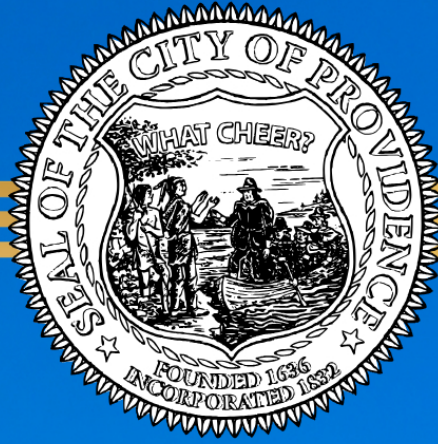




**AFTER-ACTION ASSESSMENT
OF THE CITY OF PROVIDENCE
AND MUNICIPAL AGENCIES' RESPONSE
TO THE DECEMBER 13, 2025,
BROWN UNIVERSITY MASS SHOOTING**

**AUGUST
2026**



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DATE: August 19, 2026

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ACRONYMS, ABBREVIATIONS, AND INITIALISMS

This report uses acronyms, abbreviations, and initialisms for terms that appear repeatedly throughout the document. Each term is spelled out upon first reference, after which the corresponding acronym is used. For ease of reference, a summary of acronyms, abbreviations, and initialisms is provided here.

AAR	after-action report
ALPR	automated license plate reader
ALS	advanced life support
ATF	Department of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
CDC	U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CERC	crisis and emergency risk communication
CISA	Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency
DPS	Department of Public Safety (Brown University)
EGPD	East Greenwich Police Department
EMS	emergency medical services
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FCC	Federal Communications Commission
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FRC	family reunification center
ICS	incident command system
IRS	Internal Revenue Service

LPR	license plate reader
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
NFPA	National Fire Protection Association
PEMA	Providence Emergency Management Agency
PERF	Police Executive Research Forum
PFD	Providence Fire Department
PPD	Providence Police Department
PTD	Providence Telecommunications Department
RIAG	Rhode Island Attorney General's Office
RISP	Rhode Island State Police
RTCC	real-time crime center
RTF	rescue task force
UC	unified command
WEA	Wireless Emergency Alerts

OVERVIEW

On December 13, 2025, at approximately 4:05 p.m., the Providence Telecommunications Department (PTD) began receiving emergency calls reporting a shooting in the Barus & Holley Building on the Brown University campus, with callers reporting that hundreds of people were fleeing the area. Five days later, on December 18, law enforcement officials located the shooter dead in a storage unit in Salem, New Hampshire. Authorities determined that he had died by suicide from a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Beyond the profound psychological trauma inherent in a mass shooting on a university campus, the attack at Brown University resulted in the deaths of two students—a 19-year-old sophomore and an 18-year-old freshman—and physical injuries to nine other students.

The mayor's office, multiple municipal agencies, numerous local organizations, and state and federal partners responded to the shooting and carried out critical emergency response activities. These efforts included clearing buildings, rushing injured people to the hospital, overseeing and facilitating inter- and intra-agency communications, reunifying affected individuals with their families, and managing public communications.

As the events unfolded, the Rhode Island Attorney General's Office (RIAG) served as a steadfast and collaborative partner, providing critical legal guidance throughout a rapidly evolving and highly complex investigation. RIAG attorneys worked closely with law enforcement to address warrants, evaluate probable cause, conduct interviews, and navigate legal issues. The office also participated in operational briefings and public communications, helping ensure a coordinated and unified law enforcement response. The U.S. Attorney's Office likewise provided valuable assistance and support throughout the investigation.

The City of Providence, seeking to critically assess its response to this tragic incident, contracted with the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) to conduct a comprehensive review of the municipal response. This review examined how the mayor's office and key agencies—including the

Providence Police Department (PPD), Providence Fire Department (PFD), and Providence Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) as well as the PTD—managed the initial response, coordinated interagency efforts, communicated with the public, and, in the case of the PPD, conducted the investigation to identify and locate the shooter.

This report begins by outlining the investigative steps the PPD took to identify the shooter and determine his ultimate whereabouts. It then summarizes PERF's assessment of the municipal response to the events of December 13, 2025—across key agencies—highlighting key strengths in the City's response while identifying specific opportunities to further enhance preparedness and coordination.

This assessment is intended to provide a fact-based evaluation of the City's response, drawing on interviews, after-action materials,¹ and available documentation. It highlights the strong performance and adaptability of personnel across agencies, as well as the systemic challenges inherent in rapidly evolving, multi-agency incidents. The goal of this report is not only to document what occurred and what went well but also to identify lessons learned and provide recommendations. Each recommendation is designed to strengthen coordination, enhance communication, and improve overall preparedness for future complex, high-consequence incidents.

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1. Each municipal agency conducted a comprehensive after-action review (AAR). Much of the factual information contained in this report comes from the information contained in those AARs. **Providence Police Department:** Charles Vieira and Matthew Mulligan, *Brown University Active Threat Incident After Action Report/IP 25-99181* (Providence, RI: Providence Police Department, 2026, **FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY**); **Providence Fire Department:** Derek M. Silva, *After Action Report: Brown University Active Shooter/Hostile Event* (Providence, RI: Providence Fire Department, internal document, 2026); **Providence Emergency Management Agency:** PEMA (Providence Emergency Management Agency), *After-Action Report: Brown University Family Reunification Center December 13, 2025* (Providence, RI: Providence Emergency Management Agency, 2026, **DRAFT FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY**); **Providence Telecommunications Department:** David W. Radcliffe, *Providence Telecommunications Department After-Action Report: Brown University Active Shooter Incident* (Providence, RI: Providence Telecommunications Department, 2026, **UNCLASSIFIED/LAW ENFORCEMENT SENSITIVE**); David W. Radcliffe, *After Action Improvements: Overview of Improvements to Date — Brown University Active Shooting (12 Dec 2025)* (Providence, RI: Providence Telecommunications Department, n.d.).

INVESTIGATION OF THE SHOOTING

Unlike many mass shootings, which end with the perpetrator either dead at the scene or immediately taken into custody, the shooting at Brown University presented a more complex investigative challenge. The assailant exited the Barus & Holley Building and fled the campus area; his whereabouts remained unknown for approximately five days.

To understand how the PPD—with assistance from federal, state, and local law enforcement partners—ultimately identified and located the shooter, PERF interviewed PPD personnel, reviewed investigative materials related to the incident, and analyzed publicly available documents and information. This process revealed a disciplined, methodical approach that combined traditional police work with modern technological tools to identify and locate a determined, deliberate perpetrator who had carefully planned his attack.

The following timeline highlights the principal investigative developments that led to the assailant's identification and location. It is not intended to be exhaustive, nor does it purport to capture the full scope of investigative work conducted by PPD and its federal, state, and local partners.

The investigation included several key elements:

- Rapid development of an initial suspect description
- Collection and analysis of surveillance video
- Identification and vetting of multiple investigative leads
- Integration of technological tools and federal capabilities

The timeline also captures how investigative focus shifted over time, including a period of concentrated attention on a specific individual before efforts were redirected toward identifying a different, unknown suspect.

INVESTIGATIVE TIMELINE

DECEMBER 13 (SATURDAY) — SHOOTER IDENTIFIED IN VIDEO²

4:05 P.M.

- A gunman opens fire inside the Barus & Holley Building on the Brown University campus.

- Officers conduct an initial rapid search of the relevant area of the building and find no evidence that the shooter remains inside.

4:05—5:15 P.M.

- PPD and PFD are dispatched to the scene at 4:07 p.m. (1 minute and 22 seconds after the first call for shots fired).
- Multiple officers respond to the scene, the first arriving at 4:10 p.m. — within three minutes of being dispatched.
- Members of the Brown University Department of Public Safety (DPS) and the PPD enter the Barus & Holley Building less than five minutes after receiving the initial dispatch.

- During this period, PPD directs detectives to work with Brown DPS to obtain and review available surveillance footage. Initial access is delayed because of access-related issues at Brown DPS; however, investigators say this delay did not materially affect the investigation's ultimate outcome.

2. Times noted throughout this timeline are drawn from the AARs completed by the Providence Police Department (PPD), Providence Fire Department (PFD), and Providence Telecommunications Department (PTD) (see note 1).

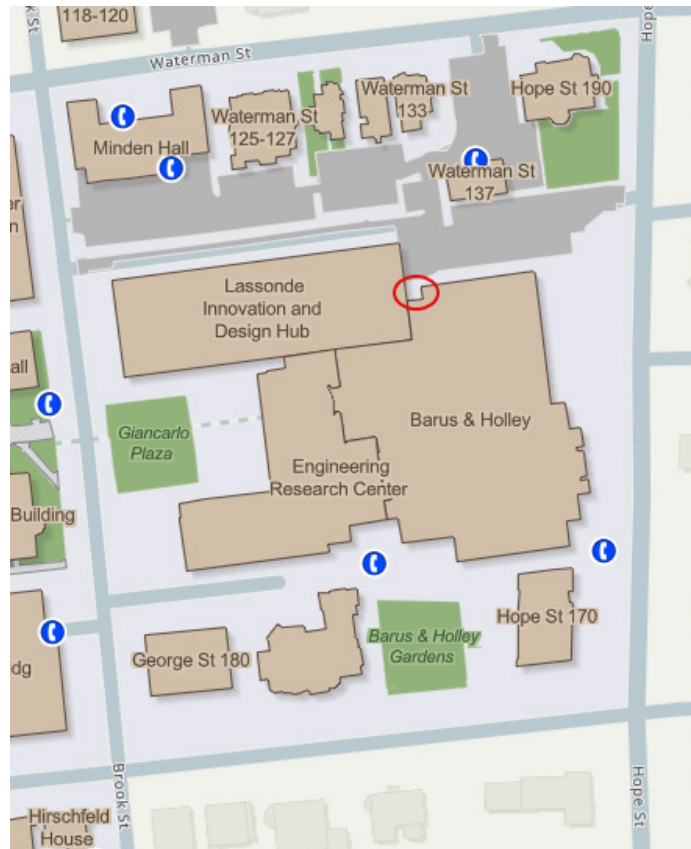
5:15–5:30 P.M.

- PPD detectives and Brown DPS personnel review exterior video footage from the area immediately outside Barus & Holley. The video shows the following:
 - Many people frenetically fleeing the building
 - One individual, later identified as the shooter, walking calmly away from the north side of the building

This individual's demeanor—marked by a lack of urgency or distress—is inconsistent with that of others exiting the building. Investigators use this behavioral cue to differentiate that individual from potential witnesses or victims.

The Barus & Holley Building, with the approximate location of the individual's exit circled in red, is shown in figure 1.

Figure 1. Barus & Holley Building on Brown University campus



- Although no camera catches the precise moment the shooter exits the building, the available footage indicates that he has left the building and is moving away from the scene.
- This footage represents a critical early inflection point in the investigation by establishing that the suspected shooter³ is no longer contained in the building but is actively mobile.
- While officers continue to methodically clear buildings in the area, detectives quickly recognize that the threat likely extends beyond Barus & Holley and requires a broader investigative response.
- After reviewing initial surveillance footage, witnesses confirm that the individual seen calmly walking away from Barus & Holley is the shooter (see note 3). They further report that the shooter used a pistol equipped with a laser sight; this detail will become significant on Sunday in Coventry, Rhode Island, when an investigative lead emerges.
- PPD also dispatches a drone to maintain overhead surveillance in case the shooter reappears.
- PPD begins assembling additional video footage to track the person walking calmly away from Barus & Holley as others flee. From existing footage, detectives identify a Brown University shuttle bus traveling east in the north lot of Barus & Holley and believe it might have captured the subject if it was equipped with cameras.

5:30 P.M.—12:00 A.M.

