Active Shooter Preparedness Meeting Kit

The Department of Homeland Security defines an active shooter as “an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area.” Anyone involved in an incident should call 911 as soon as it is safe to do so. Active shooter events are usually over within 10-15 minutes (sometimes before law enforcement arrives). Know how to respond if the unthinkable happens. Active shooters may be current or former workers, family or friends of co-workers, or complete strangers.

DETECTION: Look for characteristics that a person may be planning a shooting incident. Report any of the following observations or uneasy, “gut” reactions to your supervisor, management, and/or human resources:

- Increased use of alcohol, drugs, and absenteeism.
- Decreased hygiene and appearance.
- Depression and/or social withdrawal.
- Disregard for work quality or company policy.
- Mood swings and overly emotional responses.
- Paranoid, suicidal, or doomsday behavior or discussions.
- Increased discussion of violent incidents and weapons/firearms.

WHAT TO DO DURING AN ACTIVE SHOOTER EVENT

1. Run/Evacuate

The best choice is to evacuate the active shooter area.

- Always know two exits and escape routes in every building you visit.
- Guide others to the escape route and prevent them from entering the shooting zone.
- Exit whether others follow you or not.

- Don’t attempt to move wounded people.
- Keep your hands visible at all times and follow police instructions.

1. Hide

If you can’t escape an active shooter scenario, find a place to hide.

- Ideally stay in, or find an office with a door that you can lock and/or barricade.
- Stay out of sight of windows.
- Silence your cell phone, turn off radios, TVs, etc. and stay quiet.

If you can’t evacuate or hide, call 911 and talk to the dispatcher or leave the phone line open so they can listen and record events. If possible, describe the location of the shooting, the shooter, and the weapons. Remain calm, listen, and think about your next moves.

1. Fight / Take Action

Only as a last resort, and if your life is in “imminent danger,” should you take action against the shooter.

If you must take action, “aggressively and overwhelmingly” attack the shooter with improvised weapons. Throw things and yell at the shooter. Law enforcement recommends that you “commit to your actions,” so don’t hesitate or stop in mid-action.

DEVELOP AN ACTIVE SHOOTER PLAN

- **Prevention:** Organizations should implement employee screening and background checks for new hires to understand prior incidents involving workplace violence. Additionally, fostering a positive, inclusive work environment and treating every employee with compassion and respect can often curtail the behaviors that lead to an incident occurring. Finally, DHS recommends organizations create

systems for reporting signs of potentially violent behavior and ensure employees have access to training videos detailing what to do if they witness any type of workplace violence.

- **Protection:** Develop a thorough Emergency Operation Plan prior to an incident occurring. This includes ensuring you have an emergency communication system in place to immediately notify employees of an incident. Considering that the average length of an active shooter incident is 12.5 minutes, every second counts when activating your emergency response. Targeted acts of violence can escalate quickly, so you need to be ready to deal with the situation before local law enforcement is on the scene. 60% of active shooter events conclude by the time police arrive. Keeping your people informed about unfolding events can ultimately save lives.

- **Mitigation: This stage differs from prevention** because it focuses on detecting a potential threat and limiting the damage of an attack. The U.S. Department of Justice defines mitigation techniques as **"the capabilities necessary to eliminate or reduce the loss of life and property damage by lessening the impact of an incident."** First, conduct a thorough business threat assessment and designate a threat assessment team to document potential danger. Your team should include key stakeholders who have been thoroughly trained in threat assessment and management. This group will also work with law enforcement to identify potential threats and protect your people against harm. A physical threat intelligence and monitoring solution can also help you rapidly detect incidents near your people or business locations and identify employees in harm's way.

- **Response:** Your response plan should highlight how to stabilize the incident, establish a safe environment, communicate with your people, and ultimately transition into recovery mode.

- **Recovery:** The immediate aftermath of an active shooter

incident will likely be a confusing time. Longer-term recovery can be broken down into four distinct areas: services, physical, financial, and emotional/psychological. Your emergency plan should determine who has authority to close and reopen the business, how to document damage assessments, sources for relief funding, and where/how psychological first aid will be provided.

FINAL WORD

Active shooting occurrences in workplaces are no longer isolated events. Effective response reduces harm and saves lives.