



THE FOOD  
INDUSTRY  
ASSOCIATION

# Active Assailant Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Guide for the Food Retail Industry

March 2023

In partnership with

**THE POWER OF PREPAREDNESS™**

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#### **ABOUT FMI**

As the food industry association, FMI works with and on behalf of the entire industry to advance a safer, healthier and more efficient consumer food supply chain. FMI brings together a wide range of members across the value chain - from retailers that sell to consumers, to producers that supply food and other products, as well as the wide variety of companies providing critical services—to amplify the collective work of the industry. [www.fmi.org](http://www.fmi.org).

### **THE POWER OF PREPAREDNESS™**

#### **ABOUT TPOP**

The Power of Preparedness (TPOP) is a Michigan-based eLearning company that delivers online workplace violence and active shooter preparedness and response training customized to the unique needs of the food retail industry.

TPOP's comprehensive courses include:

- The Value of Early Indicators
- Situational Awareness and Gunfire Recognition
- De-escalation Techniques
- Surviving an Active Shooter Event – scenario-based Run, Hide, Fight, and more
- Response to Injury

Unlike the many PowerPoint-based or play-only video solutions on the market, TPOP provides a true, state-of-the-art interactive platform, dramatically increasing knowledge retention and recognition.

Learn more at [www.thepowerofpreparedness.com](http://www.thepowerofpreparedness.com).

#### **FMI AND TPOP PRESENT ONLINE TRAINING: WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PREPAREDNESS**

FMI members can implement comprehensive online training for workplace violence prevention, verbal de-escalation, and active assailant preparedness. The member-discounted training, which is custom tailored for the grocery and food industry, will give FMI members and their workers the knowledge and confidence to identify, prevent, and if necessary, minimize potentially violent conflicts.

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# Active Assailant Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Guide for the Food Retail Industry

**March 2023**

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The United States is experiencing an extraordinarily complex and dynamic active shooter threat environment, making it crucial that food retailers develop strategies and tactics for the prevention, response and recovery to this type of hazard.

FMI has partnered with The Power of Preparedness (TPOP) to provide strategy and tactics necessary to mitigate workplace violence and active shooter incidents and to provide our members with guidelines, training and best practices for mitigating the risk of active shooter threats.

In this document, we use the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)'s definition of an active shooter: "An individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a populated area." Active shooter incidents are dynamic and quickly evolve. While firearms are the weapon of choice, any weapon (such as knives, sharp objects, etc.) can be used to harm innocent individuals. The high number of casualties from these kinds of attacks underscores the importance of improving preparedness to help mitigate the consequences of potential future occurrences.



The May 2022 FBI report, *Active Shooter Incidents in the United States*, indicates that the number of attacks doubled from 2017 to 2020. There is a clear upward trend in the number of active shooter incidents each year and this trend is likely to continue in the near term.

Another FBI study (*FBI: A Study Of The Pre-Attack Behaviors Of Active Shooters In The United States Between 2000 – 2013*, released June 2018) identified mental health issues as one of the leading stressors associated with active shooter incidents. At present, one in five Americans suffer from some type of mental illness, and the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration SAMHSA has forecast that mental health and substance use disorders will soon surpass all other types of disability worldwide. Mental illnesses are common and increasing in their prevalence.

About half of adults (48%) continue to report negative mental health impacts related to stress from the pandemic according to the most recent Kaiser Family Foundation study.

The American Psychological Association's annual Stress in America Poll indicates that the COVID-19 pandemic has already resulted in significant mental health distress with nearly half (48%) of those surveyed stating that their level of stress has increased compared with before the pandemic.

Topics covered in this document include:

- **Pre-incident Planning**
- **Incident Actions**
- **Post-incident Recovery**
- **Resources/Templates**



# Pre-Incident Planning

An Active Shooter Preparedness Plan is a critical component to retail food facility occupant safety. Active shooter incidents are trending upwards, and the random nature of the threat presents a complex challenge to security and law enforcement personnel. Should deterrence and prevention fail, employee knowledge, emergency preparedness and protective actions will save lives. Therefore, an Active Shooter Preparedness Plan that delineates procedures to protect life and property during emergency conditions is an essential tool before, during, and after an active shooter incident.