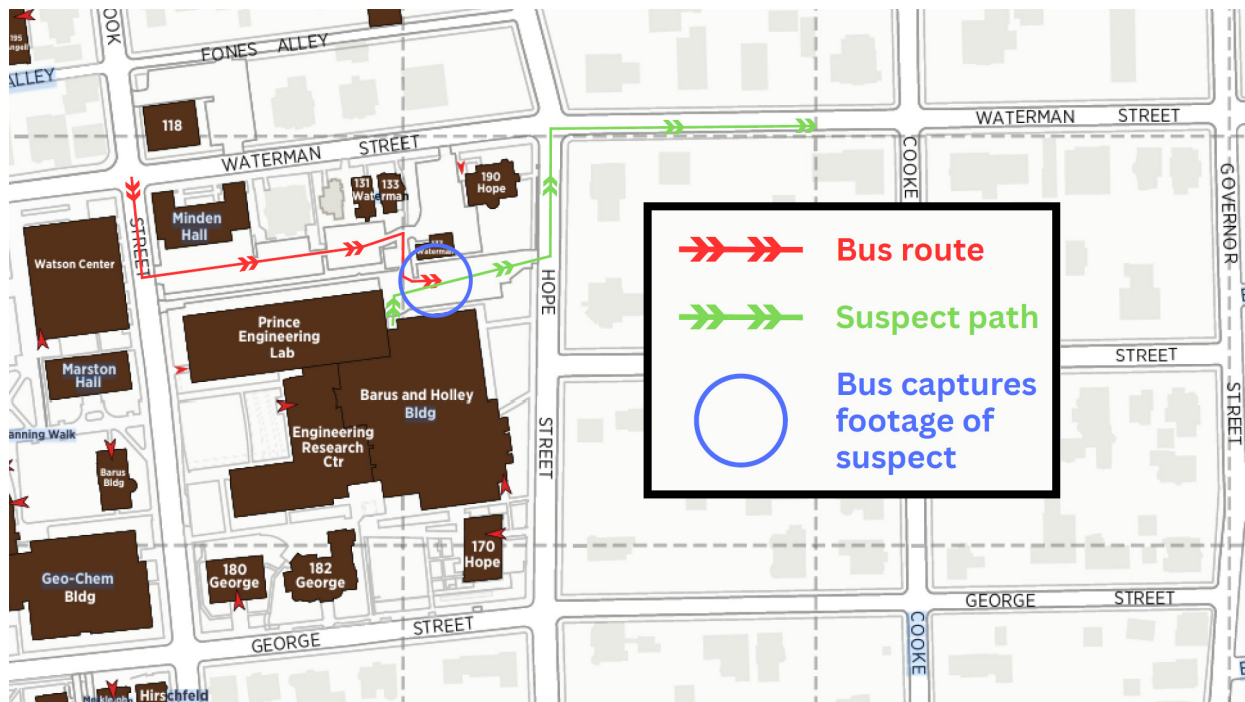
- PPD establishes a detective command post at Manning and Hope Streets. Officers also ensure that individuals being permitted to exit buildings are identified and treated as potential witnesses.

3. Based on the footage, PPD initially considered the man calmly exiting the building to be a potential suspect. That designation was upgraded to confirmed suspect only after witnesses reviewed the footage and identified that person as the shooter.

- When detectives inquire, officials at Brown advise them that the shuttle buses lack video recording capabilities. This information proves to be incorrect. Detectives continue to press the issue and ultimately confirm that the shuttle is equipped with a functioning camera system, which captured the suspect and provides critical insight into his direction of travel after leaving Barus & Holley.

Based on the shuttle footage, detectives determined that the suspect walked to and crossed Hope Street east of Barus & Holley before turning and proceeding eastbound on Waterman Street, as shown in figure 2.

Figure 2. Map displaying the path of the shooter, captured by a Brown University shuttle



- During the evening of December 13, PPD receives its first credible investigative lead identifying a specific suspect. An officer from the nearby East Greenwich Police Department (EGPD) reports that a former Brown University student recently applied for a license-to-carry firearms permit, which the department denied because of inconsistencies. Despite this denial, the applicant demonstrated an unusual urgency to acquire a firearm by immediately applying through another local agency. Based on these red flags, the EGPD officer recommended the individual for investigation.
- Detectives immediately vet the lead. A comprehensive background check confirms the individual's ties to Brown University and reveals multiple firearms permit applications across Rhode Island. Investigators also identify his vehicle, license plate, and primary cell phone number.
- With assistance from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), detectives analyze the subject's cellular telephone data and determine that they do not place him in the vicinity of the crime scene at the time of the shooting—meaning either that he wasn't in the area with his cell phone or that he was in the area but took steps to avoid his cellular data linking him to the area. Similarly, a review of license plate reader (LPR) data showed no indication that his vehicle was present in the area during the incident—meaning he was not in his vehicle at a location where it could have been detected on LPRs in Providence but still not foreclosing the possibility that he was in the city.

Consequently, while the individual remained a person of interest, detectives found no physical or digital evidence linking him to the crime scene beyond his past affiliation with the university.

DECEMBER 14 (SUNDAY) – COVENTRY LEAD DOMINATES

- Early in the morning of December 14, between 2:00 and 4:00 a.m., FBI personnel locate the individual and his vehicle at a Hampton Inn in Coventry, Rhode Island, roughly 17 miles southwest of Brown University.
- When FBI investigators knock on the hotel room door and the individual answers, they immediately observe two firearms inside, one equipped with a laser sight. These findings are highly significant. The individual now presents multiple converging risk factors: a law enforcement flag, physical proximity to the region of the attack, and possession of weapons matching initial witness descriptions.
- Coincidentally, a CNN news crew covering the shooting is staying at the same hotel and witnesses the federal law enforcement activity. Alerted by the operation, the media immediately seeks comment from Providence Police Chief Colonel Oscar Perez and Providence Mayor Brett Smiley. These inquiries come before investigators have reached any definitive conclusions about the individual's involvement.
- The officials respond carefully to the sudden media pressure:
 - Colonel Perez is circumspect, sharing only verified facts and declining to label the individual as a suspect.
 - Mayor Smiley is similarly measured, accurately stating that a “person of interest” has been detained without calling him a suspect. However, he adds that the community can “breathe a little easier” that morning.⁴

4. Lauren Mascarenhas, Chris Boyette, and CNN Staff, “Person of Interest in Brown University Shooting Taken into Custody at Rhode Island Hotel, Source Says,” KRDO, last modified December 14, 2025, <https://krdo.com/news/national-world/cnn-national/2025/12/14/person-of-interest-in-brown-university-shooting-taken-into-custody-at-rhode-island-hotel-source-says-2/>.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

Mayor Brett Smiley's public communications during the incident were, overall, measured and highly effective. He later said that he hoped his remark that the community could breathe a little easier did not unintentionally create a false sense of security, because the detained individual was ultimately cleared. However, understanding that statement's chaotic context is important, as it came amid rapidly unfolding events and intense public demand for information. Viewed in that light, the remark serves as one point in a broader pattern of strong mayoral communications throughout the incident, shaped by evolving facts, operational constraints, and the need to keep the public informed.

Within minutes of the shooting, Mayor Smiley established a central coordination hub at his home, near Brown University. From there, he maintained regular briefings with key staff, supporting continuous coordination and real-time situational awareness as events unfolded. These briefings also informed regular public communications, providing updates on the shooting, shelter-in-place decisions, and the evolving investigation.

During the early morning of December 14, the FBI detained an individual at a hotel in Coventry *without notifying the PPD or City leadership in advance*. Because a national media crew happened to be staying at the same hotel, the operation quickly became public, accelerating demand for immediate information. The mayor was therefore required to comment based on a limited but significant set of confirmed facts:

- The individual was affiliated with Brown University.
- He had a documented history of attempting to acquire firearms.
- When located 17 miles from the crime scene, he possessed weapons, including one with a laser sight matching witness descriptions from the shooting.

These factors made the person detained in Coventry a compelling person of interest. But at the same time, both Mayor Smiley and Colonel Perez exercised notable restraint by avoiding definitive characterizations and limiting their public statements to confirmed information.

This episode highlights the inherent challenges of crisis communication in fast-moving situations. Officials were required to provide timely updates amid heightened public concern and rapidly evolving information. Their communications reflected meaningful developments—particularly the detention of a person of interest and the lifting of shelter-in-place orders*—while remaining grounded in available facts.

Established crisis communication protocols emphasize the importance of regular public briefings, stressing transparency, particularly in the early stages, when information should be treated as preliminary.† Especially early on, it is “important to make clear that early information is preliminary and provided in good faith, but subject to change as additional information is received.”‡ In this instance, officials overwhelmingly avoided premature conclusions and aligned their messaging with the information available at the time, including decisions to lift shelter-in-place orders.

Overall, this incident underscores the difficulty of balancing the need to reassure the public with the responsibility to communicate cautiously. Our review found that the mayor and his team managed a complex and dynamic communications environment highly effectively.

* Ashley Carnahan, “Person of Interest in Custody following Deadly Shooting at Brown University,” Fox News, last modified December 14, 2025, <https://www.foxnews.com/us/person-interest-custody-following-deadly-shooting-brown-university>.

† FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency), “IS-29: Public Information Officer Awareness,” accessed May 15, 2026, <https://training.fema.gov/programs/public-information-officer/basic/>.

‡ PERF (Police Executive Research Forum), Managing Officer-Involved Critical Incidents: Guidelines to Achieve Consistency, Transparency, and Fairness (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, 2025), <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/ManagingOICIs.pdf>.

- The balance of investigative efforts on December 14 is focused on determining whether the individual detained in Coventry could have committed the shooting at Brown University. This represents a temporary narrowing of the investigative focus onto a single high-interest individual rather than the continued development of an unknown suspect.
- This question becomes increasingly significant after FBI Director Kash Patel posts an update on X (formerly Twitter) at approximately 11:38 a.m., suggesting that a person of interest has been identified and detained. That message is reproduced in figure 3 on page 12.
- From nearly the moment agents begin speaking with him, the individual in Coventry says he thinks they are there in connection with the Brown shooting and tells them to check the hotel video footage, which will prove

his innocence. Detectives review surveillance camera footage covering both the hotel's interior and the exterior parking lot. The footage shows the man entering his hotel room, but none shows him leaving. In addition, his vehicle remains stationary during that time. However, given his near-immediate reference to the Brown shooting and "checking the video," investigators are understandably concerned that these comments may reflect an attempt to proactively establish an alibi.

- The only apparent alternative exit from the hotel room would have required removing the air conditioning unit and crawling through a vent. Detectives examine this possibility by removing the unit and observing the surrounding area. They note undisturbed dust and debris, which is inconsistent with anyone having recently passed through the vent.

Figure 3. X Post by FBI Director Kash Patel



An update on the @FBI response at Brown University:

@FBI Boston established a command post to intake, develop and analyze leads, and run them to ground.

We activated the FBI's Cellular Analysis Survey Team, to provide critical geolocation capabilities.

As a result, early this morning, FBI Boston's Safe Streets Task Force, with assistance from the @USMarshalsHQ & the @Coventry_RI_PD, detained a person of interest in a hotel room in Coventry, RI, based off a lead by the @ProvidenceRIPD.

We have deployed local and national resources to process and reconstruct the shooting scene - providing HQ and Lab elements on scene.

We set up a digital media intake portal to ingest images and video from the public related to this incident.

And the FBI's victim specialists are fully integrating with our partners to provide resources to victims and survivors of this horrific violence.

This FBI will continue an all out 24/7 campaign until justice is fully served.

Thanks to the men and women of the FBI and our partners for their continued teamwork. Please continue praying for the victims and their families - as well as all those at Brown University.

Source: Kash Patel

(@FBI Director Kash), "An update on the @FBI response at Brown University: @FBI Boston established a command post . . .," X post, December 14, 2025,

<https://x.com/FBIDirectorKash/status/2000244040667676940>.

- Later that evening, ballistics analysis facilitated by the Department of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) establishes that the weapons recovered from the individual in Coventry are inconsistent with those used in the Brown shooting. Combined with the lack of corroborating video, cellular, or vehicle data placing the individual at the scene, this finding leads investigators to clear him as a suspect. The individual is released, and that decision is clearly communicated to the public.⁵

5. Molly Farrar, "Man Detained in Connection with Brown University Shooting has been Released, Authorities Say," Boston.com, last modified December 14, 2025, <https://www.boston.com/news/local-news/2025/12/14/man-detained-in-connection-with-brown-university-shooting-has-been-released-authorities-say/>.

DECEMBER 15 (MONDAY) — INVESTIGATION RESET

- The Coventry investigation has consumed significant investigative resources; however, by Monday, PPD is able to reorient its efforts toward identifying the unknown suspect. These efforts include the following:
 - **Establishing a grid system for a structured re-canvass.** Teams—typically composed of one PPD member, one federal agent, and one officer from a partnering agency—are assigned to specific geographic areas surrounding Barus & Holley. These teams conduct systematic, door-to-door canvassing, seeking witnesses, identifying private surveillance cameras, and uncovering any information that may have been missed during the initial canvassing.
 - **Establishing a structured tip triage and evaluation system.** Investigators, with assistance from the FBI, organize incoming tips through a centralized process, allowing them to be logged, categorized, and prioritized based on credibility and relevance. Tips are assessed using available evidence—including video, timeline, and known-suspect information—and either assigned for follow-up or quickly screened out if they lack corroboration. This system enables investigators to efficiently manage a high volume of incoming information while ensuring that credible leads are pursued in a timely and coordinated manner. The overwhelming volume of incoming information—with tips numbering in the hundreds—necessitates a structured approach, ensuring that potentially critical leads are not overlooked while allowing investigators to efficiently eliminate non-credible information.

