

SECOND  
EDITION

**ACTIVE**

S H O O T E R



**A Handbook on Prevention**

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## **Preparing an Emergency Response Plan (ERP)**

A lack of preparedness in responding effectively to potential active shooters can have disastrous consequences. This section discusses several measures you need to implement to upgrade your defensive posture against such threats prior to such incidents.

To best prepare your personnel to respond against an active shooter situation, the first thing you should do is **create an Emergency Response Plan (ERP)**. Develop the ERP with input from your stakeholders, such as your facility owner/operators, your facility manager, human resources department, your training department (if one exists), and local law enforcement and emergency responders, including fire departments and hospitals.

Developing an ERP will prepare your personnel to respond effectively and help minimize any loss of life. An ERP is intended to address critically important policies and procedures, for example, reporting emergencies and evacuation of the premises. In addition, preparing for as many as possible different active shooter scenarios helps prevent additional casualties since alternative scenarios of shooting events that may have occurred were anticipated ahead of time.

## **An effective Emergency Response Plan should include:**

- A method for reporting various types of emergencies, whether shootings, fires and other emergencies.
- An evacuation policy and procedure, including designating staging areas to safeguard and secure those who manage to escape from the “hot zone.”
- In the event that mass evacuation is necessary, ensure your facility has at least two evacuation routes that are conspicuous, well-marked, and continuously exercised, including designating escape procedures and route assignments (i.e., floor plans, safe areas).
- Contact information for – and responsibilities of – individuals to be contacted under the ERP.
- Contact information for emergency care at local hospitals (i.e., name, position, telephone number/email address), including distance from your location.
- An emergency notification system to alert relevant individuals and agencies of an active shooter emergency, including:
  - Individuals at remote locations within your premises who require instructions about their movement.
  - Local law enforcement.
  - Local area hospitals.

In addition, the Emergency Response Plan specifies responsibilities and key contact information within your organization. The ERP should also include an emergency alert notification system to operate throughout the emergency (i.e., the “Alert” response component), a mechanism to receive information and coordinate its dissemination during the incident, including during the post-event consequence management phase.

As discussed in the State of Alabama’s “Active Shooter Response: Strategic Plan,”<sup>87</sup> it is crucial to prepare for managing media relations during an incident. The ERP should therefore include a tool kit that will include the following<sup>88</sup>:

- Who will be **in charge of the media site**?  
Who will be the back-up?
- Who serve as the **organization’s spokesperson**?
- Who will be responsible for **updating social media**?
- Who will **talk to family members**?
- Who will be responsible for **writing press releases**?
- Who is allowed to **talk to media**? Who is **not allowed** to talk to media?

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<sup>87</sup> See “Appendix B: Media Plan Best Practices,” in The State of Alabama, “Active Shooter Response: Strategic Plan,” February 2013, <http://www.alicetraining.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/2013-AlabamaActiveShooterStrategicResponsePlan.pdf>.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

- If more than one person is addressing the media, how will **consistent messaging** be ensured?

The ERP should also include provisions for **conducting regularly held training exercises** at least once a year. The training of managers and employees should **combine online videos and live exercises**. Videos are useful for mid-year refresher training, while drills, either as table-top workshops or live drills are essential to continuously reinforce essential response procedures and protocols, including coordination with local police and fire personnel. The ERP should also include evacuation procedures to **safeguard persons with disabilities**, as well as visitors. It should also include a **checklist of risky characteristics** that might characterize potential active shooters in your environment, such as in the workplace, school, or other places, as well as protocols for follow-up actions, whether mental health counseling or reporting them to the appropriate authorities.

With an effective Emergency Response Plan that is regularly exercised, you and your staff will be better prepared to respond to an active shooter incident and other emergencies, whether fires or natural disasters.

Following an active shooter incident, your After Action Report will serve to make any improvements, if necessary, to your ERP.

## **Facility Managers' Responsibilities**

As part of the **Emergency Response Plan**, your facility managers should:

- Institute **security access controls** (e.g., keys, security system pass codes).
- Distribute critical items to appropriate managers/employees, including:
  - **Floor plans.**
  - **Keys and other access-control** measures.
  - Facility **personnel lists, telephone numbers and email addresses.**
  - **Daily schedule.**
- Assemble **crisis kits** containing:
  - Radios
  - Floor plans
  - Employee roster and emergency contact numbers and email addresses
  - First aid kits
  - Flashlights
- Ensure an **emergency notification system** is activated (i.e., the “Alert” response component) when an emergency situation occurs (and **regularly ensure that it is operational**).
- Ensure that the facility has at least **two evacuation routes**.

