



Course Summary

Active Shooter: What You Can Do

Course Overview

This course provides guidance to individuals, including managers and employees, so that they can prepare to respond to an active shooter situation.

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Describe actions to take when confronted with an active shooter and responding law enforcement officials.
- Recognize potential workplace violence indicators.
- Describe actions to take to prevent and prepare for potential active shooter incidents.
- Describe how to manage the consequences of an active shooter incident.

Not all recommendations provided here will be applicable at every facility. This course is intended to provide guidance to enhance facility-specific plans and procedures.

Active Shooter Incidents

Losing a loved one to a random act of violence is unthinkable. Unfortunately, recent events serve to remind us that we are not immune from these types of tragedies.

As we know, an active shooting event can occur at any time or any place. During the past several years, there have been active shooter incidents where we shop [2007 ... Gunman kills 5 and injures multiple others at a Utah mall], where we exercise our free speech [2011 ... Representative Gifford critically shot while meeting with constituents at a market – 6 people killed and 3 others injured], where we learn [1999 ... Columbine High School 12 students and 1 teacher killed; 2007 ... Virginia Tech 32 killed and many others wounded; 2008 Northern Illinois University 5 students killed on campus], and where we work [2005 ... Gunman opens fire at beer distributor, killing 8 people].

An active shooter is an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area. In most cases, there is no pattern or method to their selection of victims.

Most active shooter situations are unpredictable and evolve quickly. Because most incidents are over within minutes, we must be prepared to deal with the situation until law enforcement personnel arrive.

And, preparedness and awareness are the keys to helping protect our employees, our customers, and ourselves.

Understanding Active Shooter Incidents

- Active shooter incidents are becoming more frequent.
- All employees can help prevent and prepare for potential active shooter situations.
- Typically, there is no pattern in the selection of victims in an active shooter incident.
- Common motives include, anger, revenge, ideology, and untreated mental illness.

Active Shooter Profile

An **active shooter** is an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined space or other populated area. In most cases 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. Active shooters usually will continue to move throughout building or area until stopped by law enforcement, suicide, or other intervention.

Active Shooter Booklet

The information presented in this course is summarized in the booklet titled “Active Shooter: How To Respond,” published by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

The booklet provides guidance to individuals, including managers and employees, who become involved in an active shooter situation, and discusses how to react when law enforcement responds.

Preparedness

A lack of preparedness in responding effectively to an active shooter can have disastrous consequences.

For example, shooting occurred in one room of a warehouse. The police investigation found that there was only one way in and out. Because of a lack of a secondary evacuation route, the employees in that room were cornered by the active shooter.

Developing an Occupant Emergency Plan to address this could have helped prevent additional casualties in this case. An Occupant Emergency Plan addresses critical policies and procedures, for: reporting emergencies and evacuation of the premises.

In addition, the Occupant Emergency Plan specifies responsibilities and key contact information. And, the Occupant Emergency Plan should include an emergency notification system. In the event that evacuation is necessary, facilities should have at least two evacuation routes that are conspicuous and well-marked.

After the Occupant Emergency Plan is in place, staff should be trained in responding to active shooter situations, including the use of exercises that involve local law enforcement.

With an effective Occupant Emergency Plan and training, staff will be better prepared to respond to an active shooter incident and other emergencies.

Occupant Emergency Plan

To best prepare your employees for an active shooter situation, the first thing you should do is create an Occupant Emergency Plan.

Create the Occupant Emergency Plan 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.

The Occupant Emergency Plan will prepare your employees to respond effectively and help minimize loss of life.

Components of an Effective Occupant Emergency Plan

An effective Occupant Emergency Plan 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 Occupant Emergency Plan.
- 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.

Training Exercises

Another important aspect of preparedness is training. The most effective way to train your employees to respond to an active shooter situation is to conduct mock active shooter training exercises. Local law enforcement organizations are an excellent resource in designing training exercises.

Employees should be trained in:

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

Meeting Everyone's Needs

In addition to developing an Occupant Emergency Plan and conducting training, you should:

- Ensure that plans, evacuation instructions, and any other relevant information include provisions for individuals with special needs and/or disabilities.
- Ensure that your building is accessible for individuals with disabilities, in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.