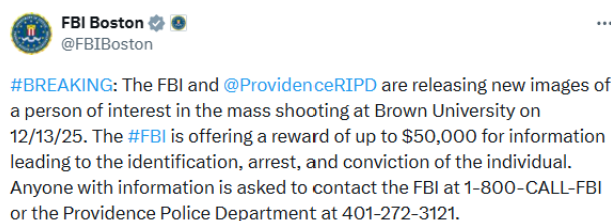
Even as the investigative steps recounted here are underway, PPD continues to pursue many other leads while the suspect remains at large.

- **Continuing to refine the image of the shooter.** Investigators systematically review and enhance available surveillance footage obtained from campus cameras, private residences, and nearby businesses. By analyzing multiple video sources and synchronizing them with the known timeline of events,

detectives can produce sharper still images and a more accurate depiction of the suspect's appearance and movements than they can derive from fewer inputs.

These refined images, released to the public on December 15, provide the most detailed visual representation of the suspect to date and are intended to generate actionable public tips. As shown in figure 4, the images provide a more detailed visual reference of the shooter.

Figure 4. X Post from FBI Boston

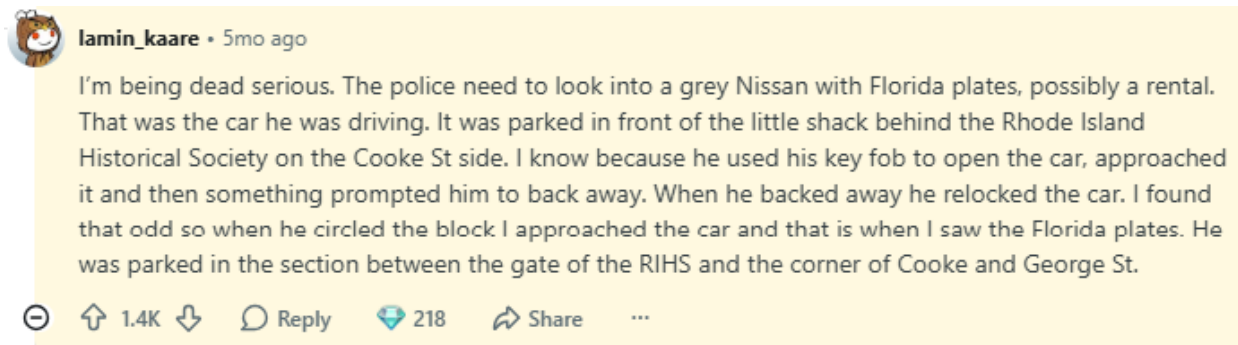


5:12 PM · Dec 15, 2025 · 884.8K Views

Source: FBI Boston (@FBIBoston), "The FBI and @ProvidenceRIPD are releasing new images . . .," X post, December 15, 2025, [https://x.com/FBIBoston/status/2000690371072794682](\"https://x.com/FBIBoston/status/2000690371072794682\").

- Later that evening, after the enhanced images are released, an individual posts on the social media platform Reddit, saying police should look for a “grey Nissan with Florida plates, possibly a rental.”⁶ The full content of this anonymous post is reproduced in figure 5.

Figure 5. r/providence Reddit comment, December 15, 2025



Source: Reddit user lamin_kaare, “The police need to look into a grey Nissan” (see note 6).

- Approximately 50 miles northeast of Brown University, in the town of Brookline, Massachusetts, an unknown assailant shoots and kills MIT professor Nuno Loureiro at approximately 8:30 p.m., introducing a second violent incident that investigators will later determine to be connected to the Brown University shooting.⁷ Professor Loureiro, a Portuguese national, was a world-renowned plasma physicist and fusion scientist.

6. Reddit user lamin_kaare, “The police need to look into a grey Nissan with Florida plates . . .,” comment on “r/providence” thread, Reddit, December 15, 2025, <https://www.reddit.com/r/providence/comments/1pnkwog/comment/nu9c70a/>.

7. Phil Helsel, “MIT Professor Killed in Shooting at Home,” NBC News, December 15, 2025, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/mit-professor-killed-shooting-home-rcna249582>.

DECEMBER 16, 2025 (TUESDAY) — A POSSIBLE CONNECTED VEHICLE EMERGES

- Two independent tips come into the PPD tip line that ultimately converge on the same critical detail:
 1. A member of the RIAG reports receiving a tip from a person who, prior to the Brown shooting, had observed a small gray vehicle with Florida license plates moving slowly in the vicinity of the Brown campus. This independently derived observation indicates the possible relevance of a specific vehicle.
 2. Separately, another individual forwards the anonymous Reddit post (see figure 5 on page 15) to the tip line, referencing a gray Nissan with Florida plates.

Although these tips originate independently, both point investigators toward the possible involvement of a specific vehicle—the first time the investigation has identified a potential asset linked to the suspect.

- Working from these independent streams of information—without yet knowing the identity of the Reddit poster—detectives reexamine available surveillance footage and confirm multiple key details—they can see the shooting suspect interacting with a person (ultimately determined to be the Reddit poster). Investigators also observe behavior consistent with the use of a key fob. Although the vehicle itself is not visible in the footage, detectives observe off-camera vehicle lights illuminate when the suspect activates the fob, providing indirect but compelling confirmation that a vehicle is present.

DECEMBER 17, 2025 (WEDNESDAY) – IDENTIFICATION OF SHOOTER

- Law enforcement releases surveillance images to the public of the person seen on neighborhood video footage interacting with the suspected shooter. Detectives believe the person can help identify the suspect; they later confirm that the person in the video footage is, in fact, the Reddit poster.⁸ Shortly thereafter, the Reddit poster approaches a PPD officer and says he believes officers are looking for him.
- When detectives interview the Reddit poster, he reports the following:
 - Earlier on December 13, prior to the shooting, he observed the suspect inside the Barus & Holley Building. The individual's appearance drew his attention because he appeared out of place, including wearing clothing inconsistent with the indoor environment and temperature, as well as a facial covering.
 - The tipster then followed the suspect, resulting in a "cat-and-mouse" interaction through neighborhoods surrounding Barus & Holley, during which the witness observed that the suspect was aware he was being followed and adjusted his movements accordingly, including changing direction.
 - The suspect eventually confronted the tipster, asking why he was being harassed.
 - At one point, the suspect approached the gray Nissan described in the Reddit post. He used a key fob to unlock the vehicle, then relocked it without getting in.

8. LiveNOW from FOX, "Police Release Photos of Person 'In Proximity' to Brown Shooting Person of Interest," YouTube, last modified December 17, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TyraLr-wS78>.

- The information provided by the Reddit tipster corroborates and adds depth to the evidence that law enforcement has developed: that the suspected shooter is tied to a gray Nissan with Florida plates, possibly a rental.

DEVELOPMENT OF SUSPECT VEHICLE LEAD

- Armed with this vehicular information, law enforcement queries LPR data in the Flock system,⁹ which produces two candidate vehicles matching the description in the vicinity of Brown University on December 13, 2025. These results do not identify a single definitive vehicle and require further validation through investigation.
- Detectives then **conduct a comparative analysis**, evaluating each candidate vehicle against available surveillance footage and the established timeline of the suspect's movements. **This analysis reflects a disciplined, evidence-based process**

in which each candidate vehicle is assessed for consistency with known facts of the investigation.

- One vehicle is ruled out after investigators determine it could not have been in the vicinity of the crime scene at the relevant time, based on video and timeline analysis.
- The remaining vehicle consistently aligns with the suspect's movements across multiple data sources, including surveillance footage and timeline reconstruction, and becomes the focus of further investigation.

9. Beyond capturing license plates, Flock's Vehicle Fingerprint™ technology allows users to filter searches based on a vehicle's specific characteristics, including body type, make, color, and more. "Frequently Asked Questions," Flock Safety, accessed May 18, 2026, <https://www.flocksafety.com/faq>.

- This development represents a critical transition in the investigation, as it provides the first concrete link between the shooting suspect and a specific asset (his vehicle) and enables investigators to move from identifying a vehicle to identifying the individual associated with that vehicle.

INITIAL IDENTIFICATION OF THE ASSAILANT

- Using the car description and license plate information developed through the Flock system, investigators trace the vehicle to an Alamo Rent-A-Car location in Boston, Massachusetts. Detectives respond to that location and obtain the identification of the person who, on December 1, 2025, rented the car.
- Detectives obtain video footage from Alamo showing the person at the rental location on December 1. This footage shows that his clothing, body type, posture, and movement patterns are similar to and consistent with the suspect in surveillance footage from the Brown University shooting.
- Law enforcement begins to develop information about the person who rented the car, including that he, like the MIT professor murdered in Brookline, Massachusetts, is a Portuguese national who attended the same physics program at Instituto Superior Técnico in Lisbon.¹⁰ They also learn that he previously attended Brown University.
- At this stage, investigators have not yet determined his whereabouts. However, they know that, pursuant to his rental agreement, he is scheduled to return the vehicle the following day.

10. Meredith Deliso, "Timeline of the Brown University Mass Shooting and MIT Professor Slaying," ABC News, last modified December 19, 2025, <https://abcnews.com/US/timeline-brown-university-mass-shooting-mit-professor-slaying/story?id=128531611>.

DECEMBER 18, 2025 (THURSDAY) – LOCATION OF THE SHOOTER

- PPD and other law enforcement partners anticipate the shooter's return of the rental car while continuing their efforts to determine his current whereabouts. Federal partners play a critical role in accelerating this process. Through rapid federal financial analysis, Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and FBI investigators identify a single recurring payment associated with a storage facility in Salem, New Hampshire—one of the only consistent transactions linked to the suspect.
- At the same time, investigators determine—while staging teams at rental locations in anticipation of the suspect's return—that the rental vehicle used in the Providence and Brookline incidents has not been returned as scheduled.¹¹ However, this line of inquiry is superseded when the storage facility lead develops.
- Law enforcement personnel respond to the storage facility to conduct reconnaissance.¹² Upon arrival, they locate the suspect's rental vehicle parked on-site. The vehicle's presence, now bearing a Maine license plate consistent with earlier investigative findings regarding a plate switch, provides strong confirmation that the suspect is likely in or near the facility.
- Based on this convergence of evidence—the financial link to the facility and the physical presence of the vehicle—law enforcement establishes a perimeter and initiates a coordinated response to clear the property. Tactical teams position themselves and execute a controlled approach to locate the suspect among the storage units.

11. Although the same vehicle was used in both the Brown University and Brookline shootings, the assailant replaced the legitimate Florida license plate with a stolen Maine plate in the intervening period.

12. As law enforcement personnel began to respond to the identified storage facility, the FBI informed the PPD that it was taking control of the investigation, because the investigation had crossed state borders.

- During the subsequent search of the facility, the assailant is located inside one of the storage units, dead from an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound.
- According to an FBI report released on April 29, 2026, investigators concluded that the shooter—who harbored a range of grievances for perceived injustices—likely carried out the shooting because of longstanding personal grudges, a sense of failure and marginalization, and a desire for retribution against those he blamed for his circumstances, rather than accepting personal accountability.¹³

THROUGHOUT THE DAYS THE SHOOTER WAS AT LARGE

While the preceding timeline details the investigative efforts undertaken to identify and apprehend the shooter, those efforts occurred alongside a sustained operational response. Throughout the four days the shooter remained at large, PPD—assisted by the Rhode Island State Police (RISP) and other law enforcement partners—implemented a range of measures aimed at protecting the public, maintaining a visible police presence, and responding to community concerns. Some of those efforts are as follows:

- Direct and open communication with school leaders across grade levels as well as affected neighborhoods
- Placing officers at public and private schools throughout Providence
- Conducting extra vehicle patrols
- Placing two-member teams in populated areas such as concerts, festivals, and shopping areas

13. FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation), “FBI and U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Massachusetts Release Findings on Brown University and Brookline Shootings,” press release, April 29, 2026, <https://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices/boston/news/fbi-and-us-attorneys-office-for-the-district-of-massachusetts-release-findings-on-brown-university-and-brookline-shootings>.

INVESTIGATION – OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section reflects high-level observations drawn from a comprehensive review of the investigation into the Brown University shooting outlined in the previous section's timeline. It identifies key strengths, challenges, and lessons learned. While not exhaustive, these observations highlight critical factors that contributed to the case's resolution as well as areas where processes and coordination could be strengthened in future complex, multi-agency investigations.

A defining feature of this investigation was the disciplined reliance on the convergence of multiple independent lines of evidence. Rather than relying on any single lead or data source, investigators allowed information from tips, video evidence, LPRs, car rental records, and federal analytical tools to develop in parallel and reinforce one another. This approach reduced the risk of misidentification and ensured that key investigative decisions were grounded in corroborated information rather than assumption.

At the same time, the investigation was not without challenges. For example, a significant early focus—driven in part by federal involvement—on a credible but ultimately unproductive lead required substantial resource allocation before investigators could conclusively rule it out. This experience highlights the inherent difficulty of operating in a fast-moving, multi-agency environment while maintaining balanced investigative focus.

