

AkitaBox

Active Shooter Protocol for Facility Managers

A 2019 Report on Responding to Active Threats



The Importance of Active Threat Preparedness

Many people figure that a shooting could never happen in their workplace. But what if a shooting did occur? Would your organization be prepared?

While workplace shootings may seem rare, reported cases are on the rise. A 2018 report conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics[1] revealed concerning statistics on workplace shootings:

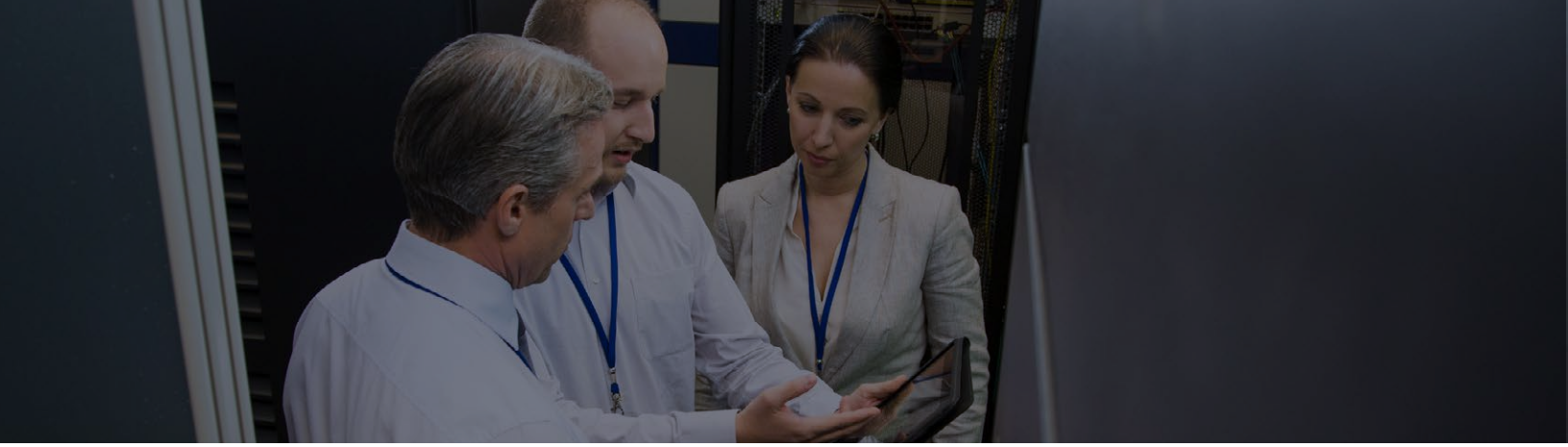
- There were **500** workplace homicides in 2016, an **increase** of 83 cases from 2015.
- Of the 500 workplace homicides in 2016, **394** homicide cases involved an **active shooter**.
- Of workplace homicides in 2016, **82%** of victims were male and **18%** of victims were female.
- **Robbers** were the most frequent assailants of **men** in work-related homicides.
- **Relatives or domestic partners** were the most frequent assailants of **women** in work-related homicides.

When faced with an active shooter, a person's first response may be to panic. Emergency alarms, gunfire, screaming and shouting can cause distress and confusion. People who are startled, anxious or frightened may make rash decisions that put their lives in jeopardy.

However, organizations can actively prepare for threats and take steps to prevent disaster. Planning ahead is the best way to protect occupants of a facility. Preparedness has its benefits; it provides peace of mind and knowledge of safety protocols. In training, employees can learn methods for regaining composure and committing to action in threatening situations.

Emergency preparedness is everyone's business.

So how, specifically, does a facility manager play a part in preparing for active shooters?



A Facility Manager's Role in Emergency Situations

Preparation is a facility manager's best friend. There are real benefits in being prepared for any situation that may occur: preparation reduces fear, anxiety and losses that accompany disaster.

Facility managers have the ability to prepare for and prevent disaster, including active threats. Specifically, facility managers impact organizational safety by:

- **Reducing Negative Impact on People:** Facility managers have the power to inform and educate occupants on how to react in dangerous situations like active shootings.
- **Collaborating With Other Departments:** Facility managers collaborate with other departments in a facility to make sure that emergency protocols are consistent throughout an organization.

Need help writing an emergency preparedness plan?
AkitaBox offers a free, 12-step checklist to help you, your team and your organization prepare a strong emergency preparedness plan. Download the checklist here.

