

SURVIVING AN ACTIVE SHOOTER SITUATION

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Active shooter situations are becoming more frequent. An “active shooter” is someone who initiates a shooting, and either remains at the scene or in motion shooting multiple rounds at multiple victims. Active shooters target crowded locations such as stores, theaters, airports and public buildings where every round fired may potentially hit one or more victims. If caught in this type of situation you can be sure that the killing will continue until the police engage the shooter or he/she/they have killed everyone in sight. Even the police have now admitted that civilians caught in such situations should take certain actions rather than “stay calm” or try to reason with the terrorists. Unfortunately, the days when you could relax and enjoy public places and public venues are gone. Violent crime, gang shootings, drive-by shootings and terrorist guns and bombs have converted our communities into potential war zones. Below are steps and actions that you can take to survive such an event.

Being Prepared for a Potential Active Shooter

Be observant and alert! In any crowd you must observe for suspicious behavior. Are people wearing unnecessarily baggy or long clothing? Do some people have suspicious bulges in their clothing or are they carrying odd long packages? Are some people wearing backpacks or leaving backpacks or bags behind? Are some people moving around suspiciously and looking about as if getting ready to take some action? If your “sixth sense” is telling you to get out or get down, then do it!

Make an escape plan. In a restaurant, mall, theater or other potential terrorist target make sure to constantly be aware of the exits. Exits can be fire doors, windows, over railings, or anything that works. Consider routes to all the exits that offer the most bulletproof cover. If true escape is not safe, then seek any room with a solid door that can be locked and barricaded with heavy furniture.

Identify potential bulletproof cover. While you may hide behind furniture, car bodies, and plaster or wood walls these will usually not stop bullets. They provide only concealment. Bulletproof cover is offered by brick walls, cement walls, heavy appliances, engine blocks and other very solid objects. Constantly identify these as places to go if escape is not immediately available.

What to Do When the First Shots are Fired

Act Immediately! If you have accepted the possibility of an active shooter situation and taken the steps above, you can move from denial to action while other hesitate and become victims.

Take Cover. If you are already in the shooters vision or if there is no covered escape route that will not expose you to the shooter, this may be your only option. Get behind the strongest, thickest object possible immediately. Stay low or lie flat. If you are wounded

or among those who are wounded lie down and play dead. Shooters will instinctively shoot anyone that they see that moving.

Escape. If the shooter(s) has his back to you, or you are out of his immediate vision you have a chance to escape or at least reach good cover before they turn around. Remember that there may be more than one shooter. If you go through a door get to the right or left of the door immediately and keep moving towards any cover; since the shooter may shoot through the door it or follow you out the door. If you chose to run, leave your belongings behind and keep your hands visible and fingers spread. Remember that you will be running towards police who do not know you from the shooters. Do not stop to ask the officers for information. Avoid pointing and screaming. Others outside the building may be unaware of the situation inside and could be about to enter. Tell them that there is an active shooter and to get away from the building

Hide and Barricade. If you cannot exit the building safely, your next best option is to get into a securable room. Turn off the lights. Be sure everyone cell-phone ring-tone is off. Block the door with anything available and get out of sight. Quietly call the police and tell them where you are.

Engage. The Washington D.C. chief of police and many others have now recognized that civilians may need to take action on their own before law enforcement arrives to save themselves and others. If you cannot escape or find cover and the shooter continues to shoot, your best chance is to distract, delay, or disable the shooter. Discharging a fire extinguisher, throwing a heavy object; tackling, clubbing, or stabbing are all justified in this situation. If you have a firearm use it! Yes, shoot them in the back if necessary. Shoot for the head as they often have bullet-proof vests. If possible shoot from a low position so your bullets go upward and avoid hitting bystanders. Don't hesitate and don't try to get them to surrender. They will just shoot you. **CAUTION: remember, the police will consider anyone they find holding a gun as the enemy! Once the shooter(s) are down (1) do not pick up their weapon(s) and (2) put your weapon down and your hands up and wait for the police.**

Communicate. If not in immediate danger, use your cell phone to call for help. Provide the police with any information that you can, such as the description and number of shooters, location of the shooters, type of weapons being used, direction shooters are or did move. If you are barricaded or behind cover, provide your exact location and your own description. The police will be getting a lot of calls so you may get put on hold or even get disconnected, so leave a callback number, but have your phone on vibrato. If nothing else, pull the fire alarm to warn others and distract the shooter. .

Recovery. If you are lucky enough to have survived such a violent event you are not safe yet since, police are going to be very jumpy upon entry. Shooters have been known to hide among victims and escape or open fire at the police. The police will consider everyone there to be a potential threat until they are searched, interviewed and cleared. **Follow police instructions carefully.** Raise your hands and spread your fingers

immediate. Keep your hands visible at all times. Do not reach for your cell-phone or any other object. Avoid making any quick movements towards the officers.

If you are carrying a firearm (open or concealed) be sure to immediately tell the police while keeping your hands up.

Help Others. If safe to do so, direct others to escape or to shelter. If you have any medical training try to help the wounded until the medics arrive. Stopping severe bleeding by immediately applying direct pressure over the wound and/or applying a tourniquet above the wound and treating for shock may be an important lifesaving action.

(Possible sidebar)

Recognition of a Potential Active Shooter

In most cases, active shooter situations could have been prevented if others had recognized and reported the shooters actions and mental state in advance. The next active shooter could be a family member, fellow employee or neighbored. If you know or encounter someone with one or more of the following traits. Contact authorities, employers and psychological support organizations immediately. Do not confront or argue with such individuals.

- Obsession with extremist and violent political or religious ideas combined with interest in and access to firearms or explosives
- Increased anger at others such as employers, family, or religious groups.
- Talk of revenge or getting even.
- Increase mood swings, absenteeism at work, drug and alcohol use and depression.
- Paranoia, hostility and withdrawal.
- Obsessive interest in violence, firearms and explosives

