

Active Shootings in the Workplace: Prevention and Survival

Support Materials



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For EV

Transcript:

It seems like active shooter incidents are always in the news. Schools, workplaces, churches, retail stores ...no place is immune.

Although they're still a very small percentage of all workplace violence incidents, active shootings are so devastating that it's critical to understand how to plan for and survive if a tragedy occurs.

An active shooter is an individual who is killing or attempting to kill people in a confined area with a firearm.

Active shooters in the workplace come from a variety of origins including current or ex-employees or their families; stalkers; customers, contractors or vendors; and even terrorists.

Active shooters can even target a workplace completely at random.

In the vast majority of incidents, the selection of victims is also random and without a particular method or pattern.

Active Shooter Profiles

There are warning signs that signify people who may be capable of becoming an active shooter.

The most common motives for active shootings are anger, revenge, ideology, and untreated mental illness.

Active shooters often have experienced a recent stressor such as a divorce, layoff, loss of employment, financial problems or death of a loved one.

They are generally men, loners, own several weapons and have an unhealthy and unusual infatuation with guns and violent incidents in the news.

Often, they will express sympathy for gunmen or justify the use of force.

They are prone to angry outbursts, rage, extreme mood swings, paranoia, suicidal thoughts and depression.

They have a tendency to hold grudges, use intimidation as a weapon and blame other people for their troubles.

They have been known to violate work policies and react with an unusual amount of anger when policies are changed.

They often have had a recent increase in absences and tardiness and the quality of their work performance has declined significantly.

In many cases, they have increasingly used drugs and alcohol and have a history of domestic abuse, threats, assaults and other violence.

Often times, they have engaged in toxic behaviors such as bullying, harassment, verbal abuse and intimidation.

They are prone to extreme overreactions to criticism and are usually unable to accept responsibility for even the smallest mistakes.

They may even make direct or thinly-veiled threats such as “They’re going to be sorry that they tried to push me around.”

Additionally, be watchful for threats and changes in behavior posted in social media. Frequently, at-risk employees will express rage, threats or plans via their accounts prior to a violent incident.

Reporting and Threat Assessments

Co-workers who display one or more of these behaviors are not necessarily on the verge of becoming an active shooter.

However, when these behaviors are different from the norm or have escalated and are accompanied with threats and violence, the behavior should be reported immediately.

Often getting a person help through counseling or medical treatment will avert a disaster.

Preparation

Workers who are caught in an active shooter situation cannot rely on the police to save them.

In most cases active shootings are over in less than 15 minutes...making it extremely difficult for officers to respond in time to save everyone.

If you find yourself in the middle of an incident it is imperative to have a plan. It may just save your life.

The plan recommended by Homeland Security, the FBI and law enforcement agencies around the world is really pretty simple.

Run. Hide. Fight.

However, enacting this plan under pressure requires preparation.

Start by examining the places where you spend the most time at work, such as your office, the warehouse or customer and vendor locations.

Memorize at least 2 evacuation routes and two hiding places at each location. The best hiding places provide cover from being seen and shelter from bullets while allowing you freedom to move quickly if needed.

Even when you’re in unfamiliar locations, you should make it a habit to quickly assess escape routes and hiding places.

By planning ahead you will be able to act immediately if you are ever caught in an active shooter incident.

When It's Real

Many people interviewed after a shooting say they didn't realize they were hearing gunfire.

They thought the sounds were the result of paper bags popping, cars backfiring or from other non-lethal sources.

However, unlike these other noises, gunfire in an active shooting will have a deliberate pattern. There will be pauses followed by rapid bursts as the shooter locates targets.

Follow Your Plan

The very second you realize that an active shooter incident has begun you must initiate your plan without hesitation. Freezing or panicking will get you killed quickly.

Do not beg, plead or try to reason with an active shooter. A person actively involved in a mass shooting is generally not capable of reason or empathy.

Option 1: Run

The first option in the plan is always **run**. Running is your best chance of survival.

If there is an escape path, run immediately and leave all of your belongings behind. Encourage others to run as well, but don't wait for them if they do not immediately respond.

Run as far away from the shooter as possible, take shelter and call 911. Then, protect others from entering the active shooting zone.

Options 2 & 3: Hide & Fight

While running is always the best option, sometimes there are situations where you cannot run.

For example: your escape path is blocked, you're handicapped, you're assisting a handicapped person or you have young children under your care.

In these scenarios, your best alternative is to enact option two – **hide**.

There are generally two situations people find themselves in when their escape is blocked. 1. The active shooter has entered their precise location...often this is a large area like a lobby, cafeteria or courtyard. Or 2, The active shooter has entered the facility and the only escape route is blocked.