- Coordinate with the facility's security department to ensure the **physical security** of the location.
- Ensure the public address system can broadcast a **facility lockdown**.
- Ensure interior doors can be locked (if this is deemed necessary).
- Ensure area supervisors are trained in directing all personnel (employees, customers, visitors, vendors, etc.) in their area to evacuate the facility, and that it can be done safely.
- Ensure that nearest rooms are designated in case evacuation is not possible, and train staff to prepare for such lockdowns.
- Train your staff to keep their personnel as calm as possible and know how to **notify 911** (using cell phones/smart phones) of your location, number of occupants and status.
- Train your staff to remain in a room until an all-clear signal is given or law enforcement arrives and allows you to leave to a safe location.
- **Post evacuation routes** in conspicuous locations throughout the facility.
- Place removable floor plans near entrances and exits for emergency responders.
- **Include local law enforcement and first responders** during training exercises.
- The **training must be as realistic** as possible.

- Encourage law enforcement, emergency responders, SWAT teams, canine teams, and bomb squads to train for an active shooter scenario at their location.
- **Foster a respectful workplace** that would minimize possible workplace violence.
- Be **aware of early indications** of potential workplace violence and take remedial actions accordingly.
- **Prepare an incident report template** that could be used at an event to document personnel observations following exercises.

### **Human Resources Department Responsibilities**

As part of your Emergency Response Plan, your human resources (HR) department should also engage in planning for emergency situations, including active shooter scenarios.

Planning for emergency situations can help to mitigate the likelihood of an incident by establishing processes and protocols such as:

- Conducting effective **new employee screening and background checks**.
- Creating a **system for reporting signs of potentially violent behavior** by your employees (including contractors).
- **Making counseling services available** to employees.

- Ensure your **employee termination procedures and assessments** take into account the **potential for post-employment workplace violence** and the protective measures that should be implemented in such cases.
- Designating an **HR representative to serve as a regular stakeholder** in developing and exercising the Emergency Response Plan.

## **Training**

Once the Emergency Response Plan is in place, you and your staff should be briefed and trained in preparing to respond to active shooter situations, including regularly held exercises that involve local law enforcement and other relevant agencies, such as medical first responders.

It is important for you and your personnel to establish an effective training program and be appropriately trained in its procedures and protocols so that you and your team can react effectively if you are ever confronted with an active shooter situation. One of the most effective training practices in responding to an active shooter situation is for you and your team to conduct mock active shooter training exercises. Local law enforcement departments are an excellent resource in helping you design such training exercises. Private sector consultants can also be used to design such training exercises as part of an overall risk and vulnerability assessment program.

In addition to your immediate security staff, your managers and employees should also be trained in:

- Recognizing the **sound of gunshots**
- **Reacting quickly when gunshots are heard** and/or when a shooting is witnessed. Training should cover:
  - Evacuating the area
  - Hiding out
  - Fighting against the shooter as a last resort
- Knowing **when to call 911**
- Knowing **how to respond when law enforcement arrives**
- Knowing how to **adopt a survival mindset** during times of severe crisis

### **Meeting the Needs of those with Disabilities**

In addition to developing the Emergency Response Plan and conducting regularly held training exercises, you should ensure that your plans, evacuation instructions, and any other relevant information include provisions for **managing the requirements of individuals with special needs and/or disabilities**. It is also important to ensure that your building is accessible for individuals with disabilities, **in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** requirements.

## **Focusing on Preparedness, Prevention, and Recoverability**

Adopting these pro-active measures to anticipate potentially threatening situations and mitigate security situations before they materialize can be achieved by creating an effective security strategy, based on a robust Emergency Response Plan, that focuses on preparedness, prevention, and recoverability which will result in greater resiliency for your organization. This is essential to deterring and defeating potential threats.

Adversaries such as active shooters prefer to attack the most vulnerable targets (i.e., “targets of opportunity” or “soft” targets). Therefore, mitigating the risk to your facility by keeping threats outside your secure perimeter is of paramount importance. Having an effective security program in place will reduce the likelihood of being perceived by your adversary as vulnerable and will help dissuade such potential attackers from selecting your facility as a target.

Thus, private sector security and law enforcement agencies can use a variety of protective measures to help disrupt or mitigate a potential active shooter attack during the five pre-incident phases, particularly when a susceptible individual starts fantasizing about his vengeful attack, engages in suspicious weapons and ammunition purchase and stockpiling, target selection and surveillance, and approaching the intended target.

