U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Washington, DC 20528

cfsteam@hq.dhs.gov

www.dhs.gov

ACTIVE SHOOTER
HOW TO RESPOND

October 2008

References

Safety Guidelines for Armed Subjects, Active Shooter Situations, Indiana University Police Department, April 2007.

Safety Tips & Guidelines Regarding Potential "Active Shooter" Incidents Occurring on Campus, University of California Police.

Shots Fired, When Lightning Strikes (DVD), Center for Personal Protection and Safety, 2007.

Workplace Violence Desk Reference, Security Management Group International, www.SMGICorp.com

How to Plan for Workplace Emergencies and Evacuations, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Health and Safety Administration, OSHA 3088, 2001.

MANAGING THE CONSEQUENCES OF AN ACTIVE SHOOTER SITUATION

After the active shooter has been incapacitated and is no longer a threat, human resources and/or management should engage in post-event assessments and activities, including:

- An accounting of all individuals at a designated assembly point to determine who, if anyone, is missing and potentially injured
- Determining a method for notifying families of individuals affected by the active shooter, including notification of any casualties
- Assessing the psychological state of individuals at the scene, and referring them to health care specialists accordingly
- Identifying and filling any critical personnel or operational gaps left in the organization as a result of the active shooter

LESSONS LEARNED

To facilitate effective planning for future emergencies, it is important to analyze the recent active shooter situation and create an after action report. The analysis and reporting contained in this report is useful for:

- Serving as documentation for response activities
- Identifying successes and failures that occurred during the event
- Providing an analysis of the effectiveness of the existing EAP
- Describing and defining a plan for making improvements to the EAP

Emergency Numbers

Emergency Services: 9 -1 -1

Local Emergency Information Line: _____

Local Police Department: _____

Local Fire Department: _____

Local Hospital: _____

Local FBI Field Office: _____

Facility Security: _____

Facility Address: _____

_____

_____

_____

Floor: _____ Suite/Room: _____

Office #: _____ Ext. _____

Indicators of Potential Violence by an Employee

Employees typically do not just "snap," but display indicators of potentially violent behavior over time. If these behaviors are recognized, they can often be managed and treated. Potentially violent behaviors by an employee may include one or more of the following (this list of behaviors is not comprehensive, nor is it intended as a mechanism for diagnosing violent tendencies):

- Increased use of alcohol and/or illegal drugs
- Unexplained increase in absenteeism; vague physical complaints
- Noticeable decrease in attention to appearance and hygiene
- Depression / withdrawal
- Resistance and overreaction to changes in policy and procedures
- Repeated violations of company policies
- Increased severe mood swings
- Noticeably unstable, emotional responses
- Explosive outbursts of anger or rage without provocation
- Suicidal; comments about "putting things in order"
- Behavior which is suspect of paranoia, ("everybody is against me")
- Increasingly talks of problems at home
- Escalation of domestic problems into the workplace; talk of severe financial problems
- Talk of previous incidents of violence
- Empathy with individuals committing violence
- Increase in unsolicited comments about firearms, other dangerous weapons and violent crimes

RECOGNIZING POTENTIAL WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

An active shooter in your workplace may be a current or former employee, or an acquaintance of a current or former employee. Intuitive managers and coworkers may notice characteristics of potentially violent behavior in an employee. Alert your Human Resources Department if you believe an employee or coworker exhibits potentially violent behavior.

Table of Contents

This pamphlet provides guidance to individuals, including managers and employees, who may be caught in an active shooter situation, and discusses how to react when law enforcement responds.

7 Profile Of An Active Shooter
Good Practices For Coping With An Active Shooter

8 How To Respond When An Active Shooter Is In Your Vicinity

10 How To Respond When Law Enforcement Arrives On The Scene

12 Training Your Staff For An Active Shooter Situation

14 Preparing For And Managing An Active Shooter Situation
Human Resource And Facility Manager Responsibility

16 Recognizing Potential Workplace Violence

18 Managing The Consequences Of An Active Shooter Situation
Lessons Learned

19 References

Reactions of Managers During an Active Shooter Situation

Employees and customers are likely to follow the lead of managers during an emergency situation. During an emergency, managers should be familiar with their EAP, and be prepared to:

- Take immediate action
- Remain calm
- Lock and barricade doors
- Evacuate staff and customers via a preplanned evacuation route to a safe area

Assisting Individuals with Special Needs and/or Disabilities

- Ensure that EAPs, evacuation instructions and any other relevant information address to individuals with special needs and/or disabilities
- Your building should be handicap-accessible, in compliance with ADA requirements.