Law enforcement and other first responder personnel are invaluable resources in developing an Active Shooter Preparedness Plan. Store managers should coordinate with local law enforcement to maximize response effectiveness and to minimize confusion and delay if an incident occurs. Building strong partnerships with law enforcement and fire departments, as well as Emergency Medical Services (EMS) organizations, will ensure first responders are familiar with the facility layout, entrances and exits, video surveillance systems and controls, and other vital issues. Providing this detailed information to first responders allows them to move through a facility rapidly during an active shooter incident in order to quickly locate and incapacitate the shooter. Incapacitating the shooter minimizing casualties and allowing first responders time to ensure areas are safe to tend to people in need. Managers should consider conducting facility familiarization with law enforcement to allow for realistic walk-throughs as well as training and exercises to support better preparedness for an active shooter incident.

Plans should include collaboration with internal (company) and external (first responder) stakeholders. Internal stakeholders may comprise corporate leadership, security, property managers, the human resources department, risk / loss control managers, and the training department. External stakeholders should include local law enforcement officers, EMS, emergency management, and fire personnel.

Prior to finalizing or updating the Active Shooter Preparedness Plan, those responsible should expect to encounter and address a variety of potential challenges.

These challenges include, but are not limited to:

- Facility size.
- Population density.
- Existing security practices.
- Interaction with the public.

- Areas of ingress and egress or entrance and exit areas.
- Mixed-use spaces (e.g., retail shops).
- People with disabilities and others with access and functional needs.
- Law enforcement response time.
- Internal and external communications.
- Door numbering system.

Additionally, effective Active Shooter Preparedness Plan should include coordination and development of the following:

An Insider Threat Program that proactively evaluates, identifies, and mitigates workforce issues by training employees to recognize the warning signs posed by malicious insiders (co-workers, guests).

A preferred method for reporting active shooter incidents, including informing all those at the facility or all those who may be entering the facility.

- Formalized “Run, Hide, Fight” protocols.
- Emergency escape procedures and route assignments, including where and how to evacuate when primary evacuation routes are unusable.
- Procedures for how to select effective “hide” locations.
- Barricade tools, window breaking mechanisms, etc.
- Formal exercise cadence deploying the above process and methods annually.
- Consider establishing an Employee Assistance Program.

Review potential locations that, at a minimum, provide concealment from an assailant. Optimal locations include ballistic protection known as “cover,” consisting of thick walls made of steel, cinder block, brick and mortar, or other material capable of stopping a bullet. It is a best practice to use safe and securable rooms when hiding from an active shooter. These rooms are safer than typical hiding locations, but no one is ever completely safe during an active shooter incident until the threat is neutralized. Consider retrofitting safe rooms into existing facilities and including them with new construction.

Planning teams should ensure safe rooms are accessible for persons with disabilities and should consider stocking them with:

- First aid and stop the bleed kits (including tourniquets).
- Hand-held radio/headsets.
- Employee roster and emergency contact numbers.
- Water, toiletries, cleaning wipes.
- Floor plan showing emergency evacuation routes and exits.
- Electrical outlet or charging capability.
- Critical response kit bag with stickers (green/cleared), access key, plans, contacts (security, etc.).

## 1A. Workplace Violence Prevention

Most acts of workplace violence occur as some form of verbal or non-verbal threat, bullying, harassment, or non-fatal physical assault. However, acts of physical workplace violence may originate from some form of non-physical violence, so managers must take all threats seriously and respond appropriately.

Research and analysis from active shooter incidents consistently show that current or former employees are perpetrators of some of these events. In fact, most attackers displayed some concerning behavior prior to the actual event. Therefore, all personnel should be trained on suspicious and anomalous behavior recognition and should be encouraged to share concerns they may have regarding coworkers through proper reporting procedures as defined by company policy. A reasonable awareness of the warning signs that can precede an act of violence may prompt employees to share their concerns with someone who can help.

