

How to Respond to Workplace Shootings

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

These 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.

Coping with the 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 or her.

Responding

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.

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 and able to do so

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

If the active shooter is nearby:

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

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

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

Contacting Emergency Assistance

If possible, dial 911 or your local emergency number to alert police to the active shooter's location.

- Remain calm
- State the location of the active shooter
- Note the number of shooters
- Provide a physical description of shooter(s)
- If possible, describe the number and type of weapon(s) held by the shooter(s)
- If possible, provide the number of potential victims at the location
- If you cannot speak, leave the line open and allow the dispatcher to listen

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. Note the following activities:

- Officers usually arrive in teams of four
- Officers may wear regular patrol uniforms or external bulletproof vests, Kevlar helmets and other tactical equipment
- Officers may be armed with rifles, shotguns and 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

When law enforcement arrives on the scene:

- 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 holding on to them for safety
- Avoid pointing, screaming 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.

The first officers to arrive at 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

Some content on this page was gathered from documents found on the website for United States Department of Homeland Security. The website is located at www.dhs.gov.

Here when you need us.

Call: 877-527-4742

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