

SUDDEN VIOLENCE

Surviving an Active Shooter

Office of Homeland Security

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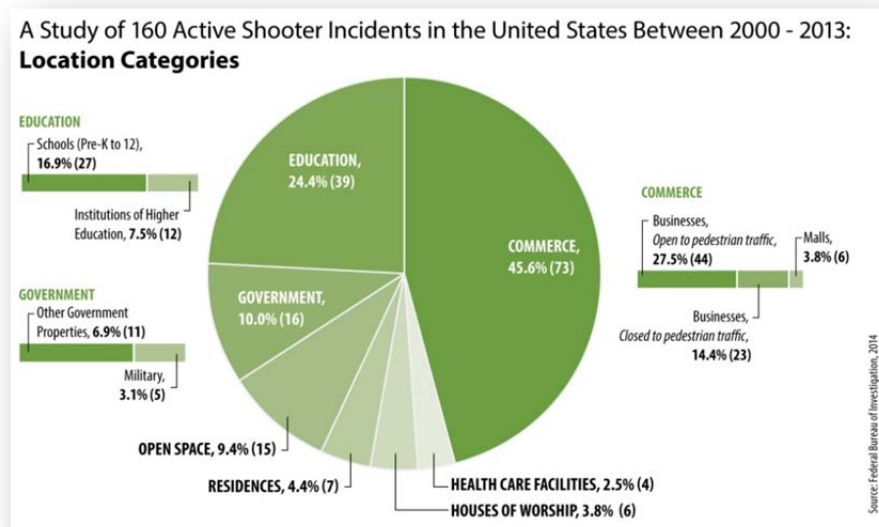
Studies have also shown us that the number of Active Shooter attacks in this country has been increasing.¹ This trend indicates the need for the public to be alert and prepared. While the average attack may last only minutes, you will very likely have to make split second decisions critical to your survival.

According to the United States Department of Homeland Security,

“An Active Shooter is an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area; in most cases, active shooters use firearms(s) and there is no pattern or method to their selection of victims.”

These acts of violence have occurred in schools, shopping malls, office buildings, and other public locations. No place appears to be immune. According to a recent Federal Bureau of Investigation report places of commerce have the highest likelihood of this type of attack.

Keep in mind that most Active Shooters typically will make no demands. Their goal is simply to harm as many people as possible and while there is no profile for who might become a violent offender, their reasons for why they commit their crimes may vary. To that end, they are most likely going to be heavily armed and committed to their goal.



¹ Years 2000-2006 the annual average number of incidents was 6.4. During the years 2007-2013 the annual average increased to 16.4. Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation. (September 16, 2013). A Study of Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Between 2000 and 2013.

Warning Signs of Workplace Violence

Most people think of violence in terms of a physical attack. However, workplace violence can occur in a much broader scope. It can include direct and implied threats, harassment, intimidation, physical assaults, and even murder. Workplace violence affects and can involve not only employees; but clients, customers, and visitors.

Workplace violence may start as a small incident involving inappropriate remarks and behavior. It may escalate to physical or psychological violence. It is extremely important to understand that the following behaviors do not mean a person will necessarily become violent, but they may indicate that the person is experiencing high levels of stress and may be having difficulty managing it.

Warning signs may include:

- Openly stating their intention to hurt someone else (these statements can be verbal or written).
- Making inappropriate statements.
- Holding personal grudges against others. Verbalizing their desire that something negative will happen to the person against whom he or she has the grudge.
- Excessive or compulsive behavior (e.g. phone calls, gift giving).
- Showing a lack of concern for the safety or well-being of others.
- Preoccupation or fascination with violence and/or dangerous weapons.
- Disrespect or hostility toward authority.
- Argumentative or uncooperative behavior.
- Outbursts of anger or rage with little or no provocation.
- Impulsive or easily frustrated.
- Handling criticism poorly or they cannot take criticism.
- Suspicious of others, believing that others are *'out to get them'*.
- Blaming others for their problems or mistakes. Insistence that he or she is always right.
- Forgetfulness, confusion and/or distraction.
- Marked decline in work performance. Refusal to acknowledge job performance problems.

- Misinterpretation of communications from supervisors or co-workers.
- Feeling victimized. Complaints of unfair personal treatment.
- Talking about the same problems repeatedly without resolving them.
- Believing that they are entitled to something.

Other warning signs may also include:

- Marked changes in mood or behavior
- Extreme or bizarre behavior. Crying, sulking or even having temper tantrums.
- Swearing or emotional language.
- Irrational beliefs and ideas.
- Appears depressed or expresses hopelessness or heightened anxiety.
- Personal hygiene is poor or ignored.
- Excessive absenteeism or lateness.
- Low self-esteem.
- Demonstrates a drastic change in belief systems.
- Socially isolated.

Sometimes it is not what a person says, but it is their "non-verbal" signs or their body language, that might indicate that a person may become violent. These signs may include:

- Flushed or pale face.
- Sweating.
- Pacing, restless, or repetitive movements.
- Signs of extreme fatigue.
- Trembling or shaking.
- Clenched jaws or fists.
- Exaggerated or violent gestures.
- Change in voice, such as the tone.
- Loud talking or chanting.
- Shallow, rapid breathing.

- Scowling, sneering, or use of abusive language.
- Glaring or avoiding eye contact.
- Violating your personal space (they get too close).

Always take particular attention if:

- The frequency and intensity of the behaviors are increasing and/or becoming disruptive.
- The person is exhibiting many of these behaviors, rather than just a few.