- **Providing Safety Training:** To prevent workplace injuries and accidents, facility managers encourage and promote continuous training for their team. Informed employees are safer employees.
- **Instituting Access Controls:** Facility managers implement safety measures to keep occupants safe from intruders. Security controls also regulate who enters a facility. Keys, passcodes, electronic badges, fences and security cameras are just a few examples of ways a facility manager can protect buildings against active threats.
- **Distributing Critical Items:** Facility managers distribute critical items and information like keys, floor plans, egress plans, facility personnel lists and telephone numbers to appropriate personnel. Sharing of these items facilitates safety and communication in emergencies.

Tip: A facility's floor plans and egress plans should be accessible, digital and up-to-date. Learn more by downloading **complimentary** guides from AkitaBox:

- How to Create an Egress Plan
- Five steps to Creating Accurate Floor Plans

Because active shooter situations are often sudden and unexpected, facility managers have to prepare for the worst.



What is an active shooter?

Active shooters have become not only a common news topic, but also a real threat to facilities, employees and occupants. 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; in most cases, active shooters use firearms and there is no pattern or method to their selection of victims."[2]

Now knowing what an active shooter is defined as, let's take a look at research on active shooter behavior. Do active shooters plan for their attacks? Where do shooters obtain their weapons? What concerning behaviors should employees look out for? Read on to find out.

Statistics and Warning Signs

Statistics on active shooters can be shocking. A 13 year study conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) examined 63 active shooters. Data revealed the following statistics:

- Active shooters take time to plan and prepare for attacks, with 77% of subjects spending a week or longer **planning** their attack and 46% spending a week or longer **preparing** (procuring the means) for their attack.[3]
- A majority of active shooters **obtained their firearms legally**.
- For active shooters under age 18, **school peers** and **teachers** were more likely to observe concerning behaviors than family members. For active shooters 18 years old and older, **spouses** and **domestic partners** were most likely to observe concerning behaviors.
- In 64% of cases, at least one victim was **specifically targeted** by the active shooter.
- On average, each active shooter displayed **4-5 concerning behaviors** over time that were observable to others around the shooter. The most frequently occurring concerning behaviors were related to the active shooter's mental health, problematic interpersonal interactions and leakage of violent intent.



See the Signs: What to Look For

Facility managers and their teams should constantly be on the lookout for indicators of potential violence. According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, an employee-turned-active shooter typically does not just "snap." Rather, he or she will likely display indicators of violence over time.[2]

Potentially violent behaviors by an employee, as identified by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security may include one or more of the following*:

- Increased use of alcohol and/or illegal drugs
- Depression or withdrawal
- Unexplained increase in absenteeism
- Noticeable decrease in attention to appearance and hygiene
- Resistance or overreaction to changes in policy or procedures
- Repeated violations of company policies
- Increased severe mood swings
- Noticeably unstable, emotional responses
- Explosive outbursts of anger or rage without provocation
- Suicidal comments
- Remarks about "putting things in order"
- Paranoid behavior ("Everybody is against me.")
- Increased talk of problems at home
- Talk of previous incidents of violence
- Empathy with individuals committing violence
- Unsolicited comments on firearms, dangerous weapons and violent crimes

* This list of behaviors is not comprehensive, nor is it intended as a mechanism for diagnosing violent tendencies.

Nobody should feel unsafe at work. If you, your team or occupants in your facility feel threatened by an individual's behavior, that person should be reported immediately.

Tip: A facility's human resources department should have a system in place for reporting suspicious or concerning behavior. Human resources also should make counseling services available to employees who feel uncomfortable or unsafe at work. Open communication should always be valued in a facility.

How to Approach Active Threats

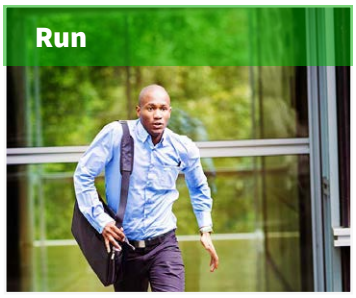
Unfortunately, shootings can still occur in a facility despite planning and preparation. In the event of an active shooter situation, you and your facility have to be ready. According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, employees and occupants should follow the "Run, Hide, Fight" method[4] when facing an active shooter situation:

First and foremost, this method encourages **evacuation** from a facility. If leaving the building is impossible, a person's second line of defense is to **hide** from the assailant. As a last resort, this method encourages **physical defense** against the shooter.