Situation 1: Same Room or Location

If the active shooter enters a location such as a large room, cafeteria or lobby and is in a position that blocks your escape route, you must hide as quickly as possible.

If at any point the shooter turns his back to you or reloads and you see an escape route, run as fast as possible out of the area.

However, if escape is not possible, you must be prepared to fight. If you can find a heavy or sharp object to use as a weapon without being seen - grab it and get in position to protect yourself.

If the shooter finds your hiding place or it's inevitable that he will find it, you have only one option... **fight!**

There is strength in numbers. If you have people near you, attack at the same time. The shooter will not be able to stop all of you.

Situation 2: Separate Room or Location

If you are trapped in a separate area from the shooter such as an office, quietly shut the door and if it has a lock...lock it.

Next, silence your cell phone and any other noise making devices, such as televisions or radios. Then, while remaining as quiet as possible, barricade the door with large objects such as desks or tables. If the shooter is not close, call 911 as quickly and quietly as possible.

Lastly, find a heavy or sharp object you can protect yourself with and hide behind something large that covers and shields, but does not restrict your movement like a copy machine or desk.

Active shooters are generally looking for easy targets. If they cannot immediately access a room, they will probably move on. However, be prepared to protect yourself.

If it becomes inevitable that the shooter will enter the room, then you must be prepared to **fight!**

It's best to use the element of surprise and rush the shooter before he knows what's happening.

Stand just to the side of the door and strike the shooter as he enters the room. Strike from multiple angles, with multiple people if possible.

In all situations, fighting should only be a last resort when your life is in danger, but when you do fight, you must be completely committed and act with physical aggression.

You may not be a violent person by nature, but your actions may save your life and the lives of countless others.

First Responders

The first police officers who arrive on the scene are generally well trained SWAT officers in blue police uniforms or camouflage.

They are not there to tend to the wounded or for your emotional support. They are there to neutralize the shooter as quickly as possible.

When you encounter first responders, remain calm and keep your hands in the air. Do not run directly toward them, point, yell or physically touch them.

Remember, they have not yet identified the shooter so you must let them know that you are not a threat.

If you have information about where the shooter is, offer it to them, otherwise follow their commands immediately. Other first responders will arrive shortly to care for the wounded.

Prevention

While there is no perfect way to predict or prevent these incidents from happening there are things you can do to make your workplace or any location you enter safer.

Always make sure that exterior doors to facilities remain locked whenever practical and that secured doors are never left unlocked, propped open or held open for someone unfamiliar.

When shooters enter through the main entrance of a location, there's a better chance that they will be recognized as a threat by security or someone else.

Immediately report unfamiliar persons, suspicious behavior or co-workers who are in locations they're not authorized to be in to security.

Report any sighting of a weapon at your workplace or at customer, vendor or supplier locations immediately. Never assume that the person has a conceal carry permit or a reason to have the weapon.

In Conclusion

While it is uncomfortable to think about, surviving an active shooter event requires planning that will allow you to act quickly and effectively under the intense stress of the situation.

Watching for the warning signs of a potential active shooter is equally as important. You may stop a violent act before it even starts by identifying a troubled co-worker.

Your life and possibly the lives of your customers and co-workers may depend on it.

Employee Quiz

1. (T / F) In the vast majority of active shootings, the selection of victims is random and without a particular method or pattern.
2. (T / F) Active shooters are women 50% of the time.
3. (T / F) Active Shooters generally have perfect work performance.
4. (T / F) Active shooters often post warnings on social media.
5. Which of the following is the order of the plan recommended by Homeland Security, the FBI and law enforcement agencies around the world is really pretty simple.
 - a) Run, Hide, Fight
 - b) Fight, Hide, Run
 - c) Reason and empathy
6. (T / F) If you must hide from an active shooter, the recommended course of action is to find a heavy or sharp object you can protect yourself with and hide behind something large that covers and shields, but does not restrict your movement like a copy machine or desk.
7. (T / F) When you encounter swat team members, remain calm and keep your hands in the air and do not run directly toward them, point, yell or physically touch them.
8. (T / F) If you see a firearm in the workplace don't report it. It's very possible that the person has a concealed carry permit and reporting the firearm will violate the gunowners 2nd amendment rights.
9. (T / F) Only speak to SWAT team members if you have information about where the shooter is, otherwise stay silent and follow their commands immediately.
10. (T / F) When preparing for an active shooter emergency you should examine the places where you spend the most time at work, such as your office, the warehouse or customer and vendor locations and memorize at least 2 evacuation routes and 2 hiding places.

Employee Quiz Answer Key

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