



EASTERN
MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
Education First

“Promoting
a Safe and
Resilient
Campus
Community”

ACTIVE SHOOTER INCIDENT AWARENESS AND RESPONSE

Prepared by the
EMU Emergency
Management Office

April 2016
Rev. 1.0

Eastern Michigan University

Active Shooter Incident Awareness & Response

Introduction to Active Shooter Incidents

Eastern Michigan University is tasked with planning for a wide range of emergencies, ranging from fires, tornadoes, floods, explosions and disease outbreaks as well as threats from active shooters. These emergencies can occur with or without warning. The Eastern Michigan University Department of Public Safety is committed to keeping the campus community as safe as possible from all hazard situations, including those caused by an active shooter.

Active shooter incidents in a higher education setting present unique challenges: a potentially large and diverse vulnerable population; individuals with disabilities, individuals from diverse cultures, and individuals who have limited English proficiency. The physical environment present challenges as well, with many large, open gathering spaces and multiple buildings on campus.

Individuals must be prepared to deal with an active shooter situation before law enforcement personnel arrive on the scene. There is no single method to respond to an incident, but prior planning will allow you to choose the best option during an active shooter incident. By discussing some of the characteristics of an active shooter attack, identifying preparedness measures and incident responses guidelines, it is hoped that this information will assist you in staying safe should you ever find yourself in a hostile environment.

Understandably, this is a sensitive topic. No single answer exists for what to do. You are encouraged to review the EMU active shooter video and additional information at:

<http://www.emich.edu/publicsafety/emo/procedures/shooter.php>

Active Shooter Incident Characteristics

Eastern Michigan University's campus is normally a safe environment. However, this can change very quickly during an active killer incident. Active killers are distinguished from other traditional criminal acts, such as robbery, domestic violence shootings, gang violence or hostage-taking by their intention to commit mass murder. Most often, these incidents are over in minutes, with a significant number of people killed or injured during the event.

An active shooter is 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.¹

Active shooter situations are unpredictable and evolve quickly. Typically, the immediate deployment of law enforcement is required to stop the shooting and mitigate harm to victims. Because active shooter situations often are over within 10 to 15 minutes, before law enforcement arrives on the scene, individuals must be prepared mentally and physically to deal with an active shooter situation.

Analysis of past active shooter incidents show that no two are exactly alike. Consequently it is impossible to provide definitive guidelines for every situation where a response to an active shooter is necessary. The FBI analyzed 154 active shooter events in the United States between 2002 and 2012² that included three or more individuals being shot.

The FBI's analysis found that though mental illness is a common factor among many active shooters, its functional role in causing the massacre is indeterminate according to FBI analysis. Very few of the shooters in cases analyzed by the FBI had previous arrests for violent crimes, though many had encountered a significant emotional

¹ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, "Active Shooter: How to Respond," October 2008.
http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/active_shooter_booklet.pdf

² DHS/FBI Joint Intelligence Briefing, December 27, 2012. "Recent Active Shooter Incidents Highlight Need for Continued Vigilance."

hardship prior to the attack such as “loss of significant relationships, changes in financial status, loss of a job, changes in living arrangements, major adverse changes to life circumstances, and/or feelings of humiliation or rejection on the part of the shooter.”

This analysis found that:

- 96% of the shooters were males
- 51% of the shooters were deceased following the attack (43% committed suicide and 8% were shot and killed by responders)
- 96% of the attacks involved shooters acting alone
- 37% of the attacks occurred in workplaces
- 17% occurred in an academic setting
- 40% of the attacks were unable to be linked to a clear motivation
- 21% of the attacks were motivated by workplace retaliation and 14% were motivated by domestic disputes
- Academic retaliation by a current or former student only accounted for 7% of the attacks

Each active shooter situation is unique. The following is a list of characteristics commonly associated with active shooter events. The list, while not comprehensive, is compiled from descriptions of past active shooters.

- Most incidents occur without warning. While there may be “leakage”, the first indication of an active shooter is when the shooting starts.
- Often, the shooter has some knowledge or familiarity with the building or location.
- People may be targeted indiscriminately or the shooter may seek specific victims.
- The shooter’s goal is to kill as many people as quickly as possible.
- A shooter may shoot at victims from a distance, acting as a sniper.
- The shooter may employ some type of diversion such as an explosive device or fire to draw victims in to the open.
- Most active shooter events are over within 10 to 15 minutes.

Preparing for Active Shooter Situations

During an active shooter situation, the natural human reaction is to be startled, feel fear and anxiety, and even experience initial disbelief. You can expect to hear noise from alarms, gunfire and explosions, and people shouting and screaming.