PERF's task was to assess the PPD, rather than other federal, state, local, or private agencies involved in this investigation. **Based on our review, PPD's investigative staff performed exemplary work in rapidly identifying and locating the suspect, who demonstrated both sophistication and a deliberate effort to limit his digital footprint and evade detection.** Their approach—marked by careful lead validation, effective use of technology, and coordination with partner agencies—was instrumental in the successful resolution of this complex case.

TECHNOLOGY WAS A CRUCIAL FORCE MULTIPLIER

The investigation was significantly accelerated through the effective integration of technological tools, including LPRs; the analysis and integration of video cameras distributed throughout Providence (e.g., residential and commercial cameras in the city and cameras at Brown University); and advanced digital investigative tools such as financial tracing and cellular data analysis.

These tools allowed investigators to rapidly narrow suspect pools, reconstruct movements, and identify the suspect at a speed that would not have been possible with traditional investigative methods alone. Notably, the investigation did not rely on any single technology but rather on the convergence of multiple data streams, each reinforcing and refining the others.

The following recommendations may strengthen the use of technology in the future should similar incidents occur.

LICENSE PLATE READERS

As noted in *Development of Suspect Vehicle Lead* on page 18, once law enforcement obtained a description of the suspect vehicle, investigators used LPR data to identify two vehicles near Brown University on December 13, 2025, that generally matched that description. After ruling out one vehicle, investigators determined that the other was linked to the shooter. LPR data proved indispensable, reducing an investigative universe of thousands of potential vehicles to just two in a matter of minutes.

Importantly, investigators used those LPR hits only as investigative leads, not as a basis for enforcement action or detention. Detectives systematically evaluated each lead before ruling one vehicle out and determining that the other, a rental vehicle associated with the assailant, was tied to the shooting.

This case demonstrates both the operational value of LPR technology and the importance of using it within an appropriate governance framework. The speed with which investigators identified the suspect vehicle supports continued investment in Providence's LPR program, accompanied by ongoing community engagement and oversight.

Significantly, before rolling out its LPR program, Providence solicited public input as part of its policy development process,¹⁴ which is a recommended best practice.¹⁵ The City also implemented a pilot program before integrating LPR technology into its Real-Time Crime Center (RTCC).

PPD's emphasis on governance is particularly important because Rhode Island currently has no statewide law governing ALPR data retention, sharing, or access.¹⁶ Against this backdrop, PPD's LPR policy takes on added significance. General Order 350.05 addresses data retention and access, requires audits, and specifies that misuse will subject members to "criminal prosecution, civil liability, and/or administrative sanctions."¹⁷

Providence's safeguards therefore exceed those required by Rhode Island law and those found in many other jurisdictions. These safeguards position Providence ahead of many peer jurisdictions that continue to operate without formal guardrails and may allow it to carefully expand its LPR program, with community input, in the future.

Recommendation 1. *Providence should maintain its LPR systems, while ensuring continued compliance with General Order 350.05's validation, audit, and accountability requirements.*

14. "Providence Police Department Seeking Public Input Regarding Automated License Plate Reader Policy," City of Providence, accessed June 10, 2026, <https://www.providenceri.gov/providence-police-department-seeking-public-input-regarding-automated-license-plate-reader-policy/>.

15. ALPR Working Group, *Automated License Plate Reader Technology in Law Enforcement: Recommendations and Considerations* (Salt Lake City, UT: Major Cities Chiefs Association, 2023), <https://majorcitieschiefs.com/resources/>.

16. "License Plate Reader Policy Scorecard," Policing Project at NYU School of Law, accessed August 12, 2026, <https://alprscorecard.com/>.

17. Providence Police Department, "Automated License Plate Readers (ALPR)," *General Order 350.05* (Providence, RI: Providence Police Department, 2025), <https://ppd.providenceri.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/350.05-Automated-License-Plate-Readers-ALPR.pdf>.

PPD'S REAL TIME CRIME CENTER

Law enforcement agencies are increasingly adopting Real-Time Crime Centers (RTCC)—centralized hubs that consolidate intelligence by integrating advanced technologies like LPRs and live video feeds.¹⁸ PPD announced the launch of its own RTCC in August 2025¹⁹ and has steadily increased its staffing at the RTCC while also implementing a drone-as-first-responder program, considered a best practice in modern cities.²⁰

The City of Providence and Brown University should consider assigning a designated liaison to the RTCC to support real-time coordination during critical incidents. The early stages of this investigation highlighted challenges in accessing and fully understanding the available institutional video resources. An embedded or regularly assigned representative could help ensure more rapid system access, clarify available capabilities, and streamline information sharing in time-sensitive situations.

In addition to a designated liaison, PPD and Brown should work to integrate the Brown University camera network into PPD's RTCC. This integration would require agreements governing when and how the PPD would access the Brown University feeds. However, this incident underscores the importance of having such agreements in place before an incident occurs. Had personnel in PPD's RTCC been able to view footage of the north exit of Barus & Holley and the Brown University shuttle buses in real time, it is possible that the assailant could have been identified and tracked as he left campus. This level of integration would allow available technological resources to be fully leveraged in real time rather than accessed retrospectively.

18. "Real Time Crime Center," Police1, accessed June 2, 2026, <https://www.police1.com/real-time-crime-center>.

19. City of Providence, "Mayor Brett Smiley and Colonel Oscar Perez Announce Launch of Real Time Crime Center," press release, August 17, 2025, <https://www.providenceri.gov/mayor-brett-smiley-and-colonel-oscar-perez-announce-launch-of-real-time-crime-center/>.

20. Brinc, "What Is Drone as First Responder? And Why Are Cities Adopting It?," National League of Cities, last modified April 28, 2026, <https://www.nlc.org/article/2026/04/28/what-is-drone-as-first-responder-and-why-are-cities-adopting-it/>.

Recommendation 2. *Providence should continue to develop and integrate its RTCC, including strengthening partnerships with key institutions and enhancing real-time access to critical data sources, most importantly camera systems. This effort should also ensure dedicated RTCC liaison representation—including participation by Brown University personnel when appropriate—and the full sharing of available technologies during time-sensitive investigations.*

FEDERAL CAPABILITIES SIGNIFICANTLY ACCELERATED THE INVESTIGATION

Federal partners provided critical assistance to local investigators, particularly in financial analysis, cellular data access, and large-scale information processing. These capabilities allowed investigators to obtain information within hours that would otherwise have required days. In particular, financial tracing directly led to the identification of the storage facility that ultimately proved to be the suspect's location.

The integration of federal resources significantly increased the speed and efficiency of the investigation, particularly during its later stages. While PPD maintained investigative ownership (until the assertion of federal jurisdiction following the discovery of the Salem, New Hampshire, storage shed), federal capabilities served as a force multiplier, accelerating the development of key leads.

That said, the involvement of federal partners was not without challenges, including occasional miscommunications and coordination issues common in complex, multi-agency investigations. These issues underscore the importance of clearly defined roles, communication protocols, and expectations for information sharing when multiple agencies operate simultaneously under evolving jurisdictional conditions. They also highlight the value of post-incident engagement between local and federal partners to identify areas for improvement and strengthen coordination in future investigations.

Recommendation 3. *Providence should continue to engage federal partners early in complex investigations while establishing clear communication protocols and operational expectations to ensure effective coordination and minimize miscommunication in multi-agency environments. As*

part of these efforts, PPD should work with federal agencies to conduct structured post-incident discussions to review coordination challenges, clarify expectations, and identify opportunities to strengthen future joint operations.

STRUCTURED TIP MANAGEMENT AND INFORMATION FLOW

Early in the investigation, information flow was fragmented, and the volume of incoming data made coordination and prioritization challenging. As the investigation progressed, the volume of incoming tips and information necessitated a much more structured approach to intake, triage, and assignment. Federal partners assisted in quickly developing and implementing a centralized and structured tip management system, improving the ability to categorize incoming information, assign leads, and reduce duplication of effort.

This shift allowed investigators to more effectively manage a high volume of tips, ensuring that they identified, prioritized, and acted on credible information in a timely manner. It also demonstrates the importance of having scalable systems in place to transition quickly from an initial surge of unstructured information to a more organized and disciplined investigative framework.

U.S. Department of Justice–supported models such as Project TIPLINE²¹—developed in collaboration with the National Institute of Justice, drawing on lessons learned from the 2002 D.C. sniper investigation—provide law enforcement agencies with automated systems and structured protocols for collecting, triaging, and analyzing large volumes of public tips during critical incidents. Providence would benefit from adopting a similarly scalable and pre-planned framework.

21. Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy, "Project TIPLINE," George Mason University, accessed June 30, 2026, <https://cebcp.org/tipline/>.

Moreover, agencies such as the Peoria (Illinois) Police Department and the Washington (D.C.) Metropolitan Police Department have implemented web-based tip management systems that allow the public to submit information via phone, text, or mobile applications.²² Beyond their scalability, these platforms offer additional benefits, including centralized intake, standardized data collection, and efficient lead prioritization and assignment. Providence would benefit from exploring similar tools as part of a broader, scalable tip management framework.

Recommendation 4. *Providence should establish scalable, pre-planned systems for tip intake and management that can be rapidly activated during major incidents while ensuring seamless integration with federal partners to support coordinated, multi-agency information sharing and analysis.*

EARLY INVESTIGATIVE STRUCTURE AND COORDINATION

The early stages of the investigation saw a high volume of responding personnel and agencies, creating challenges in coordination, task assignment, and information management. While this influx of resources ultimately proved beneficial, the lack of a clearly defined investigative structure in the initial phase created some inefficiencies.

As the investigation progressed, the implementation of structured approaches—such as defined roles, coordinated tasking, and geographic area assignments—improved overall efficiency and clarity. In future incidents, the early establishment of a clearly defined investigative structure would help maximize the effectiveness of incoming resources while minimizing initial inefficiencies.

Recommendation 5. *Providence should prioritize establishing a structured investigative framework for major incidents, including clearly defined roles, centralized coordination, and organized tasking of personnel and resources.*

22. Terry Halsch, "Anonymous Tip Technology Helps Law Enforcement Solve Crimes," *Police Chief Magazine*, accessed June 30, 2026, <https://www.policechiefmagazine.org/tip411-anonymous-tip-technology-helps-law-enforcement-solve-crimes/>; "Hotlines, Tip Lines and Important Numbers," Metropolitan Police Department, accessed June 30, 2026, <https://mpdc.dc.gov/tiplines>.

OPERATIONAL RESPONSES

PERF also analyzed the responses of the four municipal entities responsible for interconnected operational functions in the aftermath of this mass-casualty incident. Together, these Providence entities managed the City's operational response, including incident command and coordination, life-safety operations, emergency communications, resource deployment, public information, and support for affected individuals and families.

The agencies and a nonexhaustive list of their responsibilities are outlined here.

Providence Police Department (PPD)

- Conducting the immediate law enforcement response, including rapid entry into campus buildings, active threat neutralization efforts, and the systematic search of the incident location and surrounding area
- Establishing and maintaining incident command and contributing to unified command operations
- Securing the incident scene and surrounding area, including perimeter control and building clearing operations
- Coordinating the deployment of law enforcement resources, including mutual aid personnel and specialized units
- Supporting investigative operations, as outlined in *Investigation of the Shooting* (page 3)

Providence Fire Department (PFD)

- Providing emergency medical care to victims, including treatment and transport during the mass casualty incident
- Supporting coordinated rescue and evacuation operations with law enforcement to safely access and remove victims from the incident area

- Managing fire/emergency medical services (EMS) operational functions, including staging, on-scene operational coordination, and resource management
- Maintaining operational readiness and continuing response capabilities for additional medical or fire-related incidents during the event

Providence Telecommunications Department (PTD)

- Triaging emergency calls and rapidly dispatching police, fire, and EMS resources during the initial and ongoing incident
- Managing high-volume emergency communications, including more than 2,000 calls and extensive radio traffic during the operational period
- Maintaining multi-channel radio communications across police, fire, and mutual aid agencies, including the coordination of multiple operational channels
- Deploying and operating the tactical dispatch team and mobile command center to support unified command and on-scene operations
- Supporting situational awareness and operational coordination by relaying information between field units, command staff, and partner agencies
- Managing post-incident communications functions, including facilitating the tip line and coordination of information for investigative follow-up

Providence Emergency Management Agency (PEMA)

- Establishing, operating, and demobilizing the Family Reunification Center to support displaced students and families
- Coordinating multi-agency resources and partner organizations supporting reunification operations, including state agencies, nonprofit organizations, and volunteers

- Managing operational functions in the reunification center, including logistics, staffing, and site operations
- Facilitating communication and coordination among agencies operating within the reunification center environment
- Supporting information management, situational awareness, and operational coordination specific to reunification operations

Each agency conducted an after-action review (AAR) process and produced a comprehensive report in accordance with established protocols and review frameworks, which PERF examined as part of this assessment. In addition, PERF personnel conducted interviews with members of each agency to validate, expand upon, and provide additional context to the findings identified in those reports.