## Self-Assessment Checklist for Organizational Preparedness

“Table 5.0: A Checklist of Recommended Measures to Mitigate the Risks from Potential Active Shooter Incidents” (below) is intended to provide an organization-based self-assessment checklist for preparing to deal with potential active shooter incidents. This preparedness checklist is divided into three sub-tables: procedures, systems, and training. It aims to help you bolster your protective program by identifying public safety-based best practice measures, including conducting an internal “gap analysis,” to ensure that appropriate procedures, systems, and training are integrated into your overall active shooter prevention program. The “gap analysis” can be conducted by answering whether or not your organization is compliant with the components of the preparedness checklist, and the follow-up actions that are required to address such shortfalls.

**Table 5.0: A Checklist of Recommended Measures to Mitigate the Risks from Potential Active Shooter Incidents<sup>89</sup>**

<b>(1) Components of Organizational Preparedness: Procedures</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Follow-Up Actions</b>
Conduct a <b>realistic security assessment</b> to determine a facility's <b>vulnerability</b> to an active shooter attack?			

<sup>89</sup> The measures included in this table are drawn from several sources, including New York City Police Department, *Active Shooter: Recommendations and Analysis for Risk Mitigation* [2012 Edition] (New York: NYPD, 2012), pp. 2–3.

<b>(1) Components of Organizational Preparedness: Procedures</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Follow-Up Actions</b>
Create a comprehensive <b>Emergency Response Plan (ERP)</b> that addresses all phases of an active shooter incident cycle including protecting your assets from internal and external threats?			
Create an active shooter prevention training program for all levels of employees? [See Sub-Table 3, "Training", below]			
Establish a <b>central command station for building security</b> ?			
Create a <b>protocol for reporting shootings, fires, and other emergencies</b> ?			
<b>Identify multiple evacuation routes</b> ?			
<b>Create an evacuation policy and procedure</b> ?			
Create an <b>emergency escape procedure and route assignments</b> (e.g., floor plans, safe areas)?			
<b>Designate shelter locations</b> with thick walls, solid doors with locks, minimal interior windows, first-aid emergency kits, communication devices, and duress alarms?			
In responding to a potential active shooter incident, have you developed <b>procedures and alert mechanisms for canceling classes/meetings and/or closing your facility</b> ?			
Have you <b>implemented a facility lockdown procedure</b> ? Have your security personnel been briefed on it? Have you coordinated the plan with local police and co-located facilities?			
<b>Practice evacuations</b> under varying conditions and scenarios?			
Designate a <b>point-of-contact information resource manager</b> with knowledge of the facility's security procedures and floor plan to liaise with local police and other emergency response agencies in the event of an attack?			
<b>Designate a point-of-contact</b> with responsibility to be contacted under the Emergency Response Plan?			
<b>Disseminate information concerning local area hospitals</b> (e.g., name, medical role, telephone number/email address, and distance from your location)?			

<b>(1) Components of Organizational Preparedness: Procedures</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Follow-Up Actions</b>
Create an emergency notification system to alert appropriate parties of an emergency?			
Ensure the <b>presence of at least two emergency evacuation routes</b> , and post them in conspicuous locations throughout your facility?			
Place removable <b>floor plans near entrances and exits</b> for quick retrieval by authorized emergency responders?			
<b>Limit access to site blueprints, floor plans, and other documents</b> containing sensitive facility security information, and ensure those documents are kept secured, yet, when an emergency situation arises, will be readily available to authorized law enforcement responding to an incident?			
Ensure that Emergency Response Plans and evacuation instructions <b>address individuals with special needs and/or disabilities</b> ?			
Ensure that your building is <b>accessible to individuals with disabilities</b> , and in compliance with Americans for Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements?			
Establish a <b>credentialing process for entering facilities</b> ?			
Encourage <b>local law enforcement to meet with key facility staff</b> to assist in the development and familiarization of emergency evacuation, lock down, and response procedures?			
Routinely <b>coordinate with local law enforcement, emergency responders, SWAT teams, canine teams, and bomb squads</b> in jointly conducting exercises to allow for effective deployment of multiple units in the event of a crisis?			
Incorporate an <b>active shooter prevention drill</b> into your organization's emergency preparedness procedures?			
When possible, <b>establish random security patrols</b> to disrupt potential surveillance efforts?			
Establish and <b>deploy security mechanisms/ personnel at facility access points</b> and potential approach routes?			

