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# Stopping the Active Shooter: What Role Does HR Play?

**When a work environment can become a killing ground,  
how can HR professionals defend employees from an active shooter?**

A California office building, an Oregon university, restaurants in Paris, France—other than the sudden, tragic loss of life, these places all involved victims who went to work, expecting to go home later. They never made it.

There is a compelling argument to be made that the role of HR must transform to take a bigger role in workplace security, stability, incident response, and aftermath. **But what is the role that HR should be playing?**

The best way to deal with violence in the workplace is to prevent it.

An active shooter policy is only part of a broader initiative that takes into account the geography of your facility, identification of potential bad actors in the workplace and policies that should be in place that will help managers if they identify bad and possible threatening behaviors.

There are steps you can take to deter harm to your employees, as well as steps to take if a shooter targets your workplace.

## **Assessment, Policy, Action**

Organizational response is critical to address the uptick in public and workplace violence. For HR, there is work to be done in starting the conversation about creating a safer workplace, and knowing what to do in the event of emergency. [Resources](#) exist to aid in three basic but important tasks:

- **Assessment:** The first step toward creating a holistic business approach to treat management is hazard analysis. Like the federal government, crises prevention and management is an essential function. Involve C-Suite, admin, and HR personnel in your workgroup, and include local (E.g. local police authorities), state, federal, and other specialists to aid in planning. This should include facility review and renovation plans to improve safety and reduce potential threats.
- **Policy:** Create internal human resource policies/ standard operating procedures, information, and other tools from actionable plans, policies, and resources that result from your assessment phase.

- **Action:** Rollout safety information plans, use internal social media to keep employees informed, renovate your facility to offer training, maintain monitoring, and revise against your current in-force plans.

### **Staying safe—suggestions for staying alive**

Throughout the planning stage and beyond, HR is uniquely positioned to keep information moving. As specialists, HR knows their workforce and is positioned to offer feedback, training, and support. In addition to prescreening applicants (***YES! If you are not conducting background screenings, on all applicants prior to them starting employment, hopefully you will now second guess that decision. Background screen all applicants before they become employees at your company!***), increasing employee engagement, and supporting a zero-tolerance policy on workplace violence, consider these steps toward physical safety:

- **Environment:** The geography of each work environment is different. Give thought to adequate monitoring security at all levels. Include monitoring in the parking lot as well as the building. (Remember to add Surveillance policies to your handbook if you are monitoring employees.) When possible, equip access points with password or swipe security for employees and vendors. Renovate office, store, or industrial property to provide emergency egress. Is an open workspace better or worse for your business? Individual offices offer little means of fast escape. Consider the ability of each individual to escape their workstation in an emergency. If building or leasing new space—consider building materials and doors that better deflect bullets or explosion, offer lock down or lock out capabilities, or employee safe rooms.
- **Warning:** Early warning is a factor in reducing fatalities. If an employee threatens to possibly harm someone. Let local authorities investigate the threat. Don't try to be a hero and investigate on your own. Consider security cameras, sirens, gunfire detection tech, and panic buttons that trigger a facility or workplace warning and alert law enforcement. Fast, loud, response means the shooter knows responders are on the way. Internal and external alarms and automated announcements offer precious seconds for employees to escape, or find safety from an active shooter. Consider your best means of alerting employees to danger including automatic computer, mobile, electronic texting or phone messaging. Think about technology that locates employees onsite, or other platforms to communicate during and after an incident.
- **Training:** Your best protection in an active shooter incident is a workforce well-trained on your facility, its barriers, and its unique protective qualities. Create emergency plans and drill on them. Identify critical responsibilities, practice escapes, and test emergency communication. The [Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\)](#) and the [Federal Bureau of Investigation \(FBI\)](#) offer focused resources for preparing employees to respond appropriately if involved in a workplace shooting incident. Essential directions are to run, hide, or fight, if there are no other options.

The best defense to public and workplace violence is prevention, planning, and awareness. Readiness increases the chance that you and your employees will survive a violent attack.

When you have questions or need support structuring preparedness, workplace violence, and active shooter policies, we can help. Talk to [McCloskey Partners, LLC](#) today at [info@mccloskeypartners.com](mailto:info@mccloskeypartners.com) 215-716-3035 or [www.mccloskeypartners.com](http://www.mccloskeypartners.com)