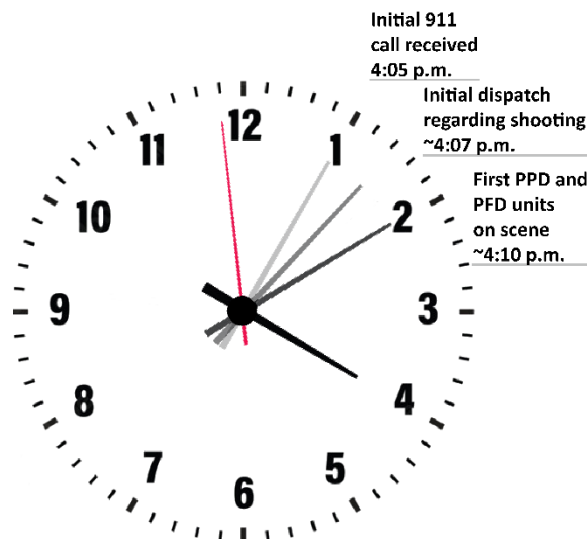
MULTI-AGENCY RESPONSE OVERVIEW

In the aggregate, the City of Providence's response to the December 13, 2025, shooting at Brown University was highly effective, with personnel demonstrating professionalism, adaptability, and a strong commitment to public safety while operating under rapidly evolving and dangerous conditions. This is reflected across all four AARs.

Law enforcement officers began to arrive on scene at 4:10 p.m. (less than 3 minutes after being dispatched); did not hesitate to enter the Barus & Holley Building despite not knowing whether the shooter was still inside; and, during the early stages, maintained an active-shooter posture while simultaneously initiating life-saving measures. Officers evacuated *all* nonfatally injured victims by 4:23 p.m., within 10–13 minutes of their entry into Barus & Holley, often transporting them directly to hospitals in police vehicles rather than waiting for EMS, prioritizing speed and survivability. At the same time, fire and EMS personnel provided critical medical support, telecommunications personnel managed an extraordinary surge in calls and radio traffic without interruption, and emergency management personnel coordinated support and early reunification efforts for affected individuals and families.

Providence's response times for patient contact, treatment, and transport met or exceeded the time-based goals established in NFPA 3000, which are designed to improve survivability during active shooter/hostile event responses.²³ These benchmarks focus on how quickly responders reach victims, begin treatment, and transport patients to hospitals. Providence's performance in these areas also compares favorably with response patterns observed in similar incidents, including the mass shootings at the Covenant School in Nashville, Tennessee (March 27, 2023),²⁴ and at the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino, California (December 2, 2015),²⁵ as documented in PFD's after-action report,²⁶ shown in figure 6, and summarized in table 1 on page 33.

Figure 6. Providence police and fire response times on December 13, 2025



23. NFPA (National Fire Protection Association), *NFPA 3000: Standard for an Active Shooter/Hostile Event Response (ASHER) Program*, Annex E (Quincy, MA: NFPA, 2024), <https://www.nfpa.org/codes-and-standards/nfpa-3000-standard-development/3000>.

24. "In Remembrance of March 27," The Covenant School, accessed July 1, 2026, <https://www.thecovenantschool.com/in-remembrance-of-march-27>.

25. Rick Braziel, et al., *Bringing Calm to Chaos: A Critical Incident Review of the San Bernardino Public Safety Response to the December 2, 2015, Terrorist Shooting Incident at the Inland Regional Center* (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2016), <https://portal.cops.usdoj.gov/resourcecenter?item=cops-w0808>.

26. PFD, *After Action Report* (see note 1).

Table 1. Survivability benchmarks

Benchmark	Goal	Providence Response
Address active threat	60 seconds from arrival	Law enforcement was immediately engaged in hot-zone operations; fire staged/operated under police protection. <i>[i.e., Police did not wait but instead went straight into the building/danger area to find the shooter and stop the threat]</i>
Establish unified command (UC)	5 minutes from arrival	PPD and PFD quickly established radio communications: A formal UC was requested at 4:23 p.m. but was delayed because of active hot-zone operations. <i>[i.e., Pending formal Unified Command set up; PPD and PFD were nonetheless communicating directly and coordinating the response]</i>
Initiate point-of-wounding care	10 minutes from arrival	Patient contact / Advanced Life Support (ALS) actions underway at 4:10 pm with initial companies on scene; rescue task force (RTF) entry at 4:12 p.m. <i>[i.e., PFD began treating victims almost immediately upon arrival, and specialized RTFs entered the building shortly thereafter to reach additional victims.]</i>
Evacuate/Transport the first critical victim	20 minutes from arrival	First patient contact and evacuation initiated at 4:12 p.m., and all transports completed by 4:23 p.m. <i>[All patients were transported to the hospital within ~ 13 minutes of arrival.]</i>
Transport all critical victims	30 minutes from arrival	All gunshot wound patient transports completed by 4:23 p.m. <i>[i.e., All gunshot wound patients transported to the hospital within 13 minutes of arrival.]</i>

INTERAGENCY COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION

Across agencies, personnel acted decisively despite incomplete information, and these actions were instrumental in stabilizing the scene and preventing further loss of life.

A defining characteristic of the response was personnel's ability to adapt in real time and operate effectively in a complex, rapidly evolving environment. The incident quickly expanded beyond the initial scene (Barus & Holley) into a large operational footprint that included building searches, victim evacuation, citywide security measures, and a sustained investigative effort. Despite this complexity, operational-level coordination remained strong.

Police and fire personnel worked in parallel to address both threat mitigation and life safety, rather than treating them as sequential priorities, and officers dynamically organized into search-and-rescue teams without waiting for the formal Unified Command structure to take shape. Telecommunications personnel supported these operations by maintaining continuous communications across multiple channels while managing thousands of incoming calls, demonstrating the system's resilience under stress. Emergency management personnel similarly established and operated reunification processes under constrained conditions, coordinating multiple partner agencies and supporting affected students and families once the immediate threat had subsided. Throughout the response, City leadership, including the Mayor's Office, maintained a consistent and highly visible public communication effort, providing regular updates that emphasized transparency, accuracy, and reassurance during a period of significant uncertainty.²⁷

27. While some at PPD felt the public communications outpaced the availability of new information, best practices in these situations emphasize frequent, even if limited, updates during the early stages of an incident, and the City's communications approach appropriately balanced the need for timeliness with the importance of accuracy and message discipline. CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), "Introduction to Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC)," *Crisis & Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) Manual* (Atlanta: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018), <https://www.cdc.gov/cerc/php/cerc-manual/index.html>.

STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

The incident revealed a limited number of minor system issues that created some operational friction but did not meaningfully affect the overall response. These stumbling blocks included challenges managing the influx of mutual aid resources, limitations in interoperable communications and technology systems, and gaps in formalized notification and coordination processes. Interviews also identified limited fully developed shared protocols for large-scale, multi-agency incidents involving external partners, as well as limited joint training at the senior leadership level. While these issues did not undermine the response, personnel often had to rely on experience, relationships, and real-time adaptation to work through these gaps.

Overall, PERF found the response to be a strong and successful operational effort, driven by skilled personnel who adapted effectively to highly dynamic conditions. **The issues—identified in agency AARs and during our interviews—reflect not failures in execution but opportunities to strengthen coordination, clarify roles and authorities, and improve interoperability and preparedness.**

Notably, agencies have already taken significant steps to address many of these issues, including improvements to communications protocols, mutual aid coordination, and interagency planning. As a result, Providence's public safety system emerged from this incident not only having demonstrated its core capabilities but also better positioned to respond to similarly complex events in the future.

In the following sections, PERF identifies areas for continued improvement. Because each agency conducted an AAR and produced a comprehensive report identifying specific operational issues (see note 1), this report will not repeat those findings. Instead, this report focuses on broader, cross-cutting themes and system-level considerations that span agencies and are critical to strengthening the City's overall preparedness and response capabilities.

PROVIDENCE POLICE DEPARTMENT

The PPD's response reflected a high degree of courage, professionalism, adaptability, and operational effectiveness under rapidly evolving conditions. As the lead agency responsible for both tactical operations and overall incident coordination, PPD directed the initial response, including rapid

entry into the Barus & Holley Building, ongoing threat assessment, and evacuation of victims while also supporting unified command and multi-agency coordination. Personnel acted decisively in a complex and dynamic environment, balancing immediate life-safety priorities with evolving situational awareness and the demands of a large, multi-agency response.

Building on this strong performance, the incident highlighted opportunities to strengthen coordination and system-level processes for future responses.

MUTUAL AID MANAGEMENT AND SELF-DEPLOYMENT

Reflecting the strong collaboration and willingness to assist among neighboring law enforcement agencies, a significant number of personnel quickly converged on Providence in the immediate aftermath of the shooting, as reflected in PPD's AAR. While this influx of support was necessary and beneficial, the volume of responding personnel created challenges in tracking arriving officers, establishing effective staging, and assigning resources in real time. The issue was not the number of responders; rather, it was the absence of a pre-established, structured approach for receiving, organizing, and deploying spontaneous mutual aid.

This challenge is not unique to Providence. Prior national-level reviews of multijurisdictional incidents—including PERF's analysis of the D.C. sniper investigation²⁸—have similarly identified the need for structured systems to coordinate large volumes of incoming personnel and resources.²⁹

28. Gerard R. Murphy and Chuck Wexler, *Managing a Multijurisdictional Case: Identifying the Lessons Learned from the Sniper Investigation* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, 2004),

<https://www.ojp.gov/library/publications/managing-multijurisdictional-case-identifying-lessons-learned-sniper>.

29. U.S. Department of Justice, *Critical Incident Review: Active Shooter at Robb Elementary School* (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2024),

<https://portal.cops.usdoj.gov/resourcecenter?item=cops-r1141>;

Robert Rielage, "8 Recommendations for Fire/EMS from the FEMA Oct. 1 After-Action Report," EMS1, last modified October 1, 2025, <https://www.ems1.com/mass-casualty-incidents-mci/articles/8-recommendations-for-fireems-from-the-fema-oct-1-after-action-report-ufzUxzTykC4Wmsak/>.

As the incident progressed, PPD adapted in real time by centralizing coordination within a unified command structure and redistributing personnel to meet operational needs across the broader incident footprint. However, the development and implementation of structured protocols to coordinate mutual aid resources would further enhance operational efficiency during future incidents.

The PPD's AAR acknowledged challenges associated with the influx and concentration of responding personnel, particularly during the early stages of the incident. While PPD's AAR identifies this as an area for improvement, it does not specify a comprehensive or standardized framework for managing spontaneous mutual aid.

Recommendation 6. *The PPD, in coordination with regional law enforcement partners, should continue to develop, formalize, and implement a standardized mutual aid management framework that establishes protocols for staging, personnel accountability, and real-time resource assignment. This framework should be shared regionally and reinforced through joint training and exercises to ensure that responding agencies are familiar with reporting expectations, communications procedures, and operational roles prior to future large-scale incidents.*

While related, the preceding and following recommendations are distinct. Recommendation 6 relates to managing the arrival and assignment of personnel, while recommendation 7 (page 38) focuses on ensuring those personnel can communicate and coordinate effectively once deployed.

EARLY PHASE INTEROPERABILITY ISSUES

The commander of PPD's Special Response Unit, Lieutenant Patrick Potter, was in close proximity to Barus & Holley when the shooting occurred; he responded immediately and entered the building without knowing whether the shooter remained inside.³⁰ As he moved through the building, Potter did not know that Brown DPS officers were also inside, having entered Barus & Holley from a

30. U.S. Department of Justice, "U.S. Attorney's Office Recognizes Providence Police Lieutenant Patrick Potter as Hometown Hero," press release, May 22, 2026, <https://www.justice.gov/usao-ri/pr/us-attorneys-office-recognizes-providence-police-lieutenant-patrick-potter-hometown-hero>.

different location, in part because of the absence of pre-established interoperable communications protocols between the agencies at the outset of the incident. Potter and Brown DPS were able to integrate their communications only after physically linking up inside the building, a situation that carried inherent risk given the potential for armed officers to operate in close proximity without a shared operational picture.

As with the mutual aid issues noted in the discussion leading to recommendation 6, the communications system functioned effectively once it was aligned and adapted in real time, but it was not pre-aligned from the outset. In this respect, the challenge was not a failure of communication but rather the absence of preconfigured interoperability at the start of the incident.

Effective initial communication between PPD and Brown DPS officers ultimately depended on the adaptability and professionalism of responding personnel rather than on pre-established systems. While this approach proved successful in this instance, it underscores the importance of establishing interoperable communication frameworks in advance to reduce risk and support seamless coordination during the earliest stages of future incidents.