Facility Managers' Responsibilities

Facility managers should:

- Institute access controls (e.g., keys, security system pass codes).
- Distribute critical items to appropriate managers/employees, including:
 - Floor plans.
 - Keys and other access-control measures.
 - Facility personnel lists and telephone numbers.
 - Daily schedule.
- Assemble crisis kits containing:
 - Radios.
 - Floor plans.
 - Employee roster and emergency contact numbers.
 - First aid kits.
 - Flashlights.
- Activate the emergency notification system when an emergency situation occurs.
- Ensure that the facility has at least two evacuation routes.

- Coordinate with the facility's security department to ensure the physical security of the location.
- Post evacuation routes in conspicuous locations throughout the facility.
- Place removable floor plans near entrances and exits for emergency responders.
- Include local law enforcement and first responders during training exercises.
- Encourage law enforcement, emergency responders, SWAT teams, canine teams, and bomb squads to train for an active shooter scenario at their location.
- Foster a respectful workplace.
- Be aware of indications of workplace violence and take remedial actions accordingly.

Prevention

Current or former employees typically do not become violent unexpectedly. Instead, they display indicators of potentially violent behavior over time.

For example, days before the office shooting at a software company, the shooter angrily confronted management over personal financial issues. One member of payroll told her family that his behavior frightened her. A few days later, the shooter then asked two of his coworkers to sign his will.

The shooter at the warehouse incident was fired six months earlier for poor performance. It was reported that he showed up late or missed entire days and was argumentative.

Explosive outbursts of anger, talk of financial problems, and repeated violations of company policies are just some indicators of potentially violent behavior. In order to help prevent potential active shooter incidents, we must alert a supervisor or other official if we believe an employee or coworker exhibits potentially violent behavior.

And, finally fostering a respectful workplace is one of the best measures for preventing an active shooter incident.

Human Resources Responsibilities

Your human resources department should engage in planning for emergency situations, including an active shooter scenario.

Planning for emergency situations can help to mitigate the likelihood of an incident by resulting in processes such as:

- Conducting effective employee screening and background checks.
- Creating a system for reporting signs of potentially violent behavior.
- Making counseling services available to employees.
- Developing an Occupant Emergency Plan that includes policies and procedures for dealing with an active shooter situation, as well as after-action planning.

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 supervisor or human resources department if you believe an employee or coworker exhibits potentially violent behavior.

Indicators of Potential Violence

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.

Indicators of potentially violent behavior by an employee may include:

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

Note: This list of behaviors is not comprehensive, nor is it intended as a mechanism for diagnosing violent tendencies.

Report violent acts or threats of violence to your immediate supervisor, security or human resources. Regardless of the type of workplace violence, the chances for prevention improve with increased awareness of potential warning signs and rapid response to a problem.

The IS-106: Workplace Violence Awareness Training course offers more information about violence in the workplace, how to recognize the warning signs, and what actions to take to

prevent or minimize violence. While this course is designed specifically for FEMA personnel, it is applicable in all work environments. A link is provided at the end of this course.

Response Good Practices

If you suspect a potential active shooter situation, you must quickly determine the most reasonable way to protect your own life. If there is an accessible escape path, attempt to evacuate the premises.

Always have an escape route and plan in mind even if you are just visiting. And, make sure to leave your belongings behind and keep your hands visible.

If evacuation is not possible, you should find a place to hide where the active shooter is less likely to find you. Block entry to your hiding place and lock the doors. Use heavy items to barricade yourself if possible. And, remember to remain quiet and silence your cell phone or pager.

As a last resort, and only when your life is in imminent danger, you should attempt to incapacitate the shooter by acting with physical aggression and throwing items at the active shooter. And, call 911 when it is safe to do so.

If you are a manager or uniformed official, employees and customers are likely to follow your lead. So, it's essential that you remain calm and take immediate action. The key is to be aware of your environment and any possible dangers.