To prevent situations and inappropriate behavior from escalating, preparedness plans should emphasize the importance of immediately reporting workplace violence.

Depending on the nature of the situation, available resources, and the need for security/law enforcement involvement, reports may be made by or provided to:

- The employee's supervisor.
- The responsible security personnel.
- Human resources.
- Local mental health agencies or crisis intervention organizations.
- Local law enforcement departments.

It is recommended that an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) be properly implemented and promoted, including situational awareness training: "If you see something, say something". The effectiveness of any workplace violence program is enhanced in an organization with an active, well-known EAP presence.

Companies with active programs promote the EAP by:

- Issuing periodic statements from top management endorsing the program and reminding employees of the services offered by the EAP.
- Having counselors attend staff meetings to familiarize employees with the counselors.
- Having counselors give special briefings and seminars for managers, employees, and union stewards.
- Reminding employees that, by law, all services provided by the EAP are confidential.



Store, warehouse, and office employees should learn the signs of a potentially volatile situation that could develop into an active shooter incident. Each employee should be empowered to proactively seek ways to prevent an incident with internal resources or additional external assistance. The FBI 2018 report, *A Study of Pre-Attack Behaviors of Active Shooters in the United States Between 2000 and 2017*, indicated that each shooter, on average, displayed four to five concerning behaviors over time that were observable to others.

## 1B. Training and Awareness

Training is one of the best activities to help prepare personnel to react quickly and effectively in emergency situations. When considering training options for active shooter incidents, conduct a review to identify the best training approach for your facility and staff. A review should assess the specific features of the facility itself along with the needs and capabilities of the personnel working at the facility.

The method of instruction depends on several factors. Instructor-led training is more formal and requires a time commitment from participants for the duration of the course and is contingent on the availability of employees when the training is provided. A growing number of companies are utilizing online or web-based instruction that can reduce or alleviate scheduling conflicts or travel requirements. Web-based instruction is also excellent for onboarding newly hired employees and for the subset of staff with a high degree of turnover.

Awareness campaigns of the active shooter threat can augment training and help ensure a much higher chance of reacting quickly and surviving an incident. Posters and other visual aids illustrate key learning points and can be situated in appropriate locations at the facility. These types of resources reinforce training program objectives and strengthen retention of essential information.

Facility staff may also be trained in the basics of stopping blood loss, so injured victims in jeopardy of 'bleeding out' can be tended to during the minutes it takes for emergency healthcare professionals to gain safe access to them. This training can include basic information on how to improvise a bandage and apply direct wound pressure. Tourniquets have been shown to be lifesaving, but it is unlikely commercial tourniquets will be immediately available in most circumstances. Therefore, training for staff could include when to use a tourniquet, how to improvise a tourniquet, and the correct application of a tourniquet. All first aid training should be conducted by a qualified source.

## 1C. Exercises

There are many types of exercises, starting with discussion-based exercises such as seminars and tabletop exercises. Activities can graduate to task-based exercises, which focus on key functions and responsibilities (i.e., functional exercises). Finally, a full-scale exercise is operations-based and utilizes personnel and equipment from multiple jurisdictions. Exercises can involve the entire facility population and local responders or be narrower in scope to address a smaller portion of the facility or population. Announce all drills and exercises prior to conducting them.

Recommended exercise topics include:

- Pre-designated assembly points for people who need assistance evacuating.
- Verified points of accessible exits.
- Internal training program for all employees.
- Established alert and notification procedures.
- Pre-determined communication capabilities.
- Location of first aid equipment.

Information for the design and conduct of exercises is available from multiple government organizations. CISA offers free table top exercises. In addition, FEMA's Independent Study (IS) program. FEMA IS courses (see Reference section) that would be beneficial in exercise planning and conduct include:

- IS-120.C: An Introduction to Exercises
- IS-130.A: How to be an Exercise Evaluator
- IS-139.A: Exercise Design and Development





## Incident Actions

When an incident occurs, it is important to follow the Active Shooter Preparedness Plan and follow directions of first responders during the incident. However, individuals may have to rely on their own judgment to decide which option will best protect lives, including their own. No single response fits all active shooter incidents but ensuring everyone knows their response options and empowering them to react decisively will save valuable time and will save lives.