Training

One way to reduce fear, overcome “normalcy bias”, and react quicker to an incident is through training. Training provides the means to regain your composure, recall at least some of what you have learned, and commit to action. A trained individual will more likely not descend into denial, while the untrained will more likely not respond appropriately, descend into denial and helplessness, and may become part of the problem.

Eastern Michigan University has adopted the ALiCE program to teach the proactive measures you can take when faced with an assailant entering a building or classroom. ALiCE stands for Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, and Evacuate and encourages you to take an active role in your own safety. To schedule training or to get additional information, contact EMU Public Safety at 734.487.0892 or 734.487.0799.

Because most people haven't had extensive training in active shooter response, using visualization techniques is a good way to practice how you would respond. Visualization is very powerful because it can physiologically mimic a true sensory experience without any actual external stimuli. Visualization exercises condition the brain into believing that you have already experienced the event. If the brain imagines something in deep and vivid detail, it will become part of your “experience”.



EMU Emergency Management Active Shooter Response Procedures

Situational Awareness

One of the best practices for coping with an active shooter incident is being aware of your environment and the possible dangers. According to Dr. Mica Endsley, a recognized expert on situational awareness, “situational awareness is the perception of the elements in the environment within a volume of time and space, the comprehension of their meaning, and the projection of their status in the near future.”³ Simply stated, situational awareness means paying attention to your surroundings and being sensitive to changes in them.

The process involves understanding how information, events, and your actions will impact the outcome. In emergency situations, seconds matter. Developing good situational awareness enables you to make a quick assessment of conditions and then make split-second decisions that are critical to survival. The process doesn’t guarantee your safety, but certainly can contribute to staying safe during an active shooter incident.

Why is Situation Awareness Important?

In after-action reviews of shootings, there are many examples of a person or activities being “out of place” or “odd”. The sounds of gunfire were dismissed as firecrackers or some other noise. And, there was a failure to process and act upon the available information.

For example, at Virginia Tech “prior to starting the shootings, the shooter walked around in the hallway on the second floor poking his head into a few classrooms, some more than once, according to interviews by the police and the Virginia Tech Review Panel.

This struck some as odd because it was late in the semester for a student to be lost, but no one raised an alarm.”⁴

³ Endsley, M. R. (1988). Situation Awareness Global Assessment Technique (SAGAT). Proceedings of the National Aerospace and Electronics Conference (pp. 789-795). New York: IEEE.

⁴ FEMA-428/BIPS-07/January 2012 Edition, Chapter 3, Targeted Shooting. p. 3-23.

During the Columbine shootings, *students and school staff at first thought they were witnessing some sort of a prank or play-acting*. As soon as they realized that the shooting was real, staff advised the students to “flee as quickly as they can, get under tables or desks, or stay in locked classrooms”.⁵

Our level of situational awareness is not always the same. It can be low or high depending on the environment we are in, what our experiences have been and other factors.

In his book, *Principles of Personal Defense*⁶, Jeff Cooper presents a color coded system to explain different levels of situational awareness. The color code relates to the degree of peril you perceive and how you should be ready to move from one level of awareness to another. In short, as the level of danger increases, your willingness to take certain actions increases. Cooper’s color levels are:

White: You are unaware and unprepared to take action. If an emergency were to arise, you are inclined to dismiss the seriousness of the event and have a “this can’t be happening” attitude.

Yellow: You are relaxed, but are aware of who and what is around you. This merely means that you are paying attention to the sights and sounds that surround you whether you are at home or moving in society. Condition yellow does not equate with paranoia or any other irrational fear of persons or places. Instead, you simply have moved your alertness to a level of attention that will prevent you from being totally surprised by the actions of another person.

⁵ Ibid. p.3-27.

⁶ Cooper, Jeff, *Principles of Personal Defense*, Paladin Press, [ISBN 978-0-87364-497-6](https://www.amazon.com/Principles-Personal-Defense-Book/dp/0873644976)

Orange: You are aware that something “not right” is going on. You actively seek information and start assessing the situation and your options. You set a mental trigger: "If that person does "X", then I will need to do “Y”.

Red: If the focus of your attention in condition orange does something you find threatening, you will shift to condition red. Your mental trigger has been tripped and you are ready to do whatever it takes to survive the emergency, including attacking the threat.

The important point is that you are able to recognize triggers to place you at higher levels of awareness and respond accordingly.

People use this ramping up and down daily - when driving a car, walking through a mall, attending a large event or being in a place we have not been before. Our skill in using situational awareness and being able to transition to different levels of situational awareness contributes to our safety, our efficiency and effectiveness in conducting tasks, our ability to communicate to others, and in making good decisions on actions to take.

Be Aware!

Have a Plan!

Keep a Survival Mindset!