However, if you do need to respond, remember: try to evacuate. If you cannot evacuate, then hide. As a last resort, take action.

How To Respond

Let's review the key points from the video presentation. In an active shooter situation, you should quickly determine the most reasonable way to protect your own life. You should:

1. **Run/Evacuate:** If there is an accessible escape path, attempt to evacuate the premises.
2. **Hide/Shelter:** If evacuation is not possible, find a place to hide where the active shooter is less likely to find you.
3. **Fight/Take action:** As a last resort, and only when your life is in imminent danger, attempt to disrupt and/or incapacitate the active shooter.

It is important for employees to be trained so that they can react if they are ever confronted with an active shooter situation. As these situations evolve quickly, quick decisions could mean the difference between life and death. If you are in harm's way, you will need to decide rapidly what the safest course of action is based on the scenario that is unfolding before you.

Run/Evacuate

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

- Warn individuals not to enter an area where the active shooter may be.
- 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.
- **Do not activate emergency fire alarms** as a method to alert others of an active shooter event.
- Call 911 when it is safe to do so.

Hide/Shelter

If safe 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.
- Close, cover, and move away from windows.

Keeping Yourself Safe While Hiding

If the active shooter is nearby:

- Lock the door.
- Silence your cell phone and/or pager. (Even the vibration setting can give away a hiding position.)
- Hide behind large items (i.e., cabinets, desks).
- Remain quiet.

Consider the difference between cover and concealment. Cover will protect from gunfire and concealment will merely hide you from the view of the shooter. Choose the best space that is available quickly.

When Evacuation and Hiding Are Not Possible

When possible, provide the following information to law enforcement officers or 911 operators:

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

Fight/Take Action

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

- Act as aggressively as possible against him/her.
- Throw items and improvise weapons.
- Yell.
- Commit to your actions.

Reactions of Managers or Uniformed Personnel

When an emergency occurs, customers and visitors will look to employees to direct them to safety, as they are familiar with the building and workspace. Employees and customers are likely to follow the lead of managers or uniformed officials during an emergency situation.

During an emergency, managers should be prepared to:

- Take immediate action.
- Remain calm, professional, and prepared to lead.
- Lock and barricade doors.
- Evacuate employees and customers via a viable, preplanned evacuation route to a safe area.

When pre-selecting shelter-in-place locations, consider any safe areas within the facility.

When Law Enforcement Arrives

The primary goal of law enforcement is to eliminate the threat and stop the active shooter as soon as possible.

As the first responders' primary responsibility is to eliminate the threat, they will not be able to stop to help injured persons until the environment is safe.

Officers may arrive in teams with tactical equipment such as vests, helmets, and rifles.

Officers will need to take command of the situation. Expect to experience officers shouting orders and even pushing individuals to the ground for their safety.

When law enforcement officials arrive, it is important that you:

- Remain calm and follow instructions.
- Put down any items and immediately raise your hands while spreading your fingers.
- Avoid making any sudden movements
- and keep your hands visible at all times.

Do not ask officers for help while you are being evacuated from the scene. Rescue personnel will be in a safe area to provide assistance.

After you reach a safe location or assembly point, you'll be asked to cooperate by providing information to investigators.

Knowing what to expect will help you assist law enforcement officials as they work to stop an active shooter and eliminate the threat.

Law Enforcement's Role

Let's review what to expect when law enforcement officials arrive at an active shooter scene.

Law enforcement's immediate 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.

The first officers to arrive at the scene will not stop to help injured persons because their first priority is life safety, so they will need to secure the scene first.

When there is an emergency such as an active shooter incident, it is important to remember that officers arriving on scene may be coming from many different duty assignments and will likely be in various types of uniforms and even in street clothes. Do not be surprised by the variances in appearance, as law enforcement officials are trained to react quickly and work together.

Additional Officers and Rescue Teams

Additional officers may arrive in teams. These teams may:

- Wear regular patrol uniforms or external bulletproof vests, Kevlar helmets, and other tactical equipment.

- Be armed with rifles, shotguns, and/or handguns.
- Use pepper spray or tear gas to control the situation.
- Shout commands, and may push individuals to the ground for their safety.

