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Based on

*How to Survive An Active Shooter*, Fort A.P. Hill, U.S. Army  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security. *Active Shooter: How to Respond*. December 2008

**STOP** WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

# ACTIVE SHOOTER

## HOW TO RESPOND

**GUIDANCE ON HOW TO RESPOND TO AN ACTIVE SHOOTER SITUATION AND REACT WHEN LAW ENFORCEMENT RESPONDS**

**CRIME SCENE DO NOT**

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four hurt in  
Atlanta shootings

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# STOP

WORKPLACE  
VIOLENCE

## PROFILE OF AN ACTIVE SHOOTER

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

## 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 (e.g., an office with a closed and locked door)
- Turn off lights
- Not trap you or restrict your options for movement

## GOOD PRACTICES FOR COPING WITH AN ACTIVE SHOOTER SITUATION

- Be aware of your environment and all 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, you may choose to 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!**

To prevent an active shooter from entering your hiding place:

- Blockade the door with heavy furniture

If the active shooter is nearby:

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

If evacuation or 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, you may choose to 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 and follow through

## HOW TO RESPOND WHEN LAW ENFORCEMENT ARRIVES

Law enforcement's goal is to locate, contain and 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
- Officers may wear regular patrol uniforms or external bulletproof vests, 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 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 (e.g., 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 or yelling
- Do not 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. These rescue teams will treat and remove any injured persons. They also may call upon able-bodied individuals to assist in removing the wounded from the premises. When you have reached a safe location or an assembly point, you likely will 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.

## 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 co-workers may notice characteristics of potentially violent behavior in an employee. Employees should inform their supervisor or security/facility manager of the potential for workplace violence due to direct knowledge, reasonable suspicion, observable warning signs or direct threat.

## 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 often can be managed and treated. Historically, many attackers have had no prior violent criminal record.

Potentially violent behaviors 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 that 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