SHOTS FIRED! Surviving an Active Shooter in the Workplace

Choose to Survive
Lecture 1: Survival Mindset & Courses of Action

Objectives:

• Describe the protective shield
• Describe “figure out.”
• Describe “get out.”
• Describe “call out.”
• Describe “hide out.”
• Describe “keep out.”
• Describe “spread out.”
• Describe “take out.”

A survival mindset is a protective shield comprised of three components: **Awareness**, **Preparation**, and **Rehearsal**.
The first component, **Awareness**, involves taking the time necessary to gain a basic understanding of an active shooter situation. Realizing that active shooter incidents happen at the individual working level to everyday people is the starting point for developing a survival mindset. It’s important to become attuned to your work environment so that you can readily recognize sights and sounds (gunshots) that are foreign to the environment. A pre-determined survival mindset will help you take rapid, effective actions in a stressful situation.

There is no substitute for **Preparation**. It includes looking at your work environment through a survival lens; a lens that focuses on the “what if” questions. “What if” questions are critical in developing effective response strategies.

Survivors prepare themselves both **mentally** and **emotionally** to do whatever it takes to make it through their situation. They become stakeholders in their own safety and security.
First, you must **figure out** the situation—what’s going on? Where is it happening? Who is doing it? This is the beginning of your personal assessment process—the continuous evaluation of the situation. This continuous evaluation will allow you to take the appropriate survival action. Use all of your senses in your assessment—and do it quickly. Trust your intuition—your “gut” feeling. It’s a built-in survival mechanism. Some people say it’s “knowing without knowing why,” and it’s an invaluable tool. Once you **figure out** what is going on, you’ll be better prepared to select one or more of the following actions.

Law enforcement recommends that if you hear popping noises that you think may be gunshots, not to waste time trying to validate your own instinct. They recommend you act on the chance that they may be gunshots and evacuate immediately through the nearest door or window. It’s far better to err on the side of caution.

Practicing may include either mentally and/or physically “walking through” your “what if” plan. Rehearsing your plan will reduce your response time and build your confidence. In essence, your rehearsal serves as a survival inoculation.
Research shows that there’s a real difference between the reactions of people who’ve been trained to face stressful, life-threatening situations and those who have not.

If you determine that you can get out to a safer area, than do so. Get out fast. Don’t wait for others to validate your decision. Leave your belongings behind. The best way to survive an active shooter situation is not to be where the shooter is—and not to go where he can see you.
In some cases, you may not be able to get out. The shooter may be between you and the only exit, or perhaps you would have to enter the area or the hallway where the shooter is positioned. It might be safer for you to remain in place because you’re well hidden and well protected. In any case, if you can’t get out, then you must find a place to hide out.

Once you’ve found your spot to hide out, you’ll want to keep out the shooter. Hiding in a room that can be locked and that has plenty of things to hide behind is best. Blockade the door with heavy furniture (even if the door can be locked). If the shooter is nearby, just lock the door and become totally silent. Turn out the lights. Turn off any radios or other noise-producing sources that might alert the shooter to your presence.
While spreading out in a room, quietly talk about what you'll do if the shooter enters. Whatever action you're taking, whether it's get out or hide out and keep out, you should help out where you can. Help others escape as you go. Help prevent others from entering the danger zone. If someone near you has a life-threatening injury, and if it's possible for you to provide first-aid to keep them alive, then do so. Let others around you know what is happening and try to remain calm. Demonstrating calmness can have a contagious effect on others; it will help them to remain focused on survival.

If you determine there is no other option than to take out the shooter, then you must be prepared to do whatever is necessary to neutralize the threat. To do this, you’ll need to become more aggressive than you ever thought possible. This means you must either disrupt his actions or incapacitate him. Throwing things, yelling, using improvised weapons can all be effective in this situation, but total commitment and absolute resolve are critical.
Law enforcement suggests that if there are several of you in a room, and you have nowhere to go, develop an action plan. If a shooter begins beating on the door and enters, get ready to act. Once he comes into the room, your best option may be to rush him and do the best you can.
Lecture 2: Distinctions Between an Active Shooter and a Hostage Situation; Law Enforcement Response

Objectives:
• Describe the distinctions of an active shooter and a hostage event.
• Explain how to respond to law enforcement or SWAT responders.
• Describe key information needed by law enforcement responders.

Armed individuals in a workplace pose a deadly threat, regardless of their motives. However, it is in your best interest to understand the difference between the active shooter who has and continues to use deadly force and a hostage taker, who may or may not have used deadly force. Law Enforcement officers will respond to neutralize the active shooter or contain and negotiate with a hostage taker. What can you do to assist these first responders while also contributing to your own safety?

It is important to understand that there is a distinct difference between an active shooter situation and a hostage situation, which require different behavioral responses on the part of the victims.
An active shooter has been defined as an armed individual who has used deadly force and continues to do so with unrestricted access to additional victims. Active shooter situations have involved single shooters, multiple shooters, close encounters, distant encounters, targeted students, random victims, single-room confrontations, and mobile confrontations. The only certainty seems to be that no two situations are alike.

