

Hostile Intruder, What Do We Do Now?

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Introduction

Mass shootings have received a lot of attention in the media due to the social impact they have on society. Violence is all around us, and numerous methods of capturing data are continually being compiled to illustrate how safe or unsafe an environment can be. Homicide numbers and averages are considered key indicators in the severity of the violence in a city, school, home or workplace. The unfortunate reality is that when a mass shooting takes place, any fatalities that occur often happen to people in the wrong place at the wrong time. They are not prepared with what to expect, or know what to do should such an occurrence take place. Preparations for hostile acts, recognizing behaviors, or what to do when observing verbal or physical aggressive acts need to be enacted in order to mitigate or eliminate the possible loss to human life. The recognition of problem behaviors or telltale aggressive acts helps address situations that may be precursor indicators of a more severe problem. Many psychologists and human resource specialists train on identifying and diffusing these escalating behaviors. When an actual hostile confrontation occurs, many people are not prepared, or actually deny that the intensification to a shooting may take place. What will you do if there is an active shooter in your facility?

Is there a need to prepare the workplace for a hostile intruder event, or prepare for proactive responses? A growing trend is developing in our country where workplace violence has been moving from individual to individual attacks, to large-scale massacres where the suspect attempts to “take out” as many people possible before killing themselves. Each workplace has a legal and moral responsibility to take reasonable steps to protect their workers. Preparing for a hostile event is no different than the way safety professionals analyze and do risk assessments for other potential hazards in the workplace. Many employees and worksites are totally unprepared for these types of workplace violence events, and damage to human life and property could be minimal if the proper preparations and planning steps are taken.

A Background of Violence

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI) there were 4,547 fatalities in the workplace in 2010. Homicides accounted for 506 of these fatalities, which is approximately 11 percent.¹ Homicides in the workplace have declined by 7

percent, which is the lowest total ever since the fatality census has been recording these events. However, workplace homicide is currently the leading cause of death for women.ⁱⁱ Assaults and threats of violence number almost 2 million a year. Many of these homicides are a result of shootings.

According to USA Today, 224 instances of fatal workplace homicide incidents were reviewed and found that, in nearly eight out of 10 cases, killers left clear warning signs. Often, they would show guns to coworkers, make threats, or talk about attacking bosses and coworkers. In the majority of these cases, employers took little action. They ignored, downplayed, denied or misjudged the threats of violence. Another alarming find was that less than 20% of companies targeted changed their security levels or took internal prevention steps to prevent reoccurrence.ⁱⁱⁱ

Recognition and Prevention

Should employers take notice and do anything different when trends appear to be declining? Schools have been in the media whenever a hostile shooting scenario develops, due to the wide impact it has on the school itself and the community. While homicides have been declining overall, shootings are happening in the workplace more frequently than in the past. Most companies are not ready to deal with how to manage an armed intruder in a hostile situation. In general, business personnel at all levels are uneducated on what to do when they hear gunshots at work, see a shooter, or in a worst case scenario, find themselves with a shooter in the same room. Human nature is to trust one another, and when a fearful conflict that is totally foreign to an individual arises, indecision and denial creates a great deal of hesitation and may result in potentially being victimized or becoming a fatality.

Prevention measures by employers often include training in dealing with disruptive employees and how to handle conflict. Creating a respectful workplace, training in awareness of warning signs, and how to report behaviors, and what actions to take will aid in preventing or minimizing violence. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has a training course, “IS-907–Active Shooter: What You Can Do,” which goes over what employees should be concerned with in regards to behaviors that may potentially become violent, where it states:

Indicators of potentially violent behavior by an employee may include:

- Depression/withdrawal
- Repeated violations of company policies
- Explosive outbursts of anger or rage without provocation
- Behavior that may suggest paranoia (e.g., “everybody is against me”)
- Escalation of domestic problems into the workplace
- Talk of severe financial problems
- Talk of previous incidents of violence
- Disturbing or violent tweets or Facebook postings^{iv}

FEMA’s training points out that employees do not typically just “snap” and become violent. Often, with post-investigations, coworkers would tell stories of how they were becoming very uncomfortable with the individual’s behavior exhibited over an extended period of time. In schools, many students actually heard specific threats or plans, and simply did not tell anyone due to denial or fear of retribution. In 2002, the United States Secret Service, along with the Department of Education, published a report that presented data which showed that there is no

specific profile of an active shooter; it goes on to discuss many of the myths such as: someone just snapping, no one knew, he never threatened anyone, and so on.

