



4 Key Actions Employers Can Take to Best Prepare for an Active Shooter

Insights

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The recent unfortunate and heartbreaking events in Uvalde, Texas and at the Greenwood Park Mall in Indiana serve as stark reminders to employers that an active shooting event can occur almost anywhere. In the workplace, active shooters are often disgruntled current or former employees, or their family or friends – but they could also be complete strangers. While active shooter events are often unpredictable, employers can adopt proactive strategies and tactics to assist in these scenarios. You can take the following four steps to prepare for the unthinkable. Employers can also take the following four steps to prepare for the unthinkable.

1. Evacuate – Train Employees to Properly Exit in an Emergency

Employees should be prepared to evacuate the active shooter area, as that is often the best course of action to get away from the threat. Your evacuation plan and corresponding training should provide employees with information to:

- know two exits and escape routes from their work area;
- assist others to the proper escape route, if possible;
- exit to the proper area regardless of whether others comply and follow;
- call 911 once it is safe to do so and notify them of the situation; and
- keep hands visible and comply with law enforcement commands upon contact.

2. Hide Out – Train Employees to Hide Out if Evacuation Isn't Possible

If escape is not an option, you should train employees on how to effectively lock and barricade themselves in a safe area, if possible. This may include the use of door locks and/or desks or furniture to block the shooter from entering the door to the room.

Hiding places should be out of sight of windows, and employees should also silence noisemaking devices that may alert the shooter of their presence (cell phones, tablets, computer speakers, etc.). Ideally the area will provide protection if shots are fired in the employee's direction (i.e., behind a desk or cabinet in a locked room).

If it is safe to do so, employees should contact 911 to alert the authorities about the situation. However, they should be careful as to not alert the shooter of their location.

3. Fight – If Escape or Hiding Are Not Options

As a last resort, and the employee's life is in imminent danger, you should train them to take appropriate action against the shooter. This may include yelling at and attacking the shooter aggressively and overwhelmingly. The attack may be made with fists, improvised weapons, or thrown objects that are at hand. Employees should commit to their actions once they begin the attack. You may consider retaining an outside expert on self-defense to help you train your workforce on useful techniques in this area.

4. Drill So That a Response is Second Nature

Preparation, training, and periodic drills are key to employees internalizing the above information and tactics necessary to deal with workplace violence and an active shooter. Such repetitive drills will assist in making the response reflexive or second nature, which is necessary in such stressful situations.

Conclusion

We will continue to monitor developments in this area and provide updates as appropriate. Make sure you are subscribed to [Fisher Phillips' Insight System](#) to get the most up-to-date information. For further information, contact the authors of this Insight, your Fisher Phillips attorney, or any member of our [Workplace Safety Practice Group](#).

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