A hostage situation involves an armed and dangerous individual, who may or may not have already used deadly force. In most instances, his access will be restricted due to his own choosing or changing events, such as the arrival of law enforcement. A significant distinction in a hostage situation is the containment of the offender and victim. The motive of hostage-takers can vary between substantive or expressive.
Expressive motives include compensating for a loss (disgruntled employees, jilted lovers, rejected spouses, aggrieved individuals, idealistic fanatics, individuals with mental illness, etc.) Hostage-takers act in an emotional, senseless, and often-self-destructive way. Unable to control their emotions in response to life’s many stressors, they are motivated by anger, rage, frustration, hurt, confusion, or depression. They have no clear goals and often exhibit purposeless, self-defeating behavior. Such individuals have either no substantive or escape demands or totally unrealistic demands for which they would have no reasonable expectation of fulfillment.
Hostage survival can be enhanced by taking the following actions:

- Remain calm
- Follow directions
- Avoid sudden movements
- Maintain eye contact (but don’t stare)
- Find the middle position (not too assertive/passive)
- Personalize yourself
- Don’t argue
- Don’t be a nuisance
- Don’t turn your back
Active Shooter vs. Hostage Situation

➢ Law Enforcement Negotiation Efforts
  ➢ Will take time; be mentally prepared for a protracted situation
  ➢ Law Enforcement negotiators will use active listening skills to:
    ◦ Communicate with hostage-taker
    ◦ Defuse emotions
    ◦ Build rapport
    ◦ Work towards a peaceful resolution
  ➢ Historically, most hostage situations have been resolved through negotiations and ended peacefully

Do not expect officers to assist you as you get out. Their primary job is to locate the shooter and neutralize the threat. In all likelihood, medical assistance will follow once the threat has been neutralized.
If you are in a room and officers or a SWAT team comes in, you must not present a threat to them. Do not point at them or the shooter. Do not scream or yell. Be quiet and compliant. Do exactly as they say. Remember that they have no way of immediately knowing whether you are one of the shooters.

They will know immediately that you are not armed or aggressive. That will help them focus on anyone who is armed and prevent them from mistaking you as one of the shooters in a very dangerous situation.
Lecture 3: Pre-Incident Indicators/Behaviors of Concern

Objectives:

- Identify pre-incident indicators/behaviors of concern.
- Describe preventive measures to avert workplace violence.

What is workplace violence? It can be defined as any action or violent acts by a disturbed or aggrieved employee or former employee against co-workers or supervisors. Workplace violence may threaten the safety of an employee, impact the employee’s physical and/or psychological well-being, or cause damage to company property.

Behaviors of Concern

- Overview
  - Key Pre-Incident Indicators/Behaviors of Concern
  - Preventive measures that can be employed to avert workplace violence

- Workplace violence
  - Any action or violent acts by a disturbed or aggrieved employee, or former employee, against co-workers or supervisors
  - Any action that may:
    - Threaten the safety of an employee
    - Impact employee’s physical and/or psychological well-being
    - Cause damage to company property
Behaviors of Concern

- Workplace violence
  - Often defined as “mass murder on the job by disgruntled employees”
    - Relatively infrequent
  - Threats, harassment, bullying, domestic violence, stalking, emotional abuse, intimidation
    - Left unchecked, can turn deadly
    - Behaviors supervisors and managers must deal with daily

Behaviors of Concern

- Common myths
  - Out of the blue
  - Never saw it coming
  - He just snapped
  - Most situations will resolve themselves if given a cooling off period
  - Warning signs are always predictive of violent behavior
  - Violence is random, spontaneous, and unpredictable

- Realities
  - Threats almost always present
  - Leakage, warnings made through comments (intentional or unintentional) can reveal clues to feelings, thoughts, fantasies, or intentions that may result in violence
  - Erratic/abnormal behavior is a principal warning sign of future violence
  - Bullying is often a steppingstone to violence
  - The path toward violence is an evolutionary one with signposts along the way
There may be warning signs or behaviors of concern that something is wrong.
They perceive every slight as a major issue upon which they must act.
Although a suicidal threat may not be perceived as threatening to others, it is, nonetheless, a serious danger sign. Suicide is violence directed inward. Many workplace shootings end in suicide by the offender.

All workplaces should have a workplace violence prevention program that will assist in recognizing potential dangers and defusing them before violence erupts.
Behaviors of Concern

- Violence more likely to occur in workplaces which:
  - Tolerate a toxic work environment
  - Fail to enforce sexual harassment policies or disciplinary procedures
  - Ignore employees’ complaints about a fellow employee
  - Subject employees to frequent change and uncertainty
  - Have inadequate security measures and procedures
  - Fail to treat people with dignity, respect, kindness, and compassion

Program components
- Workplace violence prevention program
  - Proactive rather than reactive
  - Employers have a “duty of care” responsibility

- Program components
  - Pre-employment screenings
  - Anti-violence/zero tolerance policy
  - Fair and consistent disciplinary procedures
  - Grievance procedures
  - Violence prevention training
  - Employee assistance program
  - Threat management team

Behaviors of Concern

- Threat management team
  - Integral component of effective workplace violence prevention program
  - Role is to assess and manage threats and threatening behavior
  - Primary mission is to assess likelihood of violence
    - Determine best means of intervention
Behaviors of Concern

- Employer actions to avert workplace violence
  - Communicate program policy to employees
  - Provide recurring training in preventive measures
  - Support, not punish, victims of workplace violence or domestic violence
  - Foster a climate of trust and respect
  - Seek advice and assistance from outside resources

- Employee actions to avert workplace violence
  - Be aware of and comply with organization’s workplace violence prevention program
  - Recognize and report behaviors of concern observed in the workplace
  - Treat everyone with respect, dignity, kindness, and compassion

Summary

- Violence and threats of violence often result from frustration and a breakdown in communication
- Effective communicators are non-threatening, non-judgmental, worthy of respect, and willing to listen

Overlooked area where employee can make a difference:
- Listen to a “troubled” employee
  - People want to be heard and understood
  - Simple act of listening can be a highly effective contribution to a safe work environment