

Newtown Massacre Recordings Reveal Calm, Anguish and Gunshots

Audio recordings from the Connecticut school shooting that killed 20 children and six educators a year ago reveal a mixture of calm and anguish from the callers, and gunshots from the assailant are heard in the background.

Officials in Newtown, Connecticut, on Wednesday released the 911 phone calls from the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in what may be the final official report on the tragedy that rocked the United States.

Gunman Adam Lanza, 20, shot dead his mother at home on Dec 14, 2012, then went to the school, where he massacred 26 people before killing himself.

"They're shooting at the front door, something's going on ... The front glass is all shot out, it kept going on. It's still happening," a man calling himself Richard, sounding agitated and confused, told a 911 emergency operator in one of the seven phone recordings.

The operator calmly told him to take cover.

Town officials initially tried to prevent release of the recordings. The state Freedom of Information Commission ordered seven calls placed from inside the elementary school to be aired.

Late last month, a judge ruled the town must comply with the commission's order, and Newtown officials have since dropped their appeal. First Selectman Pat Llodra recently reversed her long-standing position, saying the tapes should be released in full in order to prevent partial leaks.

One of the first callers, a deeply-anguished woman, grows increasingly distraught over the course of the 24-second call. In the final seconds, she grows more insistent, pleading with the 911 operator for help.

"They're still running, they're still shooting," she said, a volley of several gunshots audible in the background. "Sandy Hook school, please!"

On another call, a woman who described herself as a teacher said she was shot in the foot. The 911 operator instructed her to apply pressure on the wound.

"There's children in this room," the teacher said, sighing heavily.

"Are you OK right now?" the 911 operator asks?

"For now, hopefully," the teacher said, sounding worried.

On Tuesday, Newtown School Superintendent John Reed emailed parents to alert them to the recordings' release and remind them they could serve as an "emotional trigger."

Last week, State's Attorney Stephen Sedensky released a report on the Newtown massacre that concluded Lanza had acted alone, and that his motivation for the attack "may never be answered."

The town has intended for the 911 recordings to be the final release of evidence from the case. Other phone calls and crime scene photographs exist but have been sealed by state officials

Otherwise, once the December 14 anniversary has passed, the town may finally get a reprieve from the exhaustive media coverage of the past year.

"Vulture media, you got your tapes," read a hand-painted sign on a telephone pole in Newtown on Wednesday. "Please leave."