Because each situation is unique - behaviors must be taken in context with the situation. However, if you are concerned about another person's behavior, report those concerns to a supervisor, human resources department, or law enforcement.

Sources:

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. 2014.

United States Department of Homeland Security. 2014.

United States Department of Labor. 2014.

Responding to an Active Shooter

Quickly determine the most reasonable way to protect yourself. Realize others may look to you for what to do during an active shooter event. There are three things you can do that will make a difference.

1. EVACUATE

2. HIDE

3. TAKE ACTION

➤ Evacuate

- Have an escape plan in mind ahead of time.
- Leave your belongings behind.
- Keep your hand visible.

➤ Hide

- Move to a safe location out of the shooter's view.
- Lock doors and create a physical barrier to block entry to your location.

➤ Take Action

- As a LAST RESORT and only if your life is in danger.
- Attempt to stop or incapacitate the active shooter.
- Act as physically aggressive as possible and commit to stopping the shooter.

CALL 911 WHEN IT IS SAFE TO DO SO.

Information that you should provide to law enforcement includes:

- Location or last known location of the active shooter(s).
- Number of shooters.
- Physical description of the shooter(s).
- Number and type of weapons held by the shooter(s).
- Number of potential victims at the location.

What to Expect When Help Arrives

When law enforcement and other first responders arrive, keep in mind that the scene will most likely be very chaotic. The police will be trying to assess and control a very stressful situation.

The law enforcement priority is to stop the attack. They will be reacting to your actions and making split second decisions. It is important that you respond to any officers that you encounter appropriately. They will not know who you are and they may assume that you are a possible threat until they can determine that you are not.

- Keep your hands visible. Drop anything that you may be carrying.
- Do not make any sudden movements.
- Do not wave frantically.
- Do not point things at them, such as cell phones or any improvised weapons you may have picked up along the way.
- Provide any information that you may have as to who or where the shooter(s) is.

You can expect to see police officers who may or may not be wearing a uniform – however, even plainclothes police officers will most likely have on some kind of law enforcement identifier, such as a police badge or patch. Law enforcement officers will be armed, they will issue you commands, they may even physically restrain you, or they may bypass you. Follow their instructions implicitly, regardless of whether these instructions make sense or violate a company policy or procedure.

Because the police are trained to stop the attack, the first officers will likely bypass any persons injured, escaping, or hiding. Once the shooter had been stopped, they will provide medical assistance and begin evacuation. You may be asked to assist. If you are willing and able, let them know and follow their instructions.

Example Active Shooter Response Policy

Emergency response planning should address a broad range of hazards and threats. The following is an example of an ‘Active Shooter Response Policy’. While it outlines best practices for this specific threat, it cannot address all of the possible situations or circumstances that an organization could encounter. All emergency

response policies should be tailored to the specific organization and facility that it is intended for.

Example Policy

In the event of a violent intruder incident, if it is reasonably safe to do so, employees should evacuate the facility immediately to avoid the offender. Once safely evacuated, employees should treat any injuries (as applicable) and call 9-1-1 to report the incident.

If it is not reasonably safe to evacuate the facility, employees should lock themselves in the nearest room and barricade the door in order to lock out and prevent the offender from gaining access. Under no circumstances should employees leave this safe location or allow entry to outside persons until law enforcement or other competent authority indicates that the situation has been resolved and it is safe to come out. Once inside the safe location, personnel should treat any injuries (as applicable) and call 9-1-1 to report the incident.

Preferred safe locations have solid doors which can be locked from the inside, have no interior windows, are equipped with communication devices (i.e. radios, telephones), and have emergency medical equipment inside.

In the event that employees are not able to evacuate the facility or get to a safe location and if their life is in imminent danger, *AS A LAST RESORT ONLY*, employees should take physical action against the offender to defend themselves during the interim before law enforcement can resolve the situation.

Once law enforcement arrives, obey all of their commands. This may involve being detained by law enforcement. This is done for safety reasons and once circumstances are evaluated by the police, they will give you further directions to follow.

Post incident, it is recommended that employees undergo counseling to assist them with recovery from the psychological impact of the incident.

WHAT IS AN

ACTIVE SHOOTER

An active shooter is an individual actively engaged in the killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area, typically through the use of firearms.

RESPONDING TO AN

ACTIVE SHOOTER

- The event is unpredictable and evolves quickly.
- Be aware of your surroundings and any possible dangers.
- Take note of the two nearest exits in any facility you visit.
- If you are in an office, stay there and secure the door.
- Attempt to take the active shooter down as a LAST RESORT.

HOW TO RESPOND

1. EVACUATE

- Have an escape route and plan in mind.
- Leave your belongings behind.
- Keep your hands visible.

2. HIDE OUT

- Hide in an area out of the shooter's view.
- Block entry to your hiding place and lock the doors.
- Silence your cell phone and/or pager.

3. TAKE ACTION

- As a LAST RESORT and only if your life is in imminent danger.
- Attempt to incapacitate the shooter.
- Act with physical aggression.

WHEN LAW ENFORCEMENT ARRIVES

- Remain calm and follow instructions, put down any items in your hands, and raise hands and spread fingers.
- Avoid quick movements toward officers, such as holding onto them for safety.
- Avoid pointing, screaming, or yelling.
- Do not stop to ask officers for help or directions when evacuating.

INFORMATION

YOU SHOULD PROVIDE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT OR 911 OPERATOR

- Location of the shooters.
- Number of shooters.
- Physical description of shooters.
- Number and type of weapons held by the shooters.
- Number of potential victims at the location.