Emergency medical personnel will also arrive at the scene. Rescue teams will treat and remove any injured persons. These teams may also request able-bodied individuals to assist in removing the wounded from the premises.

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 and Assembly Points

After you have reached a safe location or 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.

Follow-up Actions

After an incident occurs, it is important to manage the consequences, and analyze the lessons learned. Post-event activities includes accounting for missing persons, determining a method for notifying families of victims, and referring individuals at the scene for follow-up care including grief counseling.

To facilitate effective planning for future emergencies, it is important to analyze the recent active shooter situation and create an after action report. And these lesson learned should be used to refine the Occupant Emergency Plan and provide needed training.

Managing the consequences of an incident and identifying lessons learned promotes the well-being of those involved and facilitates preparedness for future emergencies.

Managing the Consequences

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 incident.

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 recommendations contained in this report are 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 Occupant Emergency Plan.
- Describing and defining a plan for making improvements to the Occupant Emergency Plan.

Active Shooter Booklet, Pocket Guide, and Poster

It is recommended that you download copies of the following resources prior to completing this course. Select a resource to access each publication:

- [Active Shooter Desk Reference Guide](#): The booklet provides guidance to individuals, including managers and employees, who become involved in an active shooter situation, and discusses how to react when law enforcement responds.
- [Active Shooter Pocket-Sized Reference Card](#): This guide provides a brief overview of how best to respond to an active shooter situation.
- [Active Shooter Poster](#): This poster describes how to respond to an active shooter, as well as how to recognize signs of potential workplace violence.

Active Shooter materials help managers, employees, training staff, and human resources personnel mitigate the risk of, and appropriate reaction to an active shooter situation.

Additional Resources

- [IS-120.a An Introduction to Exercises](#): This course introduces the basics of emergency management exercises and builds a foundation for subsequent exercise courses, which provide the specifics of the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP).
- [IS-130 Exercise Evaluation and Design](#): This course introduces the basics of emergency management exercise evaluation and improvement planning.
- [Lessons Learned Information Sharing](#): This information and collaboration resource serves as the national, online network of lessons learned, best practices, and innovative ideas for the emergency management and homeland security communities.
- [Safety Tips & Guidelines Regarding Potential “Active Shooter” Incidents Occurring on Campus, University of California Police](#): This document defines an active shooter, and provides tips and guidelines for responding to active shooter scenarios.
- [Shots Fired, When Lightning Strikes \(DVD\), Center for Personal Protection and Safety \(2007\)](#): This DVD provides strategies to prevent and survive active shooter situations.
- [How to Plan for Workplace Emergencies and Evacuations, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Health and Safety Administration, OSHA 3088 \(2001\)](#): This booklet provides a general overview of dealing with emergency situations, including developing an evacuation plan, training employees, and utilizing resources.
- [Run, Hide, Fight.® Surviving an Active Shooter Event. © City of Houston](#): This video was created by the City of Houston's Office of Public Safety and Homeland Security using DHS funding. Please be aware that this video is designed to educate the public on surviving an active shooter event. The video contains graphic images of a violent shooter situation.
- [OPM Handbook—Dealing with Workplace Violence: A Guide for Agency Planners OWR-09 \(February 1998\)](#): This handbook was developed by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management and the Interagency Working Group on Violence in the Workplace, and shares expertise for Agency Planners in preventing and dealing with workplace violence.

Course Summary

In the event of an active shooter situation:

- **Run/Evacuate**
 - Attempt to evacuate.
 - Have an escape route and plan.
 - Leave your belongings.
 - Keep your hands visible.
- **Hide/Shelter**
 - Find a place to hide.
 - Block entry and lock doors.
 - Remain quiet and silence your cell phone or pager.
- **Fight/Take Action**
 - As a last resort, try to incapacitate the shooter.

- Act with physical aggression.

Remember to always:

- Take note of the two nearest exits in any facility you visit.
- Be aware of your environment and any possible dangers.

CALL 911 WHEN IT IS SAFE TO DO SO!