PREPARING FOR AND MANAGING AN ACTIVE SHOOTER SITUATION

Your human resources department and facility managers should engage in planning for emergency situations, including an active shooter scenario. Planning for emergency situations will help to mitigate the likelihood of an incident by establishing the mechanisms described below.

Human Resources' Responsibilities

- Conduct effective employee screening and background checks
- Create a system for reporting signs of potentially violent behavior
- Make counseling services available to employees
- Develop an EAP which includes policies and procedures for dealing with an active shooter situation, as well as after action planning

Facility Manager Responsibilities

- Institute access controls (i.e., keys, security system pass codes)
- Distribute critical items to appropriate managers / employees, including:
  - Floor plans
  - Keys
  - Facility personnel lists and telephone numbers
- Coordinate with the facility's security department to ensure the physical security of the location
- Assemble crisis kits containing:
  - radios
  - floor plans
  - staff roster, and staff emergency contact numbers
  - first aid kits
  - flashlights
- Place removable floor plans near entrances and exits for emergency responders
- Activate the emergency notification system when an emergency situation occurs

PROFILE OF AN ACTIVE SHOOTER

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.

Active shooter situations are unpredictable and evolve quickly. Typically, the immediate deployment of law enforcement is required to stop the shooting and mitigate harm to victims.

Because active shooter situations are often over within 10 to 15 minutes, before law enforcement arrives on the scene, individuals must be prepared both mentally and physically to deal with an active shooter situation.

Good practices for coping with an active shooter situation

- Be aware of your environment 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
- If you are in a hallway, get into a room and secure the door
- As a last resort, attempt to take the active shooter down. When the shooter is at close range and you cannot flee, your chance of survival is much greater if you try to incapacitate him/her.

CALL 911
WHEN IT IS SAFE TO DO SO!

HOW TO RESPOND WHEN AN ACTIVE SHOOTER IS IN YOUR VICINITY

Quickly determine the most reasonable way to protect your own life. Remember that customers and clients are likely to follow the lead of employees and managers during an active shooter situation.

1. Evacuate

If there is an accessible escape path, attempt to evacuate the premises. Be sure to:

- Have an escape route and plan in mind
- Evacuate regardless of whether others agree to follow
- Leave your belongings behind
- Help others escape, if possible
- Prevent individuals from entering an area where the active shooter may be
- Keep your hands visible
- Follow the instructions of any police officers
- Do not attempt to move wounded people
- Call 911 when you are safe

2. Hide out

If evacuation is not possible, find a place to hide where the active shooter is less likely to find you.

Your hiding place should:

- Be out of the active shooter's view
- Provide protection if shots are fired in your direction (i.e., an office with a closed and locked door)
- Not trap you or restrict your options for movement

To prevent an active shooter from entering your hiding place:

- Lock the door
- Blockade the door with heavy furniture

Additional Ways to Prepare For and Prevent an Active Shooter Situation

- Preparedness
  - Ensure that your facility has at least two evacuation routes
  - Post evacuation routes in conspicuous locations throughout your facility
  - Include local law enforcement and first responders during training exercises
  - Encourage law enforcement, emergency responders, SWAT teams, K-9 teams, and bomb squads to train for an active shooter scenario at your location

- Prevention
  - Foster a respectful workplace
  - Be aware of indications of workplace violence and take remedial actions accordingly

For more information on creating an EAP contact the U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Health and Safety Administration, www.osha.gov.

TRAINING YOUR STAFF FOR AN ACTIVE SHOOTER SITUATION

To best prepare your staff for an active shooter situation, create an Emergency Action Plan (EAP), and conduct training exercises. Together, the EAP and training exercises will prepare your staff to effectively respond and help minimize loss of life.

Components of an Emergency Action Plan (EAP)

Create the EAP with input from several stakeholders including your human resources department, your training department (if one exists), facility owners / operators, your property manager, and local law enforcement and/or emergency responders. An effective EAP includes:

- A preferred method for reporting fires and other emergencies
- An evacuation policy and procedure
- Emergency escape procedures and route assignments (i.e., floor plans, safe areas)
- Contact information for, and responsibilities of individuals to be contacted under the EAP
- Information concerning local area hospitals (i.e., name, telephone number, and distance from your location)
- An emergency notification system to alert various parties of an emergency including:
  - Individuals at remote locations within premises
  - Local law enforcement
  - Local area hospitals

Components of Training Exercises

The most effective way to train your staff to respond to an active shooter situation is to conduct mock active shooter training exercises. Local law enforcement is an excellent resource in designing training exercises.