Stopwatch of Death

Numerous studies have been done to examine and trend mass shootings. Many of these studies show some disturbing trends that are starting to emerge. One series of studies that is starting to gain acceptance among many law enforcement agencies is authored by Ron Borsch, who is a 30-year law enforcement veteran and now the manager and a trainer at the South East Area Law Enforcement (SEALE) Regional Training Academy in Bedford, Ohio. In his studies, he has developed a theory that he calls "The Stopwatch of Death," an article about which can be found at the website, www.policeone.com.

Ron Borsch created a formula to demonstrate a reliable measurement tool to determine the scale of one active shooter incident which is relevant to another:

$$\frac{\text{Number of murder attempts}}{\text{Number of minutes}} = \text{X murder attempts per minute}$$

The number of murder attempts is based on the number of casualties (dead or wounded by gunfire) divided by the number of minutes that elapsed during the entire shooting from start to finish.

If you review the University of Texas Tower shooting incident in 1966, where Charles Whitman went up into the tower and started shooting, we can see how Ron Borsch applies his formula. The entire time lasted 90 minutes and there were 48 casualties (16 dead and 32 wounded). This equates to a rate of approximately ½ a murder attempt per minute. As many other shootings were analyzed, a trend developed. The Columbine High School massacre in April of 1999 had a rate of 2.1/minute. In Montreal, the Dawson College shooting in September 2006 had a Stopwatch of Death rate of 2.9/minute. The Virginia Tech incident in April of 2007 had a rate of 7.9/minute. Over a hundred more documented cases show this trend of an increasing number of attempts in a shorter period of time. Once an event begins, every second counts.

Lieutenant Colonel Dave Grossman is a Psychology and Military Science professor at West Point. His specialty is in the field of human aggression and violent crime. Lt. Col. Grossman is also a supporter of the Stopwatch of Death. He has stated:

The kids who gave us Jonesboro in the middle school and Columbine in the high school are now giving us Virginia Tec in the colleges. I hope I am wrong, but I predicted that we would see these kids in the college, and now I predict that soon we will see them in the workplace.

Ron Borsch also analyzed shooters in instances of "rapid mass murder," where four or more victims are intentionally killed in the same episode and location in no more than 20 minutes. From reviewing close to 100 active-killer outbursts, Borsch has found (in rounded figures) that:

- 98% of the offenders act alone;
- 90% commit suicide, usually onsite;
- 80% use a long gun (rifle, shotgun, or carbine of pistol caliber);

- 75% bring multiple weapons, sometimes with hundreds of rounds of ammunition;
- Offenders are typically "preoccupied with a high-body-count, racing to avoid police;"
- They are increasingly wearing body armor;
- They almost never take hostages and do not negotiate; and
- They are "dynamic and quick," finishing in a post-Columbine average of eight minutes.

OSHA's Position on Workplace Violence

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has been getting more involved with what to do to prevent these hostile acts and how to regulate the enforcement actions. OSHA requires employers to have a safe and healthy workplace. In the United States Code, USC Title 29, Chapter 15, section 654, sub section 5 (also known as the "General Duty Clause") states the following:

§ 654. DUTIES OF EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES

(a) Each employer —

(1) shall furnish to each of his employees employment and a place of employment which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to his employees;

(2) shall comply with occupational safety and health standards promulgated under this chapter.

(b) Each employee shall comply with occupational safety and health standards and all rules, regulations, and orders issued pursuant to this chapter which are applicable to his own actions and conduct.

Furthermore, in order for OSHA to issue citations under the General Duty Clause, several conditions must be met:

- The hazard was recognized.
- The employer failed to keep the workplace free of a hazard to which his or her employees were exposed.
- A feasible and useful method was available to correct the hazard.
- The hazard was causing or likely to cause death or serious injury.

The purpose of the General Duty Clause is that, whether a standard has been promulgated by OSHA, MSHA, EPA, or any other federal/state agency, or whether it is a consensus standard, the clause is designed to prevent employees from being exposed to a hazard. The question to consider is what would be a reasonable approach to prevent a workplace shooting.

Workplace violence, which includes shootings, is becoming an increasing problem that cannot be ignored. With regard to the General Duty Clause, employers are being exposed to increased civil liabilities due to more social expectations for protection in a work environment, and subsequent citations would most likely follow in the event of an incident.

Arguably, the most difficult condition to define for any workplace violence would be if the potential hazard was recognized. Training for supervisors and employees is often conducted at worksites on what to look for in employee behavior changes or habits. These warning signs often include training on: harassment, threats, verbal, and physical abuse, along with intimidation and

employee stress, depression, and withdrawal. These training programs often cover recognition of the issues and problems, but very often come up short in discussing a policy or procedure on what to do other than just reporting any incidents.