There is no definitive best reaction during active shooter incidents, but implementing the “Run, Hide, Fight” concept, supported by DHS and the FBI, can increase the odds of survival. Unless otherwise directed by law enforcement or other emergency personnel, individuals should apply the “Run, Hide, Fight” options.

Managers can help employees better prepare, respond, and recover by discussing active shooter considerations and entrusting employees to make the best decision they can at the time, based on their individual circumstances. During an active shooter incident, those present will rarely have all the information they need to make a fully informed decision about applying “Run, Hide, Fight.” It is common for people confronted with a threat to initially not recognize the possible danger.

**“Run, Hide, Fight” is not a sequential process, but a list of response options.** Depending on how close individuals are to the shooter, occupants might run away from the shooter, seek a secure place where they can hide and deny the shooter access, or physically incapacitate the shooter in order survive and protect others from harm. Likewise, individuals might first need to hide and then run to safety when able. Although they should follow the plan, their training, and any instructions given by authorities during an incident, they will often have to rely on their own judgment. Training and the mental rehearsal of scenarios and response options in advance will assist individuals and groups in quickly selecting their best course of action.

Staff should understand how to lead or direct customers and patrons to the nearest evacuation routes (run) and identified secure areas (hide). Train staff to overcome denial and to respond immediately. For example, train staff to recognize the sounds of gunfire and forcefully communicate the danger and necessary action (e.g., “Gun! Get out!”). In addition, those closest to an intercom, overhead announcement device or other communications system, or who are otherwise able to alert others, should communicate the danger and necessary action. Internal communication with those in the immediate situation is essential.

Managers are encouraged to use any means necessary, including information technology platforms or devices (e.g., computer messaging, mobile phone applications, etc.) to disseminate information to the workforce in a dynamic environment. A clear and concise message is necessary both for the person making the announcement and those receiving it. A template can be generated and positioned near the public address or communications systems. Essential information to transmit is that an active shooter situation exists and what is known about the shooter's location (e.g., inside or outside, what floor, location unknown). Repetition in training and preparedness shortens the time it takes to orient, observe, and act. Upon recognizing the danger, staff or others must alert responders as soon as it is safe to do so by contacting 911 with information that is as clear and accurate as possible.

Personal safety is the primary consideration in any emergency. If possible, help others to safety but evacuate even if others do not follow. Rendering aid can be as simple as rallying victims (e.g., "Follow me!"). Response to an incident will involve the store patrons, employees, responding law enforcement and other emergency responders.

## 2A. General Response Guidance for Employees – Run, Hide, Fight

Staff and store occupants should make every attempt to distance themselves from the shooter and, when possible, attempt to exit the facility through the safest route away from the assailant. Given the dynamic nature of a shooter event, evacuating the facility via practiced fire drill routes which were not designed to take into account the dynamic nature of a shooter incident) may put individuals at risk or may not be possible.

You are typically the first to respond. Employees may need to run out of the facility or away from the area and move as far away as possible until they are in a safe location. These options should be clearly conveyed to employees during active shooter training. Despite the complexity of these incidents, at-risk facility occupants who can evacuate safely should do so. When an active shooter is in the vicinity, staff must be prepared both mentally and physically to react to the situation.

If the decision to run is implemented, occupants should:

**RUN** - Evacuate if possible. Run until you reach safety.

- Here are your options:
- Determine escape route and evacuate as quickly as possible.
- Run even if others do not agree to follow.
- Leave belongings behind. If you take your mobile device, ensure the ringer is disabled.
- Only attempt to help the wounded if it is safe to do so.
- If you are in the line of sight of the shooter, crouch, run in a zigzag pattern, and take cover.