Significantly, the PTD has already taken steps to improve interoperability, including the development of standardized channel-patching procedures, dispatcher checklists, and regional training initiatives. While these improvements represent meaningful progress in strengthening the City's communications infrastructure, effective interoperability during critical incidents ultimately depends on field personnel consistently understanding and using these systems. Accordingly, further work is needed to ensure that operational-level coordination across responding agencies is aligned from the outset of an incident.

Recommendation 7. *Consistent with improvements the PTD has already initiated, the PPD, Brown DPS, and other regional partners should continue to institutionalize and reinforce interoperable communications protocols as part of a shared, multi-agency framework to ensure consistent understanding and operational use across responding agencies. This framework should establish*

clear expectations for channel use, coordination procedures, and agency responsibilities and should be reinforced through regular joint training and regional exercises to ensure consistent understanding and seamless integration during future critical incidents.

INCIDENT COMMAND STRUCTURE

The national Incident Command System (ICS)—developed in response to incidents in which failures were attributed to deficiencies in command structure, role clarity, and coordination—is designed to be implemented from the onset of an incident.³¹ Interviews indicate that while command functions were established early, the structure evolved as the incident progressed. Initial operations were characterized by dynamic, rapidly evolving coordination, with roles and processes becoming clearer as the response stabilized.

While the ICS structure ultimately functioned effectively, its early implementation was less formal, with key components—such as role clarity, documentation, and command organization—developed more fully over time. This dynamic highlights an opportunity to reinforce the consistent application of formal ICS structures during the earliest stages of complex, multi-agency incidents.

Recommendation 8. *PPD should reinforce the early establishment of formal ICS structures during critical incidents. This pattern should include prompt designation of command roles, early development of a command organization appropriate to the incident's complexity, and the use of standardized coordination and documentation practices.³² These elements should be emphasized through training and exercises to ensure consistent application during the initial phases of future multi-agency response.*

31. FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency), *National Incident Management System*, Third Edition (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2017), <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/nims>.

32. PPD has already shown commendable commitment to this by, for instance, producing a new Active Threat Checklist, which it shared with PERF during our interviews.

PRE-INCIDENT COORDINATION WITH EXTERNAL PARTNERS

Although interviews show that one tabletop exercise had been conducted with Brown University prior to this incident (June 4, 2025), it was limited in scope and depth, particularly compared to what would be needed for an active shooter or multi-agency response. As reflected in Early Phase Interoperability on page 37, initial coordination between the two agencies during the response suggests that shared operational expectations and integration protocols were not fully established in advance.

Providence is home to seven institutions of higher education—Brown University, Community College of Rhode Island, Johnson & Wales, Providence College, Rhode Island College, Rhode Island School of Design, and Roger Williams University—each with its own public safety operations within a densely populated, interconnected environment. This complexity requires strong pre-incident coordination to ensure agencies can integrate seamlessly during high-stress incidents. PEMA (see page 50), has recognized the importance of this coordination and is well positioned to lead and facilitate these efforts across institutions.³³

Recommendation 9. *PPD, in coordination with PEMA, Brown DPS, other local institutions of higher education, and other municipal stakeholders, should formalize and institutionalize a citywide pre-incident coordination framework for campus-related critical incidents. This framework should establish shared operational expectations and protocols across agencies and be reinforced through regularly scheduled multi-agency training and exercises that include operational, tactical, and command-level components. These exercises should emphasize interoperable communications, unified command, coordinated response procedures, and leadership decision-making under realistic conditions to ensure consistent and effective integration during future incidents.*

33. Although PEMA is well positioned to lead these coordination efforts, the success of any such efforts will ultimately rely on the participation, commitment, and alignment of all responding agencies and partner institutions, including Brown and the PPD. For that reason, we align this recommendation with PPD rather than PEMA.

PROVIDENCE FIRE DEPARTMENT

PFD personnel operated in close coordination with law enforcement, entering secured areas to access victims, provide emergency medical care, and support rapid evacuation from the scene. They delivered medical care and coordinated patient transport in a manner that compared favorably with responses to similar incidents nationwide, as reflected in the department's AAR.³⁴ Building on this strong performance, the incident also highlighted opportunities to further strengthen coordination and system-level processes for future large-scale events.

The following areas identify macro-level opportunities to further strengthen coordination, medical operations, and system-level integration within PFD's response.

EARLY-STAGE PATIENT MOVEMENT AND THE COORDINATION OF TRANSPORT

As detailed in PPD's and AFD's AARs, within eight minutes of the shooting, police began evacuating victims from Barus & Holley, with many transported directly to hospitals in police vehicles rather than by EMS. All evacuations were completed by 4:23 p.m., within 13 minutes of first units arriving on scene. This approach prioritized rapid evacuation and transport, which is widely recognized as critical in life-threatening trauma situations and was highly effective in this incident.

However, as seen in Providence and other jurisdictions using similar models, this rapid, decentralized approach made it harder to maintain a clear, system-wide understanding of patient locations, transportation, and hospital distribution during the incident's initial phase. While this approach

34. PFD's AAR presents a comparative analysis of key performance metrics—including time to patient contact, treatment initiation, and transport—demonstrating that PFD's response timelines were consistent with, and in several respects more rapid than, those documented in comparable mass-casualty incidents, including Nashville (see note 24), San Bernardino (see note 25), and the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, on February 14, 2018. Angela D. Moreland and Dean G. Kilpatrick, "Remembering Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School—Parkland, Florida," National Mass Violence Center, last modified February 14, 2023, <https://nmvvc.org/remembering-marjory-stoneman-douglas-high-school/>.

appropriately prioritized the primary objective of any mass casualty incident—saving lives—it highlights an opportunity to strengthen mechanisms for real-time coordination and visibility in the earliest stages of a multi-agency response.

This approach is consistent with an established model used in other jurisdictions facing high volumes of penetrating trauma. For example, the Philadelphia Police Department has long employed a “scoop and run” approach, under which officers transport seriously injured victims—particularly those with penetrating gunshot wounds—directly to trauma centers rather than waiting for EMS when time is critical.³⁵ This practice has been formalized in policy since the late 1980s and is now used in a substantial share of cases; research indicates that survival outcomes for patients transported by police are comparable to those transported by ambulance, with time to definitive care serving as the primary determinant of survivability.³⁶

Nearby Camden, New Jersey, has similarly adopted this approach, drawing directly on Philadelphia’s model as part of its strategy for responding to gun violence and other time-critical injuries.³⁷ At least quarterly, Camden stakeholders—including the Camden County Police Department, Camden EMS, and local trauma centers—meet to discuss issues and refine practices.

35. Sara Jacoby and Elinore J. Kaufman, “Police Transport of Injured People to Trauma Centers in Philadelphia,” Penn LDI, last modified February 8, 2021, <https://ldi.upenn.edu/our-work/research-updates/police-transport-of-injured-people-to-trauma-centers-in-philadelphia/>.

36. Jacoby and Kaufman, “Police Transport” (see note 35).

37. “Scoop and Run: Camden Learned to Use Strategy of Philly Police Technique,” NBC10 Philadelphia, last modified November 19, 2018, https://www.nbcphiladelphia.com/video/news/local/scoop-and-runs-spread-among-local-police-departments_philadelphia/58774/.

Given these precedents, there is an opportunity for the City of Providence to further examine how early-stage patient movement can be both rapid and better integrated into system-wide situational awareness. PERF can facilitate peer-to-peer exchanges with jurisdictions such as Philadelphia and Camden, should the PFD (in coordination with the PPD) wish to explore how these models balance transport speed with coordination, tracking, and hospital distribution.

Recommendation 10. *Building on findings identified in PFD's AAR, the City of Providence should enhance cross-agency protocols to improve coordination and early-stage visibility into patient movement and hospital destinations. These protocols should be designed to operate alongside rapid, decentralized patient transport—including law enforcement-led transport when necessary—rather than constrain it.*

Efforts should emphasize real-time information sharing among fire/EMS, law enforcement, and receiving hospitals, including early designation of responsibility for patient tracking, use of common reporting mechanisms, and integration of transport information into a shared operational picture.

This approach aligns with broader interoperability and incident command improvements outlined in recommendation 7 and recommendation 8 concerning the PPD.

INTEGRATING FIRE AND EMS INTO POLICE-LED ACTIVE THREATS

During its initial response to the incident, PFD worked with PPD and other agencies to access Barus & Holley following initial law enforcement clearing operations. PFD personnel then operated alongside law enforcement to remove victims; facilitate evacuation; and provide emergency medical care within a dynamic, police-led operational environment. This work required close coordination and real-time awareness, as PFD personnel depended on law enforcement to safely access patients within a rapidly evolving environment.

This dynamic reflects the evolving nature of active threat incidents, in which fire and EMS personnel must operate and adapt within law enforcement-led environments rather than alongside them, requiring clearly defined coordination protocols, shared situational awareness, and joint operational

training. PFD personnel effectively operated in this environment; however, as these incidents become more common, formalized joint protocols and training are critical to ensuring consistent integration across agencies. Strengthening this integration will help ensure that fire and EMS personnel can continue to deliver rapid, life-saving care while operating safely and effectively during any future mass-casualty events.

Recommendation 11. *PFD should continue coordinating with PPD to strengthen joint operational protocols and training for active threat incidents, with a focus on the integration of fire and EMS personnel into law enforcement-led environments. These efforts should emphasize coordinating entry into secured areas, optimizing shared situational awareness, and clearly defining roles and responsibilities to support the safe and effective delivery of medical care in dynamic conditions.*

HOSPITAL COORDINATION

All patients requiring transport were en route to the hospital by 4:23 p.m., within 13 minutes of first units arriving on scene. As discussed previously in Early-Stage Patient Movement and the Coordination of Transport (page 41), victims were transported from the scene to area hospitals via EMS and law enforcement vehicles. This approach, adopted by an increasing number of police departments across the country, appropriately prioritizes speed and survivability during the initial response phase. Here, that approach likely contributed to the positive clinical outcomes reflected in PFD's AAR.

PFD's AAR establishes that hospital notification itself was not deficient. Rhode Island Hospital and Miriam Hospital were formally notified by 4:19 p.m.—and were updated with an estimated victim count two minutes later. In addition, Hasbro Children's Hospital and Landmark Medical Center were identified as contingency destinations for pediatric, critical-overflow, and noncritical patients. Both the notification and destination planning occurred promptly and through multiple channels.

The principal challenge was not hospital notification or destination planning themselves. Instead, the decentralized nature of early patient transport, particularly the transport of patients in police vehicles outside standard EMS reporting procedures, made it difficult to maintain a consistent, system-wide understanding of which patients had been transported, by whom, and to which hospital during the incident's initial stages.

This process is distinct from hospital notification: Hospitals knew a critical incident was underway and were prepared to receive patients. What was more difficult to establish in real time was a complete, cross-agency picture of individual patient movement and the confirmation of patients' final destinations. The after-action materials and interviews do not clearly reflect a centrally managed approach to patient tracking at the outset of the response; rather, visibility into these elements developed over time instead of being established immediately.

This pattern is consistent with challenges observed in similar fast-moving incidents, in which rapid patient movement can outpace formal tracking and accountability processes.³⁸ Immediate transport saves lives but inevitably creates a short-term loss of patient traceability. Strengthening cross-agency patient tracking between field operations and receiving hospitals can help improve real-time awareness and support more coordinated accountability for patient location and destination in future incidents.

Recommendation 12. *PFD (and PPD) should further strengthen protocols for cross-agency patient tracking and accountability during mass-casualty incidents, particularly for patients transported outside standard EMS channels, including early designation of responsibility for tracking*

38. "Organizing transport resources and matching appropriate patients . . . can be challenging." TRACIE (Technical Resources, Assistance Center, and Information Exchange), "Patient Movement, Medical Operations Coordination Centers (MOCCs), and Patient Tracking," U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, accessed June 8, 2026, <https://asprtracie.hhs.gov/technical-resources/70/patient-movement-moccs-and-tracking/0>.

patient movement, confirming hospital destinations in real time, and integrating with regional health care partners. These efforts should support rapid patient transport while enhancing real-time visibility into patient location and hospital destinations, improving system-wide accountability during the initial phase of future responses.

PROVIDENCE TELECOMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

The PTD played a critical role by managing the City's emergency communications during the response, operating under extraordinary conditions marked by a rapid influx of calls and sustained, high-volume radio traffic. Despite these challenges, PTD maintained continuous communications across multiple channels, effectively supporting coordination among police, fire, EMS, and mutual aid agencies. The department's ability to absorb and manage more than 2,000 calls, deploy tactical dispatch resources, and support unified command reflects a high level of operational resilience and adaptability, particularly given that large-scale incidents often strain communications systems with high call volumes, radio congestion, and demands for multi-agency coordination.³⁹

Following the incident, PTD conducted a comprehensive AAR. It later issued a supplemental report detailing the steps it had already taken to address challenges, including enhancements to interoperability protocols, dispatch procedures, and coordination practices. This development indicates strong leadership, responsiveness, and progress. In this section, we highlight additional opportunities to further strengthen coordination, information flow, and system-level integration during complex, multi-agency responses.

