



911 BULLETIN

Active Shooting Response

*Procedures and Pre-Arrival Survival
Instructions for managing a critical
incident in progress.*

*Excerpted in part from PowerPhone's Total Response® Emergency Call
Handling System. For more information on how standardized call taking can
enhance your PSAP visit www.powerphone.com or call us at 1.800.537.6937.*

Introduction

PowerPhone's Total Response Active Shooter procedure provides the dispatcher with pre-arrival instructions based upon Department of Homeland Security guidelines. These instructions are normally an integral part of the Total Response Call Handling system. They are distributed freely via this bulletin to promote greater awareness for the need to equip call takers and dispatchers with effective instructions when handling Active Shooter events. Your agency does not have to be a licensed user of Total Response to adopt these instructions within your PSAP, and your dispatchers are not required to hold PowerPhone certification in Law Enforcement Dispatch.

What is an Active Shooting Incident?

According to the Department of Homeland Security/FBI, an "active shooter" is defined as: *one or more individuals participating in a random or systematic killing spree demonstrating their intent to harm others with a firearm.* An active shooter's objective is that of mass murder, rather than committing traditional criminal acts, such as robbery or burglary. Active shooter attacks are dynamic incidents that vary greatly from one to another.

Why is this of Major Concern Now?

In the aftermath of recent events, it would be understandable to assume that active shooter incidents in the U.S. have become more frequent. But a recent NYPD report states statistics do not indicate an increase in active shooter incidents between 2006 and 2012. However, there is some evidence that mass shootings are getting deadlier. In December 2012, Adam Lanza, 20, fatally shot his mother in her home and then gunned down 20 children and 6 adults at Sandy Hook Elementary School before committing suicide. James Holmes, 24, is accused of shooting 12 people dead and wounding 58 others at a cinema in Aurora, Colo., in July 2012.

Responding to Active Shooter Incidents

Figures released by the Department of Homeland Security indicate that the average active shooter incident lasts 12.5 minutes, while the average law enforcement response time takes 18 minutes. These acts of extreme violence often cannot be prevented. Unless law enforcement is present precisely at the time of an attack, there will always be a delay between the initiation of

violence and their arrival on scene. This means that the 911 dispatcher is very likely to be the first law enforcement representative to establish contact with victims or those closely involved in these dramatic and often fast moving events. Until responders are physically present, the **only individual** predominantly **in control** during an Active Shooter incident is the **shooter himself**. So in the time separating the **first and last shots** fired in Active Shooter incidents, those who have the capacity to **react** to the threat are the **victims** and **potential victims**. Yet many people in these circumstances will turn to 911 for help and advice. Agencies need to not only ensure that their response plans are current and the correct responders are dispatched to the scene, they also need to recognize the importance of the dispatcher in these situations and equip them with the tools to help mitigate risk at a critical moment of the incident timeline.

Pre-Arrival Survival™ Instructions

The Department of Homeland Security in its publication "Active Shooter: How to Respond" puts forth three steps that building occupants should take when an active shooter is in the vicinity:

Evacuate: Building occupants should evacuate the facility if safe to do so. Evacuees should leave behind their belongings, visualize their entire escape route before beginning to move, and avoid using elevators or escalators.

Hide: If evacuating the facility is not possible, building occupants should hide in a secure area (preferably a designated shelter location), lock the door, blockade the door with heavy furniture, cover all windows, turn off all lights, silence any electronic devices, lie on the floor, and remain silent.

Take Action: If neither evacuating the facility nor seeking shelter is possible, building occupants should attempt to disrupt and/or incapacitate the active shooter by throwing objects, using aggressive force, and yelling.

Reporting an Active Shooter Event

An Active Shooter event could initially be reported by the caller as something other than an obvious active shooter scenario. They may describe sounds they have heard, such as gunfire or people screaming. The caller may have witnessed a suspicious person moments before the attack or as they opened fire. The descriptive details they provide may be invaluable to protect responders or assist them in identifying the attacker within a crowd. But in the critical moments before responders arrive, priority must be to protect life, either by instructing those closest to the scene to escape or to secure their location.

PowerPhone's Active Shooter procedure assumes the dispatcher possesses the core communication skills required of a public safety communicator. All PowerPhone instruction is based upon the principal of empowering students to understand the fundamentals of a structured call handling approach and utilize their skills and experience in response to the information presented to them. Of course these points alone will not ensure complete preparedness for any situation. To ensure best practice is maintained, a continuous process of call review should be in place to promote a culture of continuing education and to confirm that agency policy and procedures meet operational needs. Over the years, PowerPhone has developed a number of specific methods in responding to emergency calls. One of the most important and widely used methods is the **Journalistic Investigative Approach**. This is considered to be the most effective way to systematically screen a call and quickly, effectively and appropriately respond.