- If possible, run to a designated reunification point. Remain there until police arrive.
- Follow all instructions of law enforcement.
- Keep hands empty, visible, and in the air to signal to law enforcement that you are unarmed.
- Call 911 when safe to do so. When possible, provide the following information to law enforcement:
  - Location and number of active shooter(s).
  - Your current location and proximity to the shooter.
  - If there is law enforcement on site.
  - Physical description of shooter(s).
  - Type and number of weapons used by shooter(s).
  - Use or threat of explosive or improvised explosive devices.

**HIDE** - Shelter if necessary. Here are your options:

- If running is not a safe option (e.g., the location of the shooter is unknown and running may inadvertently put you in their path), occupants should hide in as safe a place as possible, for example, locations where the walls might be thicker and have fewer windows. Likewise, for occupants who cannot run, hiding may be the only option.
- Go to the nearest room or office and lock the door(s). If the door does not lock, wedge the door shut, use furniture or heavy objects to barricade it, and/or secure handles using cords, neckties, etc.
- Identify an escape route in the event you are forced to run again.
- Close blinds, turn off lights, cover windows, and stay out of sight.
- Silence all noise – one person should call 911 if safe to do so.
- If it is not safe to talk, leave phone on for dispatcher to listen and to monitor.
- Identify ad-hoc weapons and be prepared to fight should the shooter enter the room.
- When safe to do so, use strategies to silently communicate with first responders, if possible (e.g., in rooms with exterior windows, make signs to silently signal law enforcement and emergency responders to indicate the status of the room's occupants).
- Hide along the wall closest to the exit but out of view from the doorway (which would allow the best option for ambushing the shooter and for escape if the shooter enters or passes by the room).
- Do not open the door until the person on the other side can provide an identification badge.
- If an opportunity arises where you can escape, run.

**FIGHT** - Take decisive and aggressive action to incapacitate the shooter.

Here are your options:

- ***If and only if your life is in imminent danger***, attempt to disrupt and/or aim to incapacitate the active shooter by using available resources or lethal force such as fire extinguishers, chairs, scissors, heavy objects, brooms, cans, etc.
- There is strength in numbers, so recruit others to ambush the shooter with makeshift weapons. Aim to cause severe or lethal injury to the shooter.
- Yell as loudly as possible to disorient the shooter as you attack.
- As possible, assist fellow staff and visitors.

## 2B. Plan for “Run, Hide, Fight” for Occupants with Disabilities

Any actions taken during activation of the Active Shooter Preparedness Plan must be as effective for individuals with disabilities as those actions provided for individuals without disabilities. When developing or making changes to the plan, it is imperative to evaluate and address those factors that can affect the access and functional needs population throughout the process. Applicable laws and regulations include but are not limited to:

- The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.
- The Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
- EO 12196 “Occupational Safety and Health Programs for Federal Employees” 1980.
- EO 13347 “Individuals with Disabilities in Emergency Preparedness” 2004.

## 2C. Know How to Interact with First Responders

The priority for responding law enforcement is to engage and neutralize the active shooter as soon as possible; all other actions are secondary.

First responders, such as law enforcement, firefighters, and emergency medical services personnel, coming to a facility because of a 911 call involving gunfire face a daunting task. The threat of an active shooter incident differs from responding to a natural disaster or other emergencies.

Active shooter incidents are one of the most dangerous situations law enforcement faces today. During active shootings, officers will enter the facility and proceed directly to the sounds of violence (e.g. gunshots, or pleas for life). Facility occupants should not be alarmed if officers shout commands and push individuals to the ground for their safety. They may employ pepper spray, tear gas and handcuffs.

Officers may be dressed in civilian clothes or patrol uniforms and may be wearing external bullet proof vests, Kevlar helmets, and other tactical equipment. The first officers to arrive on the scene will not stop to assist with injured personnel. Rescue teams consisting of additional officers and medical personnel, if authorized by facility and local law enforcement agency response plans, may follow the first wave, and will enter the facility as soon as possible.