<b>(1) Components of Organizational Preparedness: Procedures</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Follow-Up Actions</b>
Conduct <b>comprehensive background checks</b> for new employees?			
Create a system and protocol for <b>reporting signs of potentially violent behavior to appropriate authorities</b> ?			
Ensure <b>employee termination procedures</b> assess the potential for workplace violence and consider protective measures?			
Make <b>counseling services available</b> to employees, students, etc.?			
Establish a <b>Threat Assessment Team</b> that is trained in evaluating risky mindsets and behaviors by employees that might indicate movement along the pathway to violence and reporting them to appropriate authorities for follow-up remediation?			
Know your facility's vendors and, if possible, <b>randomly alter delivery entrances</b> to avoid developing discernible patterns?			
In the event of an incident, be prepared to <b>address immediate mental health needs</b> of victims, families, and emergency responders?			
In the event of an incident, ensure <b>Emergency Response Plan</b> includes a multi-layered <b>notification system</b> to alert local law enforcement, employees' immediate family members, individuals at remote locations within the premises, and local area hospitals?			
In the event of an incident, plan the use of mass warning systems to <b>alert your community of the threat</b> (e.g., public service announcements, social media networks such as Twitter/Facebook, etc.)?			
Prepare <b>Business Continuity Plan (BCP)</b> to recover from disasters?			
In the aftermath of an event, prepare an <b>after-action report</b> that describes how the Emergency Action Plan worked and how it might be improved?			
For the aftermath of an event, prepare a <b>template</b> to serve as an <b>after-action report</b> documenting personnel observations and <b>lessons learned</b> ?			

<b>(2) Components of Organizational Preparedness: Systems</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Follow-Up Actions</b>
Put in place <b>credential-based electronic access control systems</b> (i.e., keys, security system pass codes) that provide accurate attendance, report and limit unauthorized entry, and do not impede emergency egress?			
Install and monitor <b>closed-circuit television (CCTV) surveillance cameras</b> covering multiple angles and access points, in order to provide domain awareness of the entire facility and its perimeter; and ensure that video feeds are viewable from a central command center?			
Deploy an <b>emergency alert notification system</b> for entire facility?			
Put in place communication infrastructure that allows for <b>facility-wide, real-time messaging</b> about an emergency via single or coordinated multiple systems?			
<b>Automate an SMS alert system</b> with mobile text alerts and continuously update your alert database?			
Install <b>panic buttons</b> in offices?			
Involve your facility's IT department in installing, deploying (and continuously exercising) the <b>alert notification system and communication infrastructure</b> ?			
Put in place <b>elevator systems that may be controlled or locked down</b> from a central command station?			
Employ software-based <b>risk and vulnerability assessments</b> about your facility that are regularly updated?			
Utilize an IT tool or third-party vendor to <b>conduct 24/7 contextual monitoring of threats</b> and risks to your facility/facilities that might be posted in <b>social media</b> ?			
Install <b>portal on IT network to provide 24/7 comprehensive situational awareness of potential threats, including in social media</b> , as well as command & control system to coordinate response efforts in event of incident that also provides for incident alerting, tracking and reporting, including easily accessible contact information, photos, floor plans, site maps, and emergency plans, and that is compatible with mobile hand-held devices?			

<b>(2) Components of Organizational Preparedness: Systems</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Follow-Up Actions</b>
Does your facility employ an <b>automated safety center</b> that manages via a <b>dashboard</b> your assets, assessments, threat streams, incidents, events, maps?			

<b>(3) Components of Organizational Preparedness: Training</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Follow-Up Actions</b>
Train employees on how to <b>respond to an active shooter scenario</b> ?			
Train employees on how to <b>respond to other emergencies</b> , such as fires or natural disasters?			
Conduct active shooter prevention <b>training classes for all relevant personnel</b> , ranging from managers to employees?			
Train facility occupants on <b>response options</b> outlined in various training publications?			
Train staff to be <b>aware of unusual events or activities</b> , such as individuals loitering for no apparent reason or pace counting in a suspicious manner?			
Train staff on <b>how to issue emergency notification alerts</b> ?			
Train staff to <b>evacuate from potential active shooter</b> ?			
Train staff to <b>hide from potential active shooter situations</b> ?			
Train staff to <b>take offensive action</b> against an active shooter (as a last resort)?			
Train your building occupants to <b>call 911</b> as soon as it is safe to do so?			
Train your building occupants on <b>how to respond when law enforcement arrives</b> on scene, how to follow their instructions, remaining calm, keeping hands empty and visible at all times, and avoid making sudden or alarming movements?			
Train specifically designated employees whose responsibilities include <b>managing a streamlined incident management role</b> ? Does each entity clearly know its role and be able to operate independently (as part of a team) according to the pre-designated plan?			

<b>(3) Components of Organizational Preparedness: Training</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Follow-Up Actions</b>
Train employees on <b>preparedness response plan and workplace violence awareness</b> ?			
Is <b>training as realistic as possible</b> for the types of threats you may face?			
Is your <b>training regularly exercised</b> throughout the year?			
Does your training <b>include law enforcement and emergency medical services (EMS)</b> personnel?			
Do your exercises <b>include deploying your alert systems</b> to ensure communications equipment is operable?			
Does your training <b>include online and live exercises</b> ?			