Active Shooter Procedure

The procedure has been designed to be used after the initial dispatch of responders to a reported event. With units en route, the dispatcher handling the call is encouraged to try and solicit additional information from the caller that may aid responders, as well as offer advice and reassurance to the caller.

This Active Shooter procedure is excerpted from Total Response[®], PowerPhone's protocol-based call handling system. For more information on how Total Response can guide your center in achieving greater call consistency and a better standard of care visit us at www.powerphone.com.

1. Have you seen the shooter(s)?

Remember, each new caller is potentially a new witness, with new and changing information. Obtain specific intelligence as it pertains to the exact location of the Active Shooter.

2. Do you know where the shooter is now? Are they moving around, have fled the scene or close by?

When handling a crime or incident in progress such as an active shooting, your responsibilities should include updating information to responders.

3. Do you know or are you able to describe the person(s), their vehicle(s), and/or any weapon(s) used?

The telecommunicator must strive to identify the suspect(s), but not lose focus on the victim.

3a. If Yes, go to the Description-Person, Description-Vehicle, or Description-Weapon procedures as necessary.

PowerPhone has developed a set of procedures that address each of the description types mentioned above. These detail the types of questions and approaches needed to gain the best information possible with respect to identifying the persons, vehicles and weapons that might be involved.

4. Has anyone been injured? If yes, how many people have been hurt?

In a violent, fast moving situation, details of the number of people injured and their location may change rapidly.

5. If you are in a building and able to evacuate safely, you should do it now. Do not waste time gathering up any belongings, try to plan and visualize your escape route before beginning to move and avoid using elevators or escalators

Evacuate: The DHS recommends that building occupants should evacuate the facility if safe to do so.

6. If you are unable to vacate the area safely, secure your immediate location. Lock the door or barricade it with a heavy object, cover windows and get everyone to stay out of sight.

Hide: If evacuating the facility is not possible, building occupants should hide in a secure area.

7. If escape is not possible, stay where you are until an officer gives you instruction.

Active Shooter

1. Have you seen the shooter(s)?
 - Information about those involved will help responders, but the safety of the caller and others at the scene should be the primary concern.
2. Do you know where the shooter is now? Are they moving around, have fled the scene or close by?
3. Do you know or are you able to describe the person(s), their vehicle(s), and/or any weapon(s) used?
➔ **If YES:** go to **Description-Person**, **Description-Vehicle** or **Description-Weapon** procedure as necessary.
4. Has anyone been injured? If yes, how many people have been hurt?
5. If you are in a building and able to evacuate safely, you should do it now. Do not waste time gathering up any belongings, try to plan and visualize your escape route before beginning to move and avoid using elevators or escalators.
6. If you are unable to vacate the area safely, secure your immediate location. Lock the door or barricade it with a heavy object, cover windows and get everyone to stay out of sight.
 - Try to stay low, silence any mobile phones and other electronic equipment. Try to remain calm and reassure others around you.
7. If escape is not possible, stay where you are until an officer gives you instruction.

Active Shooter Incident

“One or more individuals participating in a random or systematic killing spree demonstrating their intent to harm others with a firearm.”

Description–Person v1

1. How is the person associated to the incident?
2. Has the person left the scene?
➔ **If YES:** How long ago and what was their direction of travel? Were they on foot or in a vehicle?
3. Gender?
4. Ethnic Origin?
5. Hair? (style and/or color)
 - Head and/or facial.
6. Height? (approximate)
7. Can you describe their clothing?
8. Do you know their name and address?
9. Do they have any distinguishing features?
 - Such as scars, tattoos, jewelry, etc.
10. Have any warrants or restraining orders been issued against this person?
11. What did they say or do?
12. Have weapons been seen or used? If so, can you describe them?
13. What is your name and address?
14. Are you able to move to a position of safety and observe the scene?
15. Is it safe to remain on scene until responders arrive?

Description–Vehicle v1

1. What type of vehicle is it?
2. Can you describe it?
3. What is the license plate?
4. Can you describe the make and model?
5. Can you describe any distinguishing features?
 - I.e., customized modifications, accident damage, color.
6. Has the vehicle left the scene?
7. How long ago did it leave?
8. What direction did it travel in?
9. How many persons were in/on the vehicle?
10. Can you describe any of them?
11. Have weapons been seen or used? If so, can you describe them?

Description–Weapon v1

1. How is the person with the weapon associated to the incident?
2. Has the person left the scene?
3. Can you describe the weapon?
4. Did it have any distinguishing features?