OSHA has developed guidelines to help assist employers under the OSHAct. In 1989, OSHA published the "Safety and Health Program Management Guidelines." On September 8, 2011, OSHA issued *Enforcement Procedures for Investigating or Inspecting Incident of Workplace Violence*. OSHA has been placing a greater emphasis on prevention and now, in the enforcement arena. The 1989 guideline advisory document outlined the steps for workplace violence prevention:

1. Management Commitment and Employee Involvement
2. Worksite Risk Analysis (Vulnerabilities, anticipated risk areas)
3. Hazard Prevention and Control (Engineering & administrative controls)
4. Training and Education (Awareness, recognition and what to do)
5. Recordkeeping and Evaluation of Program (Written procedures and auditing)^v

These steps provide an excellent outline for a company workplace violence program. It is also not really much different than any other hazard with regard to how to approach the process of hazard reduction.

Management commitment and employee involvement is the framework in which a company can set the motivating force to deal with workplace violence. It starts with setting roles, responsibilities and ultimately accountabilities for an effective program. A clearly written policy of zero tolerance must be established for any workplace violence policy to work well. A strong message needs to be communicated to all employees that there will be no reprisals taken against employees who report unusual behaviors, inappropriate comments or observe any acts of verbal and/or physical abuse.

Worksite risk analysis should involve reviews both internally and externally. Internally, a review can be done by analyzing and tracking employment records, performance reviews, and disciplinary action reports, monitoring trends and, reviewing human resource screening practices. Analyzing physical security in the workplace would also be beneficial when considering items such as fences, cameras, access points, lighting, blind spots, and other physical vulnerabilities that can all be evaluated, based on the industry standards and what is needed in the local areas. Externally, a review of police statistics for the area, trade association news reports, or industry trends can be analyzed for any possible red flags in the physical location of a facility. Communication protocols with local law enforcement should be established ahead of time to understand expectations from the law enforcement community. Equipment needs and resources can be identified for future needs.

Hazard prevention and control involves both engineering and administrative controls. Engineering controls will include such items as alarm systems, closed circuit video, panic alarms, public address systems, and external communications (texting, cell phones, public address systems, rapid phone dialers, email, and other alert systems). Administrative controls involve policies, procedures, reporting and training for emergencies.

Training and education involves the use of computer-based training, face-to-face discussions and relationships with the local law enforcement agencies. All employees need to be

aware of the potential security hazards and ways to protect themselves and other coworkers. Training in early recognition of escalating behaviors or warning signs and how to report them should involve employees at all levels.

Recordkeeping and evaluation of the violence prevention program is essential to the overall effectiveness of the program. Incidents of abuse, verbal altercations, aggressive behavior and assaults need to be recorded and reviewed. A periodic audit to analyze frequencies, severity and trends will validate whether or not the program is working, and provide an opportunity to assess any need for improvement.

So, the inevitable question comes up with, “What can you do” if a situation exists where an active shooter is present and you are in the middle of an incident? Prevention is obviously the key to help minimize the potential for active shooter incidents, but should the worst possible scenario occur, quick proactive responses will be required. With a good plan in place, periodic training and practice, actions become automatic and most importantly, save lives.

The “Active Shooter”

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) describes the following four characteristics of the shooter in an active shooter event:

1. The attack is planned well in advance; however targets are often at random.
2. Every attacker has engaged in behavior prior to the shooting that seriously concerned others.
3. Often, clear warning signs are evident, such as displaying or talking about weapon(s) ownership.
4. In many cases, warning signs are ignored, downplayed or misjudged.^{vi}

The DHS puts out a publication that discusses how to respond to an incident involving shooters. It is basically a three-step process and easy to remember. When an active shooter is in your vicinity:

1. Evacuate
2. Hide out
3. Take action^{vii}

Post-Columbine incidents have shown that the average shooting event takes place from start to finish in less than eight minutes. This may not be enough time for law enforcement agencies to arrive. If it is at all possible, one must evacuate, not wait for validation where seconds count. Don't take anything with you, and zigzag if necessary. Communicate to everyone what is happening while you are running.

If evacuating is not possible, then hide out in the nearest locked room. Silence any cell phones, shut off the lights, lock or barricade the entrance, anything to protect you and to buy time. The shooter will be looking for fast, easy targets and will not try to waste a lot of time getting into some areas. Always evaluate the possibility of escape routes and clear methods for survival.

As a last resort, and only if all options have been eliminated, attack the imminent threat. This should be done if the shooter is in the same room as you, your life is in imminent danger, and there are no better options. Keep in mind that negotiations with shooters will be futile as they

almost never take hostages or try to get into discussions. They are on a mission and at a point of no return. Survival is paramount, and escape is your only solution at this point.