The priority for responding law enforcement is to engage and neutralize the active shooter as soon as possible; all other actions are secondary. When law enforcement officers arrive at the scene, occupants should (as reinforced through training):

- Follow all instructions from the officers.
- Remain calm, think, and resist the urge to panic.
- Immediately raise hands and spread fingers.
- Always keep hands visible.
- Put down any items. **DO NOT PICK UP ASSAILANT'S WEAPON**
- Avoid making sudden or quick movements toward officers.
- Do not point, scream, or yell.
- Do not touch, grab, or ask for help from the officers when evacuating.
- Proceed in the direction as advised by the officers.
- Provide all relevant information to officers when asked, but do not distract responding officers unless it will assist in identifying the location of the shooter or the location(s) of known explosives or booby traps.







# Invest Post-Incident Recovery Management

Once the threat no longer exists and after the affected and wounded have been evacuated, crisis management teams should engage in post-incident assessments and activities in coordination with local law enforcement and emergency personnel, including:

- Partnering with law enforcement to account for all individuals (to include casualties). If possible, reach out to employees by phone if they don't check in.
- Staffing/standing up a Family Assistance Center (FAC).
- Assessing the psychological state of individuals at the scene and referring them to healthcare specialists accordingly.
- Employing continuity of operations plans to ensure mission-essential functions are carried out.
- Determining a transition plan that includes when to resume normal business operations and when the site will be turned back over from law enforcement.

Once the active shooter is neutralized, the incident site will be an active crime scene. Nothing should be touched unless it involves tending to the wounded. Discuss the implications of the facility as a crime scene with law enforcement officials in advance.

The senior representative and other key personnel should plan for an extended, evolving situation and any mass casualty or internal disaster plans may be activated to manage the continuing situation. Daily activities may be altered so law enforcement and first responders can investigate and clear the scene.

Federal and state laws mandate the care of crime victims in certain circumstances. Therefore, substantial resources and processes are already in place to aid victims and their families, most notably through state agencies, the Department of Justice, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Office for Victim Assistance. Prior familiarity with these resources, such as existing, dedicated toll-free numbers for victims and their families, will permit officials to immediately provide valuable information to victims, victim families, staff, and others affected by the tragedy.

## 3A. Understand Your Stakeholders and Crisis Management Team

Understanding the stakeholders that need to be reached during an emergency is one of the first steps in the development of a crisis communications annex or component to the Active Shooter Emergency Preparedness Plan. There are many potential stakeholders that will want information during and following a major incident and each has its own needs for information. The challenge is to identify potential stakeholders, determine their need for information, and then identify



who within the organization is best able to communicate with that stakeholder or audience.

The following represents a list (not in any priority order) of potential stakeholders:

- Building owner.
- Building management.
- Survivors impacted by the incident and their families.
- Employees and their families.
- News media.
- Community - especially businesses and residents living near the facility.
- First responder community.
- Suppliers.
- Clients and customers.
- Unions.
- Insurance Company.
- OSHA.
- Food Safety/Health Department.
- Potential stakeholders specifically within your organization.
  - Executive Team.
  - Legal Department.
  - Crisis Management Team.
  - Media Relations.
  - Human Resources (HR).
  - Facilities.
  - Maintenance.

*(Contact information for each stakeholder should be compiled and immediately accessible during an incident. Include as much information for each contact as possible (e.g., organization name, contact name, business telephone number, cell number, fax number and email address). Lists should be updated regularly, secured to protect confidential information and available to authorized users.)*

### **3B. Plan Your Crisis Communications**

A critical component of preparedness planning is crisis communications. Corporate headquarters and store management must be able to respond promptly, accurately, and confidently during an emergency and in the hours and days that follow. Many different stakeholders must be reached with information specific to their interests and needs. The image of the company can be positively or negatively impacted by perceptions of the handling of the active shooter or other emergency incidents.