The following graphic provides an at-a-glance view of the "Run, Hide, Fight" method of self-defense:

Active Shooter Emergency Actions

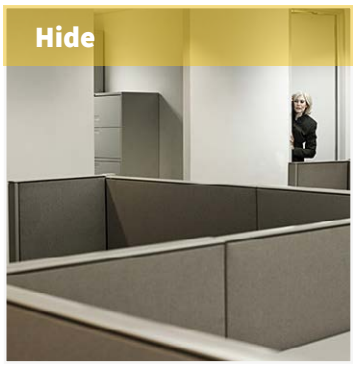
The first and best way to protect yourself against an active shooter is to evacuate the facility. If you can get out, do so.



Remember to:

- Get yourself out of harm's way (your #1 priority)
- Have an escape route and plan in mind
- Leave your belongings behind
- Refrain from moving wounded people
- Prevent individuals from entering an area where the shooter may be
- Call 911 once you are in a safe location
  Stay in your safe location until police say it is okay to leave

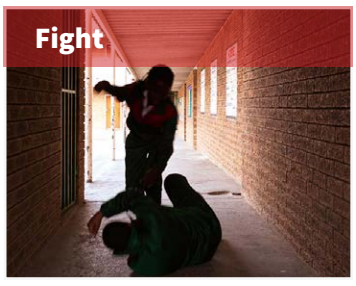
If you cannot get out of the facility safely, find a place to hide.



Remember to:

- Act quickly and quietly
- Secure your hiding place as best as you can
- Turn off the lights and lock the door
- Blockade doors with heavy furniture
- Conceal yourself behind a large object that can protect you
- Silence your cell phone
- Be out of the shooter's view
- Refrain from hiding yourself in a place that traps you or restricts movement
- Do your best to remain calm until police arrive

As a last resort - and only if your life is in imminent danger - fight the aggressor.



Remember to:

- Attempt to disrupt or incapacitate the shooter
- Act with aggression
- Use improvised weapons (i.e. chairs, tools or fire extinguishers)
- Try to disarm the shooter
- Commit to taking down the shooter, no matter what

You can survive an active shooter incident by remembering three important steps — run, hide, fight.
While talking to employees about confronting a shooter may be upsetting for some, employees should know how to save themselves and take action to save lives.

How to Respond when Law Enforcement Arrives

The purpose of law enforcement is to stop active shooters and de-escalate dangerous situations. Once they arrive, officers will proceed to the area of the facility where the last shots were heard. It is important to remind those around you to remain calm and follow officers' instructions.

When working with police after a shooting, remember to do the following:

- Get to a safe place designated by rescue officials
- Do not leave the scene until law enforcement authorities have instructed you to do so
- Put down any items in your hands (like bags or jackets)
- Keep your hands visible with your palms up at all times
- Do not point, scream or yell

Law enforcement and 911 operators may ask you or your coworkers for information regarding the situation. Be ready to give the following information:

- Location of the active shooter
- Number of shooters, if there are more than one
- Physical description of the shooter
- Number and type of weapons used
- Number of potential victims in the facility

Full cooperation with safety officials is crucial when facing an active shooter. The faster information is shared, the faster police can get occupants to safety.

Going Forward

As with any threat in a facility, facility managers should establish goals, objectives and courses of action before disaster strikes. As courses of action are implemented, facility managers and emergency planning teams should consider:[5]

- How the facility will communicate to occupants and police that there in an active shooter on facility grounds

> **Tip:** When developing emergency protocols, consider how your facility will communicate with individuals who have language barriers or disabilities. Accommodations may include visual signals, signs or flashing alarms to advise deaf individuals of emergency situations.

- How to evacuate or lock down students, staff and visitors of a facility (including those who are in hallways, bathrooms or break rooms at the time of the attack)
- How to evacuate when the primary evacuation route is unusable
- How to select effective shelter-in-place locations

> **Tip:** Optimal locations have thick walls, solid doors with locks, minimal interior windows, first-aid emergency kits, communication devices and duress alarms.

