



The purpose of this bulletin is to provide background and information regarding workplace violence and active shooter response to assist risk control personnel with general inquiries regarding this subject.

Currently the subjects of workplace violence and active shooter response are generating interest in the commercial section. The Occupational Health and Safety Administration has recently published an instruction for employers¹. Additionally, the American Society of Industrial Security in conjunction with the Society for Human Resource Management has published a guide that can assist employers and business in developing a template for a program in this area.²

Workplace violence programs evolved with the primary focus of protecting workers from violence at the workplace from other workers or external criminal elements. Programs were designed with primary objectives:

- Understanding the threats and sources for workplace violence
- Understanding workplace violence organizationally and educating employees and stakeholders on the organization's awareness and stance on the issue

- Developing training to recognize potential signs of workplace violence and respond appropriately.
- Developing meaningful oversight to assist the organization in managing evolving needs in this area.

The Occupational Health and Safety Administration define workplace violence as “any physical assault, threatening behavior, or verbal abuse occurring in the work setting. A workplace may be any location either permanent or temporary where an employee performs any work-related duty. This includes, but is not limited to, the buildings and the surrounding perimeters, including the parking lots, field locations, clients’ homes and traveling to and from work assignments”³.

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(s) and there is no pattern or method to their selection of victims”⁴.

Companies could consider it useful to view an active shooter response plan as part of an overall workplace violence prevention program. They have distinct elements but can also be viewed as components of a larger plan

The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health maintain statistics in conjunction with the Bureau of Labor Statistics that measure the magnitude of workplace violence⁵. The Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (COFI) reported 14,770 workplace homicide victims between 1992 and 2012 reported 14,770. Interestingly over half of the workplace homicides occurred within three occupations; sales and related occupations (28%) protective service occupations (17%), and transportation and material moving operations

¹OSHA Instruction Directive No.: CPL 02-01-052, September 8, 2011 Enforcement Procedures for Investigating or Inspecting Workplace Violence Incidents

²Workplace Violence Prevention and Intervention; American National Standard ANSI/ASIS/SHRM WPVI 1-2011

³ <https://www.osha.gov/dte/library/wp-violence/healthcare/slide2.html>

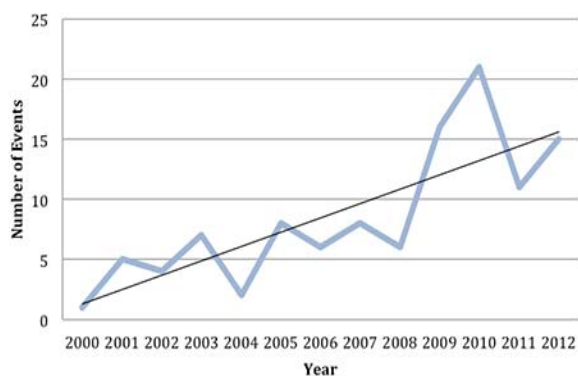
⁴ http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/active_shooter_booklet.pdf

⁵ <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/violence/>

(13%).

The average number of workplace homicides was 700, with the largest number in one year occurring in 1994 and the lowest number occurring 2011. This would indicate to the reader that the velocity of fatal workplace violence incidents is trending down.

On the other hand, The Federal Bureau of Investigation published their study of active shooter events from 2000 to 2014. Their study indicates that the number of active shooter events in the past 14 years has risen. This may be because of better reporting or classifications of the incidents. (See below)⁶



Regardless of the frequency of when an active shooter event happens, it is a tragedy of immense proportion with lasting consequences and media attention. As stated in the Department of Homeland Security's guide to active shooter response, the randomness and unforeseen nature of the event is a constant of varying degrees in every incident.

Hence, there may be no "one size fits all" approach to either workplace violence prevention or active shooter response programs because of the nature, type and size of the business. There are however some common elements that may assist a business

to determine the nature, depth and complexity of a response and apply some common practices.