It is critical to communicate quickly, truthfully, and comprehensively to the right people at the right time. However, determining how, when, and how much information is released to the community, stakeholders and to the media requires a thorough understanding of the situation. The following key concepts are best practices in this regard:

- Communications will be timely and honest.
- All employees should be informed at the same time.
- Give bad news all at once – do not sugarcoat it.
- Provide opportunity to ask questions, if possible.
- Provide regular updates and let stakeholders know when the next update will be issued.
- Communicate in a manner appropriate to circumstances:
  - Face-to-face meetings (individual and group).
  - News conferences (contact the person or department responsible for Media Relations).
  - Voice mail/email.
  - Text messaging.
  - Company intranet and internet sites.
  - Social media.
  - Toll-free hotline.
  - Special newsletter.
- Announcements using local or national media.

### **3C. Involve Your Government Officials and Regulatory Agencies**

An active shooter incident in the community will capture the attention of elected officials. A senior manager should be assigned to communicate with elected and public safety officials as deemed necessary.

Although it is the duty of law enforcement to protect the community, their ability to provide sensitive information - particularly during an ongoing crisis or investigation - can be extended through existing relationships with businesses based on a high level of trust. Developing that relationship and trust prior to a tragedy is crucial.

Communications with government officials depends upon the nature and severity of the incident and potential regulatory requirements. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and Health Department regulations, for example, require notification when there are three or more hospitalizations from an accident or if there is a fatality.

## 3D. Media Relations Management

In the case of an active shooter incident, the news media will be on-scene or calling to obtain details. There may be numerous requests for information from local, regional or national media. While primary responsibility for dealing with the media lies with law enforcement and the incident commander, corporate and/or store management must be prepared to support and take a leading role, depending on the circumstances.

The challenge of managing large numbers of requests for information, interviews, and public statements can be overwhelming. Prioritization of requests for information and development of press releases and talking points can assist with the need to communicate quickly and effectively.

Business interests and priorities during a crisis are different from the media. The media wants to gather as much information as possible, as quickly as possible, and some media outlets stress sensational elements. Your goal is to inform your staff, stakeholders, and the community accurately and appropriately about the situation, ideally before they hear about it on the news.

When talking to the media:

- Lead with facts.
- Do not hesitate to say, “I don’t know,” or “I will have to check and get back to you.” Find the answer and call back immediately.
- Do not speculate or answer hypothetical questions.
- Always return phone calls quickly.
- You and the reporter have different jobs; understand the differences.

Know and respect deadlines. Use them to set your own deadlines and understand the best time to pitch a story, the best time to schedule a news conference, and the latest you can call to get your quotes into a story. For more information on crisis communications, reference the [FMI Crisis Communications Guide](#).

Make sure you and the reporter you are talking to have the same understanding of specific terms, such as “off the record” and “not for attribution,” before you use them. These phrases vary regionally and personally. You must clarify your meaning every time with every reporter.

- On the record: The reporter can use anything you say and attribute the quotes to you. *You are always on the record unless you clearly specify otherwise.*
- Off the record: The reporter cannot use the information you are giving him in the story. Note, however, that he or she may use the information to find another source who will go on the record.
- Background or not for attribution: The reporter can use the information you supply for a story but must conceal you as the source. Avoid any misunderstandings by using “not for attribution” instead.

- Deep background: The reporter can use the information in a story but must go further to conceal you as the source. Alternatively, this can mean that the reporter cannot attribute information to you in any way.

### **3E. Managing the Responses to Victims and Families**

Victim and family support are essential components to ensuring a successful overall response to an active shooter incident. It is important to ensure the response is coordinated through each phase, including the immediate response, transition process, and post-crisis support in a way that integrates into the investigative and operational response. Coordination with local resources is critical to ensure a smooth provision of services throughout the duration of the case. The quality of the overall operational response to an active shooter incident will, in large part, be judged by the response to victims and families and should be based upon trust, cooperation, and respect shown to victims, families, and eyewitnesses. Response planning should always track and adjust to meet the needs of the victim, family, and the dynamics of the situation.

Some considerations include:

- Information sharing.
- Victim identification.
- Family response management teams.
- Communications plans.
- Resource coordination.