Once the law enforcement agencies arrive, they are trained to move quickly to locate the suspect(s) and stop the immediate threat. This means that they will move past victims quickly to sounds and the source of violence until the scene is secured, and the threat has been eliminated. The speed at which this happens will directly affect the number of lives saved. More than one agency will most likely be responding, so several types of uniforms will be present, and plain clothes officers will also be present. Chaos is inevitable and confusion among everyone, including the law enforcement agencies, needs to be kept to a minimum. It is critical that your hands be visible and in plain sight at all times, and that you speak slowly and calmly. Avoid making any quick movements and avoid pointing, screaming or yelling. Most important is to follow all directions.

Human Resources and the facility Safety/Security departments must work together and create a process whereby prevention preparedness is well implemented. Human resource departments can develop screenings of new hires, establish reporting mechanisms, and conduct behavior awareness classes, behavior and confrontation training. Safety and Security departments can institute access control (entrance and egress), emergency notifications, lockdown and/or evacuation procedures, and test and train employees. Each facility has its own unique environment in which a comprehensive risk analysis must be done first, before any specific procedures can be developed.

Lockdown or Evacuate?

Most schools have adopted a “lockdown” procedure where fire doors, exterior doors and sections of the school can be shut down and isolated. This protocol is based on several assumptions:

- The law enforcement agencies will arrive quickly to respond to the incident.
- A lockdown will protect students and staff, rather than endanger them.
- The law enforcement agencies will control the scene and protect all involved.

Lockdowns also adopt the philosophy that it will isolate the hostile intruders in one section, thus minimizing exposure, and that most people can secure themselves and wait until law enforcement arrives.

In an open business environment, many have found that a total lockdown is a very difficult process, or not feasible in their particular set of circumstances. There may be multiple entrances and exits, the shooters may have access to all areas, and many businesses don't always have complete control over the physical facility. The DHS guideline is to evacuate first, getting as far away from the shooter as possible. This rationale is based on the fact that many shootings are over in less than eight minutes, and the shooter is going after as many easy targets as possible. A site's emergency action plan can drill employees on evacuating and assembling at an offsite location for accountability; however, human behavior will demonstrate that this may not be feasible in a traumatic, life-threatening event like a shooting. Employees may evacuate successfully; however, they most likely will not stay in one place and will usually head to a safe haven, such as their home, a relative, a neighbor or a friend's house.

Again, preparation is the key to a successful prevention program. Business and local police must foster a good close relationship and train for such events. Training together will be an

invaluable experience to test these procedures. The more realistic the training each employee receives will only benefit the organization and, hopefully, prevent the loss of any life. At a minimum, a tabletop exercise scenario can help in understanding the roles and responsibilities of both management and law enforcement. Gaps in the program and weaknesses will be better identified and continuous improvement will result with each new learning event.

Post-Scenario Management

The last step in a good workplace violence/hostile intruder procedure will address the post-management process of an incident or event. Accountability of all personnel of the use of assembly points, call-ins, cell phones, texting or making personal contact with individuals will need to be established as to the best methods for communications in the company. A determination of who is injured and who is missing will need to be established as soon as possible. How will notifications of individuals who are victims be handled with families, law enforcement and the media? Post-traumatic stress evaluations will be needed for most employees at the scene, and consideration will need to be made for any ongoing counseling services. Post-critique and investigation procedures for the event will take time to do completely and correctly. There will also most likely be litigation involved, and accurate investigations, documentation, and public statements must be done with proper care and with the right people.

Conclusion

Active shooters and workplace violence is an unfortunate reality that we must deal with in our society. Each business must evaluate its risks and prepare a plan in order to reduce the likelihood of such a traumatic event taking place. While homicide trends appear to be declining, the shootings that do take place are becoming more violent, and fatality counts are becoming greater when the unthinkable does happen. A well-developed, preplanned procedure will greatly reduce the likelihood of such an event taking place at the worksite. A cooperative effort by Management, Human Resources, Safety and Security will be paramount in the success of a good workplace violence program. Proper training of employees and supervisors, and building a relationship with the local law enforcement agency, will ensure that this program is effective and sustainable.

ⁱ www.osha.gov/SLTC/workplaceviolence

ⁱⁱ www.bls.gov/news.release/cfoi.nr0.htm

ⁱⁱⁱ www.usatoday.com/money/workplace/2004-2007-15-workplace-violence2_x.htm

^{iv} <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/IS907.asp>

^v www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=NEWS_RELEASES&p_id=20637In

^{vi} www.dhs.gov/cfsector

^{vii} www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/active_shooter_booklet.pdf