Some considerations for developing or assessing a Workplace Violence Prevention Programs:

1. Does the organization have a clear definition of what Workplace Violence and active shooter means? Does the plan identify critical incidents that would trigger activation of a response plan?
2. Is there a clear policy that states how to safely report workplace violence and what one can do to prevent it (Employee Assistance Programs, Human Resource Referrals, etc.?)
3. Does the plan integrate the response portion into existing business continuity and emergency evacuation plans to provide a consistent roadmap for employee emergency response? (Is it part of a larger plan that can be practiced, such as a critical incident response plan?)
4. Pre-incident preparation – Has the plan been communicated and practiced both internally and externally to the law enforcement and public safety community? Is the plan integrated into the culture of the organization? For example, is there a distinction as to evacuation vs. "shelter in place" and has that concept been tested? Do first responders understand the plan and their expected response from the organization?
5. Does the awareness part of the plan include some basic information on:
 - a. How to recognize early warning signs of potentially violent behavior and how and who to communicate the observations confidentially and safely when observed:
 - i. Is there a simple immediate subset of the plan for first line supervisors that explain their specific responsibilities?

⁶ <http://leb.fbi.gov/2014/january/active-shooter-events-from-2000-to-2012>



- b. How to diffuse hostile situations.
- c. Explanation between evacuation and shelter in place?
 - i. Are there concealment plans (where and when is it safe to stay vs. leave, etc?)
- d. How to evacuate safely in each situation.
6. Does the plan have clearly stated emergency actions? If something happens the plan should include a hierarchy in the organization to help coordinate actions quickly and a crisis communication component that has been tested to help with internal and external communications.
7. Is there regular training in procedures and responsibilities? The plan should identify those responsible as well as backups for action steps and decisions as well as those responsible for continuing awareness and education of new and continuing employees.
8. Is there sound testing and exercises? As with any continuity or emergency response plan there are responsibilities at the individual, supervisor and organizational levels that should be tested regularly based on the needs of the organization.
9. Has the plan been well integrated? Workplace violence and active shooter response plans educate and train organizations to deal with an emergency. Prevention plans largely focus on training education and progressive actions geared at avoiding workplace violence. Response plans have common components. The simpler and more clear the plan the more likely it can be followed easily. Whenever there is a common response plan for emergency actions that is generic (with exceptions as in active shooter response shelter in place components), the more likely that it can be executed in an emergency.

Active shooter preparedness and response plans are generally designed with the specific challenges of the business operation in mind and are primarily geared towards individual personal safety.

Healthcare and educational organizations pose some unique challenges as they are faced with operational, care giver, and custodial dynamics different from other businesses.

There are some common elements to an active shooter response that are worth sharing and are readily available. The following is excerpted from the Department of Homeland Security Active Shooter Preparedness website.⁷ An organization that is interested in developing training in this area is encouraged to look towards this resource initially.

Preparing For and Preventing an Active Shooter Situation:

¹http://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/active_shooter_educational_booklet_508.pdf

Preparedness

- Ensure that your facility has at least two evacuation routes
- Post evacuation routes in conspicuous locations throughout your facility
- Include local law enforcement and first responders during training exercises
- Encourage law enforcement, emergency responders, SWAT teams, K-9 teams, and bomb squads to train for an active shooter scenario at your location
- Prevention; foster a respectful workplace
- Be aware of indications of workplace violence and take remedial actions accordingly

Additionally, there are a number of Government resources for assisting businesses with various workplace violence issues:

OSHA Workplace Violence Risk Factors:

<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/workplaceviolence/recognition.html>

Workplace Violence Prevention Programs :

<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/workplaceviolence/evaluation.html>

Guidelines for Preventing Workplace Violence for Health Care & Social Service Workers:

<https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3148/osh3148.html>

The Department of Homeland Security has active shooter resources for program management and response:

<http://www.dhs.gov/active-shooter-preparednes>