### **3F. Reunification**

Having family members wait for lengthy periods of time for information about their loved ones not only adds to their stress and frustration but can also escalate the emotions of the entire group. When the immediate reunification of loved ones is not possible, providing family members with timely, accurate, and relevant information is paramount. The Active Shooter Preparedness Plan should include the establishment of a Family Assistance Center (FAC) to provide families with information and access to services during the immediate aftermath of an incident.

The FAC should be located away from media view or exposure, the incident command, and the incident site. The FAC location should be coordinated in advance of an incident, to include coordination of written agreements and contracts identifying the use of the location, access control, staffing requirements, and financial responsibilities. The location should not be too close to the incident scene, as the roadways surrounding the incident scene could be blocked off or inaccessible due to a high volume of emergency response vehicles. Family members should be advised of the FAC location which will also help minimize the number of family members responding and jamming traffic to the incident site.

Essential steps to help establish trust and provide family members with a sense of control can be accomplished by:

- Identifying a safe FAC location separate from distractions, the media, and the public.
- Scheduling periodic updates even if additional information is unavailable.
- Being prepared to speak with family members about what to expect when reunited with their loved ones.
- Ensuring effective communication with those who have language barriers or need other accommodations, such as interpreters and sign language interpreters for deaf or hard of hearing family members.

When reunification is not possible because an individual is missing, injured, or killed, how and when this information is provided to families is critical. Before an emergency, the planning team must determine how, when, and by whom loved ones will be informed if their loved one is missing or has been injured or killed, keeping in mind that law enforcement typically takes the lead on death notifications related to criminal activity. This will ensure that families and loved ones receive accurate and timely information in a compassionate way.

Although law enforcement and medical examiner procedures must be followed, families should receive accurate information as soon as possible. It is best to avoid making promises regarding timing of identification and release of victims' remains. Those who are immediately available to talk with loved ones should be identified and trained to compassionately provide family members with accurate information. Crisis responders should be present to immediately assist family members.



## Resources/Templates

The list below contains links to useful active shooter and related information:

- The Power of Preparedness (TPOP), Think and Survive, customized online training for food retailers on Active Shooter Preparedness and Verbal De-escalation
- DHS Active Shooter Preparedness website
- CISA Active Shooter Training (IS-907: Active Shooter: What You Can Do)
- FEMA Guide for Developing High Quality Emergency Operations Plan
- DHS Stop the Bleed Courses
- FEMA You Are the Help Until Help Arrives course
- United States Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center Mass Attacks in Public Spaces
- Connect, Plan, Train, Report
- Hometown Security (DHS)
- Active Shooter Workshop – Participant Resources (CISA)
- Active Shooter Preparedness Resources (CISA)
- If You See Something, Say Something (DHS)
- Pathway to Violence – Warning Signs and What to Do Flyer (CISA)
- Pathway to Violence Video (CISA)
- NCTC First Responder’s Notebook: “Bystanders Are Key to Countering Terrorism”
- Surveillance Discussion (Protection Circle)
- A Study of The Pre-Attack Behaviors Of Active Shooters In The United States Between 2000 And 2013 (FBI)
- Hostile Events Preparedness Series (HEPS) training (Gate 15)
- Strategic Intelligence Assessment and Data on Domestic Terrorism (FBI/DHS)
- Food and Drug Administration Suspicious Activity Awareness Guide
- DHS Office for Bombing Prevention (OBP) Counter-IED Resources Guide, March 2017
- CISA Critical Infrastructure Vulnerability Assessments
- IS-120.C Introduction to Exercises
- IS-130.A How to be an Exercise Evaluator
- IS-139.A Exercise Design and Development
- Crisis Cleanup
  - Bio Recovery: 24/7 call center can be reached at 800 556 0621, and at [info@biorecovery.com](mailto:info@biorecovery.com)
  - Aftermath: Direct manager contact: Bryan Warcholek 815 557 7837, Kathie Brown 630 701 5407

## Other Resources



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## **NAMI – National Alliance on Mental Illness**

### **Corporate Chaplains**