39. Rob Lawrence, "No More Radio Silence: How Agencies Are Strengthening Communication Resilience," *Police1*, last modified May 8, 2025, <https://www.police1.com/police-products/communications/interoperability/no-more-radio-silence-how-agencies-are-strengthening-communication-resilience>.

EARLY-STAGE INTEROPERABILITY AND CHANNEL ALIGNMENT

PTD's AAR appropriately identified early-stage interoperability and channel alignment as areas for improvement, and PTD has already taken steps to strengthen these capabilities, including enhancements to channel patching procedures, dispatcher checklists, and coordination protocols. These actions reflect meaningful progress in addressing challenges identified during the incident.

During the incident itself, however, initial interoperability of communications across responding agencies depended on dispatcher intervention and real-time alignment rather than pre-established configurations. While dispatch personnel adapted effectively to these conditions, this approach required additional coordination during the most critical early phase of the response—when multiple agencies operated simultaneously under rapidly evolving conditions.

The incident demonstrates that establishing interoperable communications protocols is only one part of the solution; ensuring those protocols are consistently understood, readily accessible, and operationally applied across agencies during fast-moving events is equally critical. Real-time interoperability should not rely primarily on dispatcher-driven adjustments but rather on shared expectations, pre-aligned configurations, and familiarity among dispatch personnel and field responders. Ensuring this level of consistency reduces reliance on real-time adaptation and supports more seamless integration at the onset of multi-agency responses.

Recommendation 13. *PTD should continue to institutionalize and ensure the consistent operational use of interoperable communications protocols for multi-agency incidents. These efforts should focus on ensuring that standardized channel alignment, preconfigured patching procedures, and integration protocols are consistently understood and operationalized by both dispatch personnel and field responders across all responding agencies. These efforts should be reinforced through regular interagency training and exercises designed to ensure that these protocols are applied consistently and effectively during the initial stages of future incidents.*

RADIO CHANNEL MANAGEMENT, INFORMATION FLOW, AND OPERATIONAL SCALABILITY

PTD managed an exceedingly high volume of radio traffic across multiple operational channels while simultaneously relaying large amounts of information between field units, command staff, and partner agencies. As the incident expanded, communications required segmentation across channels, dynamic resource reassignment, and continuous prioritization of incoming information.

During the early stages of the response, this information flow was both rapidly evolving and high-volume, making it unusually challenging to consistently synthesize and distribute a shared operational picture across all responding agencies. While communications remained continuous and functional, the incident's scale and complexity placed significant demands on channel management and information coordination.

This dynamic reflects a common challenge in large-scale, multi-agency incidents: Maintaining clear and efficient communications requires not only effective channel management but also the ability to prioritize, synthesize, and distribute high-volume information in real time.⁴⁰ While PTD demonstrated strong operational resilience, large-scale incidents require scalable structures that support both communications clarity and shared situational awareness across multiple operational groups.

Recommendation 14. *PTD should continue to refine its approach to managing communications during large-scale incidents, with a focus on both radio channel management and information flow. These efforts should include predefined channel assignments, traffic segmentation strategies, and structured approaches for prioritizing and synthesizing high-volume information. In addition, enhanced dispatcher support roles and coordination with command staff should be further developed to ensure that critical information is effectively communicated and operationally actionable across all responding agencies.*

40. Peter Martin Hansen, Søren Mikkelsen, and Marius Rehn, "Communication in Sudden-Onset Major Incidents: Patterns and Challenges—Scoping Review," *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness* 17 (2023), e482, <https://doi.org/10.1017/dmp.2023.132>.

SURGE CAPACITY AND CALL MANAGEMENT UNDER EXTREME DEMAND

During the incident, PTD managed an extraordinary surge in demand, handling more than 2,000 calls while maintaining sustained operations under high-volume conditions. Call takers and dispatch personnel were required to rapidly triage incoming calls, prioritize service requests, and assess incomplete or conflicting information in real time. These conditions placed significant pressure on call-taking and dispatch functions, particularly during the incident's early stages, when situational awareness was still developing.

PTD's AAR reflects the significant surge in call volume during the incident and the effectiveness of its personnel in managing these conditions. The agency demonstrated strong performance under extreme demand; however, mass-casualty incidents place extraordinary strain on call-taking and dispatch systems, underscoring the importance of deliberate surge-capacity planning to ensure that staffing, call prioritization, and operational processes can scale effectively amid rapidly increasing demand.

While PTD effectively managed surge conditions during the incident, further formalization of these practices will ensure that they are scalable and consistently applied during future incidents.

Recommendation 15. *PTD should continue to strengthen and formalize surge-capacity planning for high-volume incidents, including scalable call-taking protocols, prioritization frameworks, and staffing strategies to maintain performance amid sustained increases in demand. These efforts should ensure the system can expand operational capacity while maintaining clarity, accuracy, and coordination.*

MULTI-AGENCY NOTIFICATION AND INFORMATION ALIGNMENT

During the initial stages of the incident, notification and information-sharing processes were not always fully aligned across participating Providence agencies. As a result, some partner agencies did not consistently receive timely awareness of key developments during the early phases of the response, which was inconsistent with established standard operating procedures/protocols.

Importantly, at the time of the shooting, the CodeRED notification system,⁴¹ which Providence used for warnings and internal notifications, was inoperable. If CodeRED had been functioning properly, it may have mitigated some, if not all, of these communication challenges.

In any event, the underlying misalignment in notification protocols reflects a broader challenge in multi-agency incidents, where a lack of shared expectations and aligned processes can fragment early-stage information flow. While these gaps did not significantly affect the overall effectiveness of the response, they required personnel to rely on individual initiative and real-time coordination to ensure that critical information was shared consistently across agencies.

Recommendation 16. *PTD, in coordination with PEMA and other partner agencies, should continue to strengthen and align multi-agency protocols for large-scale incident notification and information sharing. These efforts should focus on clarifying roles and responsibilities, establishing shared expectations for notification triggers, and reinforcing consistent communication pathways to support timely and coordinated information flow during the earliest stages of an incident.*

PROVIDENCE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

PEMA played a critical role in supporting the City's response to the December 13 incident, particularly in establishing and operating the Family Reunification Center (FRC). Operating under challenging conditions, PEMA coordinated a wide range of partner agencies, nonprofit organizations, and volunteers to provide essential services to affected students and families. This work included managing site operations, logistics, staffing, and interagency coordination within the reunification center environment—especially impressive given PEMA's small staff.

Despite the complexity of the situation and the emotional nature of reunification operations, PEMA personnel demonstrated adaptability, coordination, and commitment to supporting impacted individuals and families. Their ability to rapidly stand up and manage the FRC reflects strong operational

41. "CodeRED Emergency Notification for Public Safety," Crisis24, accessed August 14, 2026, <https://codered.crisis24.com/>.

capability consistent with the agency's core mission. Interviews conducted as part of this assessment consistently revealed that PEMA's capabilities could have been more fully leveraged in the early stages of the response, particularly to support coordination and information flow across agencies.

The incident highlights an opportunity to further integrate emergency management into the City's broader multi-agency response framework. Interviews and after-action materials show that PEMA's role and involvement during the early stages of the incident were not always fully defined or consistently integrated with other responding agencies. As a result, coordination and information-sharing processes within the emergency management function were at times developed in parallel rather than as part of a unified operational structure.

This dynamic is consistent with a broader challenge in many jurisdictions, where emergency management agencies—despite their central role in coordination, planning, and resource integration—are not always fully incorporated into the early phases of law enforcement-led incidents.⁴² Strengthening this integration can enhance overall coordination, improve information flow, and ensure that support functions such as reunification, resource coordination, and interagency alignment are implemented more seamlessly.

Recommendation 17. *The City of Providence should continue to strengthen the integration of PEMA into multi-agency incident response frameworks, particularly during the early stages of large-scale incidents. These efforts should include clarifying PEMA's role in initial incident command and*

42. CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), *A Framework for Improving Cross-Sector Coordination for Emergency Preparedness and Response: Action Steps for Public Health, Law Enforcement, the Judiciary, and Corrections* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, 2008), <https://www.ojp.gov/library/publications/framework-improving-cross-sector-coordination-emergency-preparedness> and <https://bja.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh186/files/Publications/Framework.pdf>; Jason Thomas Barnosky et al., *Streamlining Emergency Management: Issues, Impacts, and Options for Improvement* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.7249/RR1440-5>; Michael Prasad, "Breaking Through Intelligence Silos for Domestic Emergency Management," *HDIAC Journal* 9, no. 1 (June 5, 2025), <https://hdiac.dtic.mil/articles/breaking-through-intelligence-silos-for-domestic-emergency-management/>.

coordination structures; reinforcing expectations for notification and engagement; and expanding joint planning, training, and exercises with law enforcement, fire, and telecommunications partners. These improvements should be validated and refined through tabletop exercises to ensure readiness and effective coordination among all stakeholders.

Beyond integrating into incident command, PEMA is also positioned to help lead a citywide effort to modernize how Providence approaches emergency notification.

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEMS AND RISK-AWARE MESSAGING

In any mass-casualty event, timely and effective public notification is critical to protecting life and safety. Authorities must deliver emergency alerts rapidly, but they must also do so deliberately, providing clear, accurate information about the nature, location, and status of the incident, along with recommending or requiring specific protective actions—such as sheltering in place or avoiding affected areas.⁴³ Effective public communication requires not only speed but also clarity, accuracy, and actionable guidance that supports informed decision-making by those at risk.⁴⁴ While PTD manages the technical infrastructure behind the City's communications systems, decisions about which notification tools to deploy—and when—are strategic, cross-agency judgment calls that fall naturally within PEMA's broader coordination mandate.

NOTIFICATION TOOLS AND TRADEOFFS

During the incident, multiple emergency notification methods—including institutional alert systems, public messaging, and other communication channels—were used to inform the public of the shooting and provide protective instructions. Interviews suggest that officials anticipated using a mass

43. FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency), *Tip 44: Best Practices for Alerting Authorities Using Wireless Emergency Alerts for Public Alert, Warning & Notification* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2022), <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/practitioners/integrated-public-alert-warning-system/public-safety-officials/tips>.

44. CISA (Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency), *Public Safety Communications: Ten Keys to Improving Emergency Alerts, Warnings, and Notifications* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2019), <https://www.cisa.gov/safecom/safecom-resource-library#P>.

notification tool such as CodeRED⁴⁵ or Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA). The WEA system allows government officials to send emergency alerts to people in a targeted geographic area without requiring them to opt in, thereby enabling broad dissemination within that area. Ultimately, though, the system was not deployed.

The decision not to use WEA reflected a deliberate balancing of its capabilities and limitations in the context of an evolving incident. The WEA system, while highly effective for rapidly reaching a broad population, is designed to generate audible alerts that are typically issued across large geographic areas. **In an active shooter incident, these alerts can create operational challenges, including disrupting shelter-in-place environments or drawing attention to areas where people are trying to remain concealed, as was the case for students sheltering inside Barus & Holley.**

Decision-makers also faced a complementary challenge: the lack of immediately deployable tools that fully meet the dual need for broad accessibility (i.e., that do not rely on opt-in enrollment) and targeted, low-disruption messaging during dynamic conditions. As a result, they were required to balance competing priorities, including the need for rapid, widespread communication alongside operational security, situational awareness, and the risk of unintended effects. In particular, the widespread and immediate dissemination of location-based alerts may, in certain scenarios, shape public behavior in ways that warrant careful consideration during active-threat incidents.

45. "CodeRED Emergency Notification for Public Safety" (see note 41).

Recent federal updates to the WEA system illustrate how notification capabilities are evolving to address these challenges. In 2025, the Federal Communications Commission adopted rules allowing alert originators to issue silent WEA messages that do not trigger the standard audible alert tone or vibration.⁴⁶ These changes are intended to provide greater flexibility in tailoring alerts to specific operational conditions, including scenarios where audible notifications may pose safety risks.

MOVING TOWARD A STRUCTURED, MULTI-LAYERED NOTIFICATION FRAMEWORK

Evolving capabilities underscore the need for the City to move beyond reliance on any single notification tool and instead adopt a structured, multi-layered approach to emergency communications. Doing so will better position decision-makers to select the appropriate notification method based on the specific conditions of an incident rather than being constrained by the limitations of individual systems. In practice, the City employed a layered approach to notification during this incident, combining institutional alerts, public messaging, and other communication channels to disseminate information. However, these efforts were not guided by a clearly defined, coordinated framework, and they resulted in an approach that evolved dynamically rather than being implemented through pre-established protocols.

