



SAFETY TALKS: Active Shooter Response

An active shooter situation is a scenario many people don't want to think about – but it's important to be prepared. Although an active shooter situation is rare in the workplace, it happens, and employers need to make sure they are prepared. In 2014, 674 homicides and suicides occurred on the job, according to the 2017 edition of "Injury Facts," a National Safety Council chartbook. Addressing workplace violence is an essential element of your workplace safety and health program. Having a policy that strictly prohibits violence, or threats of violence, is the first step. Employees must also be trained on the policy, and there should be procedures in place for what to do if an employee hears or suspects there is a threat. Most attackers have no prior history, and there is no accurate or useful way to identify who may become an active shooter. The Department of Homeland Security notes that active shooter situations evolve quickly. A study of Active Shooter Incidents in the US between 2000 and 2013, at least half the incidents ended in 2 minutes or less. 69% ended in 5 minutes or less. Every moment counts when near an active shooter. "Because active shooter situations are often over within 10 to 15 minutes, before law enforcement arrives on the scene, individuals must be prepared both mentally and physically to deal with an active shooter situation," DHS states.

The department advises being prepared to take three courses of action:

- **Run.** If you see someone with a gun or hear gunfire, run away as fast as possible if you have an accessible escape path – even if others around you don't want to follow. However, help others escape if you can. Leave all belongings behind. If law enforcement is on the scene when you get away, keep your hands visible above your head and follow instructions. Don't stop to move wounded victims.
- **Hide.** If you can't escape, find a place where the shooter is unlikely to find you. Find a room with a door and lock it. If it doesn't have a lock, barricade heavy furniture against the door. Silence all electronics and do your best to remain calm and quiet. Hide behind large items.
- **Fight.** DHS recommends confronting the shooter, but only as a last resort when you believe your life is in imminent danger. Act aggressively and throw items at the shooter or use an improvised weapon.

Training your employees on how to prevent, mitigate and respond to an active shooter event is important. Untrained persons will say, "I can't believe this is happening to me," while a trained person takes action.