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# ACTIVE SHOOTER PREVENTION FOR PUBLIC ENTITIES

Posted by [Chris Grollnek](#) on April 5, 2016 at 11:31 AM



Active shooter prevention for public entities and corporations is a relatively new training concept, but a reality that risk managers can no longer ignore. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there has been an uptick in violent incidents occurring in the work environment, from 65% to 73%. Therefore, training must be comprehensive, encompassing all areas of daily operations and should translate into an opportunity for organizations, by turning a “squeamish” subject into a benefit with a possible return on investment (ROI). The new world we find ourselves in requires risk managers to 'reach beyond the pale' to seek the best options in order to address growing concerns of workplace violence and now, threats of domestic terrorism in the workplace.

Active shooter prevention training is often set aside because of the stigma of the words “active shooter”. It is every manager’s responsibility beyond virtuous leadership to create safe workplaces, but not at the cost of instilling fear in employees. Active shooter training has several meanings to several

people depending on their occupation and understanding. To police, who are typically called to provide active shooter training, it means their response and coordination of efforts. To people who wish to do harm, it means the very definition of the term which translates to creating mass casualties and false bravado with success, while stretching the abilities of the community. For the shooter, this is reflected in the number of people they are able to kill. To risk managers, it should translate into an opportunity to proactively take measures to ensure a safe working environment by deploying preventative measures and training employees how to mitigate their risk using the most powerful weapon they possess – their minds. Because the active shooter has no profile, it is difficult to know who that one person may be and the risk ratio demonstrates that threats often come from the outside as much as from within. This is why active shooter prevention training for organizations and risk mitigation strategies is the new “normal”.

Active shooter events end in nearly 7 minutes or less by national average. It takes police, again by average, 17 minutes to arrive on scene and determine their course of action. In nearly every event, whether officers arrive on scene as early as 3 minutes or as late as 48 minutes, the average time to reach the first victim alive or otherwise is 23 minutes. Given these statistics, we must reach further to provide common sense training to every employee and beyond.

A comprehensive preparedness and training plan must include and account for more than just employees. A core plan must take into account: 1) employees; 2) leadership; 3) customers; 4) vendors; and 5) visitors. There are organizations that address all five but most try to get by with only addressing the first two due to budgetary constraints. Leadership should resist the temptation, even if at a discount, to forego the last three. We learn through the evolution of incidents and by studying the past to not only help predict the future, but to deny incidents that are preventable. By leveraging common sense training and policy development, [Safe2Safest](#) has found the balance of reducing risk while increasing the safety and emotional welfare of the five categories of people. Denial applications such as [DefenseLite](#), and response informational and mass emergency messaging systems such as [Regroup](#) are other pivotal pieces to a holistic solution.

As for an ROI, managers can weigh the price of consultants and policy implementation against the cost of inaction. Recent and past events have occurred with great enough frequency that places of business can and will be held liable for “inaction”. When a victim’s legal representatives can prove with empirical data that active shooter prevention trainings and simple, inexpensive access denial technologies and mass emergency messaging systems could help save lives, employers will have no defense for failure to act.\*

The national theme is “Run, Hide, Fight”, but this guidance was issued prior to the “Virginia Tech Massacre” and has not been updated to reflect our understanding of how these events unfold. Far too often the default of “hide” and the human psyche takes over, and people reduce themselves to hiding under and/or in unsecure (non-ballistic resistant) areas. A Google search for 'images following an active shooter incident' will show that in nearly all events, where individuals with no training decided to “hide”, many of them were injured or even killed. It is up to the risk manager to shift the paradigm to: “Evade, Evacuate and Engage as a last resort”. Many will teach engagement as a good idea until a cursory study of incidents shows that 80% of persons making contact with a shooter alone did not make it home that day.

*\*There are two federal cases weighing in with decisions leaning against employers, see [www.Safe2Safest.com](http://www.Safe2Safest.com).*

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**WORKPLACE VIOLENCE, ACTIVE SHOOTER, PUBLIC RISK**

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## Comments

**Teresa Tate** • April 6, 2016 at 1:35 PM

I personally believe there really is no "preventative" training that can be done with regard to active shooters. Since as stated above the incidents are generally over in 7 minutes or less, the event is over before most people can even react. Most violence in the workplace (all violence, not just with guns) is committed by current or former employees. Without installing metal detectors how do you know which employees are armed? What do you do about those who ARE armed, what policies are in place? How do you prevent an employee in the next cubicle or who is standing in your office, from shooting you? There actually is a profile for mass shooters in the US; mass shooters have an average age of 34, are mostly white, and almost always male. It's a very complicated issue, we're a complicated country. My opinion is that detailed workplace violence policies and procedures, and enforcement of those policies, is the best way to try to prevent or combat workplace violence and potential shootings.

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**700 S. Washington St., Suite 218, Alexandria, VA 22314 T: 703.528.7701 F: 703.739.0200**

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