Recommendation 18. *PEMA, in coordination with PPD, PFD, PTD, and City leadership, should develop a structured, multi-layered emergency notification framework to support decision-making during active-threat incidents. This framework should do the following:*

- *Define clear criteria for when to use broad, non-opt-in alerting tools such as WEA versus more targeted or lower-disruption communication methods, based on the nature, location, and operational dynamics of the incident.*

46. FCC (Federal Communications Commission), "FCC Adopts Rules Permitting 'Silent' Wireless Emergency Alerts," press release, Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, March 31, 2025, <https://www.fcc.gov/consumer-governmental-affairs/fcc-adopts-rules-permitting-silent-wireless-emergency-alerts>.

- *Incorporate a tiered notification approach that allows for phased messaging, including initial protective alerts, follow-on updates, and expanded public information as situational awareness improves.*
- *Identify and integrate multiple communication pathways—including WEA, locally managed notification systems, institutional alert platforms, and public messaging channels—to ensure both broad reach and targeted communication capabilities.*
- *Address current limitations associated with opt-in systems by establishing strategies to maximize reach during time-sensitive incidents, including the use of non-opt-in technologies and pre-established data-sharing or coordination agreements where appropriate.*
- *Clarify roles and responsibilities for notification decisions, including how information is shared among operational and executive leadership to support timely and coordinated communication.*
- *Incorporate these protocols into training and exercises to ensure that notification decisions can be made rapidly and consistently under real-world conditions.*

In addition, the City should closely follow emerging alerting capabilities—including the use of silent WEA—to support the future deployment of broadly disseminated notifications that minimize disruption during sensitive incidents.

Shelter-in-Place Directives

Closely related to notification decisions is the question of when and how to direct the public to shelter in place.

Shelter-in-place orders are a crucial protective strategy during active threat incidents, including active shooters, hostage or barricade situations, and civil unrest. Federal guidance emphasizes that individuals who cannot safely evacuate should secure themselves in place—locking and barricading doors, remaining out of view, silencing electronic devices, and avoiding movement until directed otherwise.* A central element of shelter-in-place orders is that they should be clear, concise, and directive, providing individuals with specific, actionable instructions to secure themselves and minimize risk.†

In this incident, Providence (and Brown University) adhered to these principles by issuing shelter-in-place directives that provided concise, actionable instructions to those at risk, including guidance to lock doors, silence electronic devices, and remain hidden until further notice.‡ Reporting shows that these directives were widely followed, with individuals barricading doors, remaining in place, and waiting for further instructions as law enforcement worked to locate the suspect. However, Providence officials learned of Brown University's shelter-in-place directive through media reports rather than through formal coordination, highlighting an opportunity to strengthen real-time information sharing and the alignment of protective actions across agencies.

One of the most critical considerations in shelter-in-place protocols is determining when to lift the order. Prematurely ending a shelter directive could expose people to ongoing threats, while maintaining it longer than necessary can create uncertainty and operational challenges.

Here, the Brown and Providence orders remained in effect for several hours while law enforcement searched for the suspect and cleared buildings across campus and in the surrounding area.§ Authorities lifted the order only after the situation had stabilized and there were no indications that the threat remained, reflecting a cautious, risk-informed approach.

* FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency), *Shelter in Place Pictogram Guidance* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2022), <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/plan/evacuation-shelter-in-place>.

† *Shelter in Place: When, Where, Why?* (Washington, DC: ReadyDC, n.d.), <https://ready.dc.gov/pages/resources-en>.

‡ Alexandra Fine, Ivan Pereira, and Luke Barr, "Brown University Shooting: Police Release Video of 'Person of Interest' as Manhunt Continues," ABC News, last modified December 14, 2025, <https://abcnews.com/US/brown-university-active-shooter-reported-campus/story?id=128379676>.

§ Fine, Pereira, and Barr, "Brown University Shooting."

CONCLUSION

In the wake of the mass casualty incident at Brown University, the City of Providence commissioned an independent evaluation of its response across municipal entities. PERF's review examined both the investigative efforts that led to the suspect's identification and location and the broader multi-agency operational response.

The investigation and operational response together demonstrated a disciplined and effective approach to managing a complex and evolving incident, including the use of technology, interagency coordination, and federal resources. The response reflected a city that works—and works well together—with agencies aligning quickly, sharing information, and operating with a unified sense of purpose.

Our assessment identified cross-cutting, system-level themes affecting both investigative and operational functions, reflecting opportunities to further strengthen coordination, communication, and preparedness for future complex incidents. **These findings do not reflect failures of individual agencies but rather the inherent challenges of managing a rapidly evolving, large-scale, multi-agency response involving local, state, and federal partners under significant time pressure and uncertainty.** The recommendations outlined in this report are therefore intended to build upon existing strengths by formalizing structures, clarifying roles, and enhancing interoperability across the City's public safety system.

It is important to underscore that the City of Providence's response to the mass shooting was highly effective across all levels of government. From the Mayor's Office to individual responders in the field, personnel demonstrated professionalism, adaptability, and a clear commitment to protecting life and safety under extraordinarily difficult conditions. This response was further characterized by notable bravery and selflessness, as first responders and supporting personnel worked in dynamic, uncertain circumstances, all the while prioritizing the safety and well-being

of others. Critical functions—including the rapid law enforcement response, life-saving medical care, communications management, investigative coordination, public messaging, and family reunification—were carried out with skill and dedication.

The performance observed throughout this incident reflects the strong capability of Providence's public safety system. The opportunities identified in this report are not intended to correct deficiencies but to further enhance an already highly effective system by ensuring that future responses benefit from even greater alignment, clarity, and coordination across agencies. In this respect, Providence is well positioned not only to build on its performance in this incident but to serve as a model for other jurisdictions seeking to strengthen their preparedness for complex, high-consequence events.

APPENDIX. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendation 1.** Providence should maintain its LPR systems, while ensuring continued compliance with General Order 350.05's validation, audit, and accountability requirements.
- Recommendation 2.** Providence should continue to develop and integrate its RTCC, including strengthening partnerships with key institutions and enhancing real-time access to critical data sources, most importantly camera systems. This effort should also ensure dedicated RTCC liaison representation—including participation by Brown University personnel when appropriate—and the full sharing of available technologies during time-sensitive investigations.
- Recommendation 3.** Providence should continue to engage federal partners early in complex investigations while establishing clear communication protocols and operational expectations to ensure effective coordination and minimize miscommunication in multi-agency environments. As part of these efforts, PPD should work with federal agencies to conduct structured post-incident discussions to review coordination challenges, clarify expectations, and identify opportunities to strengthen future joint operations.
- Recommendation 4.** Providence should establish scalable, pre-planned systems for tip intake and management that can be rapidly activated during major incidents while ensuring seamless integration with federal partners to support coordinated, multi-agency information sharing and analysis.
- Recommendation 5.** Providence should prioritize establishing a structured investigative framework for major incidents, including clearly defined roles, centralized coordination, and organized tasking of personnel and resources.

- Recommendation 6.** The PPD, in coordination with regional law enforcement partners, should continue to develop, formalize, and implement a standardized mutual aid management framework that establishes protocols for staging, personnel accountability, and real-time resource assignment. This framework should be shared regionally and reinforced through joint training and exercises to ensure that responding agencies are familiar with reporting expectations, communications procedures, and operational roles prior to future large-scale incidents.
- Recommendation 7.** Consistent with improvements the PTD has already initiated, the PPD, Brown DPS, and other regional partners should continue to institutionalize and reinforce interoperable communications protocols as part of a shared, multi-agency framework to ensure consistent understanding and operational use across responding agencies. This framework should establish clear expectations for channel use, coordination procedures, and agency responsibilities and should be reinforced through regular joint training and regional exercises to ensure consistent understanding and seamless integration during future critical incidents.
- Recommendation 8.** PPD should reinforce the early establishment of formal ICS structures during critical incidents. This pattern should include prompt designation of command roles, early development of a command organization appropriate to the incident's complexity, and the use of standardized coordination and documentation practices. These elements should be emphasized through training and exercises to ensure consistent application during the initial phases of future multi-agency response.

Recommendation 9. PPD, in coordination with PEMA, Brown DPS, other local institutions of higher education, and other municipal stakeholders, should formalize and institutionalize a citywide pre-incident coordination framework for campus-related critical incidents. This framework should establish shared operational expectations and protocols across agencies and be reinforced through regularly scheduled multi-agency training and exercises that include operational, tactical, and command-level components. These exercises should emphasize interoperable communications, unified command, coordinated response procedures, and leadership decision-making under realistic conditions to ensure consistent and effective integration during future incidents.

Recommendation 10. Building on findings identified in PFD's AAR, the City of Providence should enhance cross-agency protocols to improve coordination and early-stage visibility into patient movement and hospital destinations. These protocols should be designed to operate alongside rapid, decentralized patient transport—including law enforcement-led transport when necessary—rather than constrain it.

Efforts should emphasize real-time information sharing among fire/EMS, law enforcement, and receiving hospitals, including early designation of responsibility for patient tracking, use of common reporting mechanisms, and integration of transport information into a shared operational picture.

This approach aligns with broader interoperability and incident command improvements outlined in recommendation 7 and recommendation 8 concerning the PPD.

- Recommendation 11.** PFD should continue coordinating with PPD to strengthen joint operational protocols and training for active threat incidents, with a focus on the integration of fire and EMS personnel into law enforcement–led environments. These efforts should emphasize coordinating entry into secured areas, optimizing shared situational awareness, and clearly defining roles and responsibilities to support the safe and effective delivery of medical care in dynamic conditions.
- Recommendation 12.** PFD (and PPD) should further strengthen protocols for cross-agency patient tracking and accountability during mass-casualty incidents, particularly for patients transported outside standard EMS channels, including early designation of responsibility for tracking patient movement, confirming hospital destinations in real time, and integrating with regional health care partners. These efforts should support rapid patient transport while enhancing real-time visibility into patient location and hospital destinations, improving system-wide accountability during the initial phase of future responses.
- Recommendation 13.** PTD should continue to institutionalize and ensure the consistent operational use of interoperable communications protocols for multi-agency incidents. These efforts should focus on ensuring that standardized channel alignment, preconfigured patching procedures, and integration protocols are consistently understood and operationalized by both dispatch personnel and field responders across all responding agencies. These efforts should be reinforced through regular interagency training and exercises designed to ensure that these protocols are applied consistently and effectively during the initial stages of future incidents.

- Recommendation 14.** PTD should continue to refine its approach to managing communications during large-scale incidents, with a focus on both radio channel management and information flow. These efforts should include predefined channel assignments, traffic segmentation strategies, and structured approaches for prioritizing and synthesizing high-volume information. In addition, enhanced dispatcher support roles and coordination with command staff should be further developed to ensure that critical information is effectively communicated and operationally actionable across all responding agencies.
- Recommendation 15.** PTD should continue to strengthen and formalize surge-capacity planning for high-volume incidents, including scalable call-taking protocols, prioritization frameworks, and staffing strategies to maintain performance amid sustained increases in demand. These efforts should ensure the system can expand operational capacity while maintaining clarity, accuracy, and coordination.
- Recommendation 16.** PTD, in coordination with PEMA and other partner agencies, should continue to strengthen and align multi-agency protocols for large-scale incident notification and information sharing. These efforts should focus on clarifying roles and responsibilities, establishing shared expectations for notification triggers, and reinforcing consistent communication pathways to support timely and coordinated information flow during the earliest stages of an incident.
- Recommendation 17.** The City of Providence should continue to strengthen the integration of PEMA into multi-agency incident response frameworks, particularly during the early stages of large-scale incidents. These efforts should

include clarifying PEMA's role in initial incident command and coordination structures; reinforcing expectations for notification and engagement; and expanding joint planning, training, and exercises with law enforcement, fire, and telecommunications partners. These improvements should be validated and refined through tabletop exercises to ensure readiness and effective coordination among all stakeholders.

Beyond integrating into incident command, PEMA is also positioned to help lead a citywide effort to modernize how Providence approaches emergency notification.

Recommendation 18. PEMA, in coordination with PPD, PFD, PTD, and City leadership, should develop a structured, multi-layered emergency notification framework to support decision-making during active-threat incidents. This framework should do the following:

- Define clear criteria for when to use broad, non-opt-in alerting tools such as WEA versus more targeted or lower-disruption communication methods, based on the nature, location, and operational dynamics of the incident.
- Incorporate a tiered notification approach that allows for phased messaging, including initial protective alerts, follow-on updates, and expanded public information as situational awareness improves.
- Identify and integrate multiple communication pathways—including WEA, locally managed notification systems, institutional alert platforms, and public messaging channels—to ensure both broad reach and targeted communication capabilities.

- Address current limitations associated with opt-in systems by establishing strategies to maximize reach during time-sensitive incidents, including the use of non-opt-in technologies and pre-established data-sharing or coordination agreements where appropriate.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities for notification decisions, including how information is shared among operational and executive leadership to support timely and coordinated communication.
- Incorporate these protocols into training and exercises to ensure that notification decisions can be made rapidly and consistently under real-world conditions.