- How occupants will know when a building is declared safe

Together, you and your team can prepare for emergencies in your facility. Pre-planning for emergencies is the best way to avoid rapid decisions, shortage of time, lack of resources and overall chaos in a disaster situation. No matter what emergencies your facility may face, safety should always be a top priority.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about staying safe during emergencies with the following resources:

"Active Shooter Pocket Card," Information by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security
https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/active_shooter_pocket_card_5

"Active Shooter: How to Respond," a report by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security,
https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/active_shooter_booklet.pdf

"Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans," by FEMA
https://rems.ed.gov/docs/REMS_K-12_Guide_508.pdf

"How to Create an Egress Plan" by AkitaBox
https://info.akitabox.com/how-to-create-an-egress-plan

REFERENCES

[1] "There were 500 workplace homicides in the United States in 2016," Bureau of Labor Statistics (2018), https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2018/there-were-500-workplace-homicides-in-the-united-states-in-2016.htm

[2] "Active Shooter: How to Respond," U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2008), https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/active_shooter_booklet.pdf

[3] "A Study of the Pre-Attack Behaviors of Active Shooters in the United States Between 2000 and 2013," Federal Bureau of Investigation (2018), https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/pre-attack-behaviors-of-active-shooters-in-us-2000-2013.pdf/view

[4] "Active Shooter Pocket Card," U.S. Department of Homeland Security, https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/active_shooter_pocket_card_5

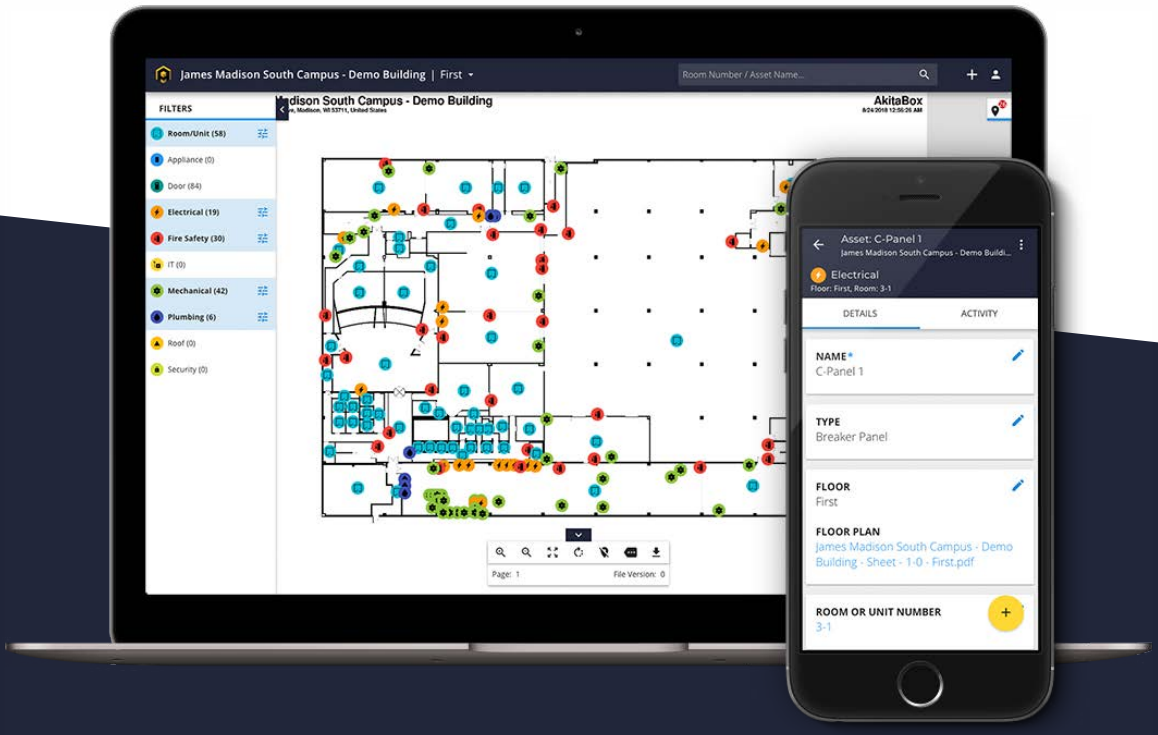
[5] "Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans," FEMA (2013), https://rems.ed.gov/docs/REMS_K-12_Guide_508.pdf

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About AkitaBox

At AkitaBox, our mission is to empower building teams to make data-driven decisions that impact the places we live, work and play. As a one-stop shop for data collection, location-based asset mapping and work order management, you are sure to find a solution that meets your needs.

With an à la carte service offering, AkitaBox works with you to identify the best solutions to meet your individual facility's needs. With custom tailored training and support, our team of success managers will guide you through the entire process from start to finish in as little as 90 days. To learn more, visit AkitaBox.com.



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