

Disaster | *Tip sheet*

Planning For and Surviving an “Active Shooter” Incident

Profile of an Active Shooter

The Department of Homeland Security defines an Active Shooter as “an individual who is actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area.” Usually there is no pattern or method to their selection of victims. Active shooter situations evolve quickly. Typically, the immediate deployment of law enforcement is required to stop the shooting and mitigate harm to victims. Since active shooter situations are often over within 10 to 15 minutes, law enforcement arrives on the scene afterwards. Individuals must be prepared both mentally and physically to deal with an active shooter situation.

How to Respond When an Active Shooter Is in Your Vicinity

Quickly determine the most reasonable way to protect your own life.

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 onsite
- Do not attempt to move wounded people
- Call 911 when you are safe

Shelter in Place. If evacuation is not possible, find a place to hide where the active shooter is less likely to find you. Be sure to:

- Be out of the active shooter’s view
- Remain as silent as possible
- Close and lock the door to a room if you are inside; if you can’t lock the door, move a heavy piece of furniture in front of the door if possible
- Move away from any windows and remain out of sight (e.g., hide behind a cabinet or under a desk)
- Do not restrict your options for movement

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If Someone is Directly Threatening You or Others with a Gun, Knife or Other Weapon:

- Stay Calm
- Quietly signal for help (use a duress alarm or code words)
- Maintain eye contact
- Keep talking, but follow instructions from the person with the weapon
- Do not risk harm to yourself or others
- Never grab for the weapon
- Watch for a safe chance to escape to a safe area

Assisting Individuals with Special Needs and/or Disabilities

- Ensure that evacuation instructions address individuals with special needs and/or disabilities
- Your building should be handicap-accessible, in compliance with ADA requirements

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

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Avoid making quick movements toward officers such as holding 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 until law enforcement authorities have instructed you to do so.

Resources

Active Shooter: How to Respond, Department of Homeland Security,
http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/active_shooter_booklet.pdf

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

Shots Fired, When Lightning Strikes (DVD), Center for Personal Protection and Safety, 2007.
Workplace Violence Desk Reference, Security Management Group International, www.SMGIcorp.com.

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

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

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