- Recognizing the sound of gunshots
- Reacting quickly when gunshots are heard and/or when a shooting is witnessed:
  - Evacuating the area
  - Hiding out
  - Acting against the shooter as a last resort
- Calling 911
- Reacting when law enforcement arrives
- Adopting the survival mind set during times of crisis

If the active shooter is nearby:

- Lock the door
- Silence your cell phone and/or pager
- Turn off any source of noise (i.e., radios, televisions)
- Hide behind large items (i.e., cabinets, desks)
- Remain quiet

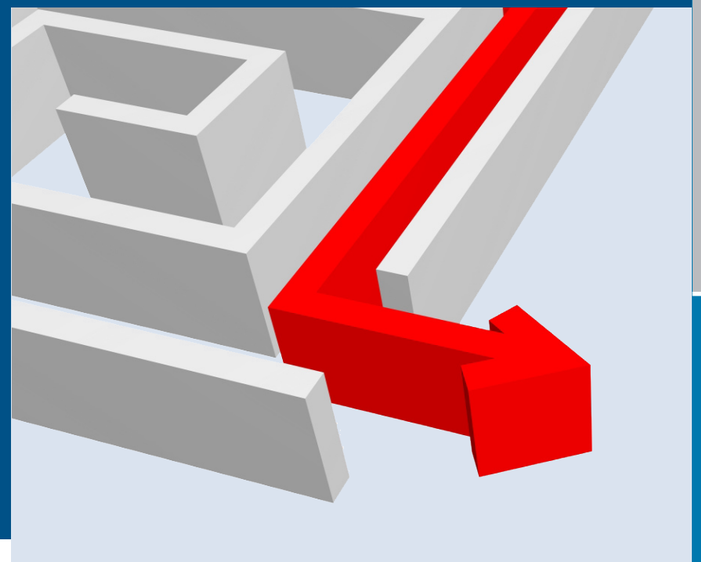
If evacuation and hiding out are not possible:

- Remain calm
- Dial 911, if possible, to alert police to the active shooter's location
- If you cannot speak, leave the line open and allow the dispatcher to listen

3. Take action against the active shooter

As a last resort, and only when your life is in imminent danger, attempt to disrupt and/or incapacitate the active shooter by:

- Acting as aggressively as possible against him/her
- Throwing items and improvising weapons
- Yelling
- Committing to your actions



HOW TO RESPOND WHEN LAW ENFORCEMENT ARRIVES

Law enforcement's purpose is to stop the active shooter as soon as possible. Officers will proceed directly to the area in which the last shots were heard.

- Officers usually arrive in teams of four (4)
- Officers may wear regular patrol uniforms or external bulletproof vests, Kevlar helmets, and other tactical equipment
- Officers may be armed with rifles, shotguns, handguns
- Officers may use pepper spray or tear gas to control the situation
- Officers may shout commands, and may push individuals to the ground for their safety

How to react when law enforcement arrives:

- Remain calm, and follow officers' instructions
- Put down any items in your hands (i.e., bags, jackets)
- Immediately raise hands and spread fingers
- Keep hands visible at all times
- Avoid making quick movements toward officers such as attempting to hold on to them for safety
- Avoid pointing, screaming and/or yelling
- Do not stop to ask officers for help or direction when evacuating, just proceed in the direction from which officers are entering the premises

Information to provide to law enforcement or 911 operator:

- Location of the active shooter
- Number of shooters, if more than one
- Physical description of shooter/s
- Number and type of weapons held by the shooter/s
- Number of potential victims at the location

The first officers to arrive to the scene will not stop to help injured persons. Expect rescue teams comprised of additional officers and emergency medical personnel to follow the initial officers. These rescue teams will treat and remove any injured persons. They may also call upon able-bodied individuals to assist in removing the wounded from the premises.

Once you have reached a safe location or an assembly point, you will likely be held in that area by law enforcement until the situation is under control, and all witnesses have been identified and questioned. Do not leave the safe location or assembly point until law enforcement authorities have instructed you to do so.