Developing Situational Awareness

How is situational awareness developed? It is a skill that can be learned and there are many approaches that can be taken. You first need to understand what elements builds “situational awareness” and then act to improve your skills for fostering better situational awareness.

Generally, there are three broad components that contribute to developing and applying situational awareness. These components change over time and situational assessment is an ongoing and dynamic process. The components are:

1. Physical environment
2. Comprehension of the situation
3. Thinking ahead

1. Physical Environment and Resources

The first component in developing situational awareness is being aware of the physical environment and the resources available to you. The physical environment includes details of the physical space, the furnishings in that space, their layout, and other conditions including communication equipment, lighting, noise, etc. In order to be able to properly assess a situation, familiarity with the physical environment and available resources is important. This familiarity should be applied to spaces that you are in frequently such as an office or classroom, and to the extent possible, to spaces that you are in for the first time.

People are creatures of habit. We go to spaces that we are familiar with, use the same routes to move about and conduct activities generally in the same manner. Attention to the details of the space is often overlooked, and we rely on our perception or mental picture of the space rather than the actual physical characteristics of the space.

In spaces that are unfamiliar, we tend to focus on the task at hand rather than the characteristics of the physical space. This can be attributed to many factors, including being in a hurry, fatigue, or overloaded with inputs (large crowd, noise, multiple activities underway simultaneously).

To improve your situational awareness, take time to review:

- a. **Floor plans** –floor plans help give a spatial layout of a building. They can show you if rooms have more than one exit, where the nearest exits are, stairwells, large open areas such as cafeterias, reception lobbies, and gymnasiums.

- b. **Room layout** - The physical layouts of lunchrooms, libraries, and other common areas vary widely. Auditoriums, lounges and other gathering spaces do not provide the same degree of cover or concealment that a locked classroom might.
- c. **Hardware** – Proper door hardware is essential to safety and security in the event of a hostile intruder. Knowing what type of lock system doors have and how they operate is extremely important. Key features to consider:
- Do the doors have locks and can they be locked from the inside?
 - Are there other devices present that help secure the door from being opened?
 - Are you aware of how to apply the devices?
- d. **Communication systems** – Being able to quickly alert and convey timely information to students, faculty and staff is critical in an active shooter incident. As part of planning and preparedness, be familiar with the systems and protocols used in the buildings you frequent..
- Does your building have an internal paging system? If so, can it be heard clearly in the area where you are?
 - Do you have access to panic alarms either on your person or quickly accessible in your area?
 - Can you receive emergency text alerts? Do the alerts go to all individuals or is it subscription based? If subscription based, are you signed up to receive alerts?

For example, if you are aware of a hostile intruder in a hallway or room, your knowledge of where that is spatially located in reference to your location will help you in assessing what actions to take. Do you need to lockdown in the room or can you exit the building or move to a safer area in the building? If you decide to lockdown, can you effectively secure the room you are in? If you need to move, what is the safest route? Prior knowledge of your environment helps build the assessment framework. Your safety during an event depends on it.

2. Comprehension of the Situation

Our comprehension of a situation is supported by a process of matching information from our training, experiences and knowledge to what is happening in the real world. We “match” the various inputs to our mental recall of what is “normal”. Clues can be picked up by observing “the absence of the normal” and “the presence of the abnormal”.

What happened?

Where am I?

What is happening?

What could happen?

This matching process helps identify what the important pieces of information are and allows us to build an accurate mental model of what is occurring. It is a dynamic process that requires knowing what to look for, when to look for it and why.

Comprehension of the situation and using our understanding of the factors within the incident environment provides the basis for prediction on how the situation is likely to unfold. By regularly monitoring conditions and events, we compile new data with which to update the situation and adjust predictions.

- ***Communicate***: think aloud and communicate with others. The incident may be close enough that you are one of the first to have information. Timely information and effective communications may be the most important factors in helping you be aware of an incident.
- ***Scan and search***: be proactive about getting the information. Don't wait until the information is delivered to you. Look for it in your environment or solicit it from others. Don't overlook social media like Twitter or Facebook as sources of information.
- ***Pay attention***: while attending and focusing on your own task, pay attention to what goes on around you. Pay attention to anyone that looks “out of place” or who is exhibiting suspicious behavior. Suspicious behavior is sometimes

difficult to define, but is one of those things that most people “know it when they see it”. It is behavior that raises feelings of wariness or distrust because it is out of the ordinary for the time, place or circumstances. The following is a partial list of behavior to consider:

- Is the person wearing heavy clothing in warm weather (dressed inappropriately for the season)?
- Is the person carrying items that do not fit in with the setting? Does the person appear to be carrying something inside their clothing?
- Does behavior indicate someone being in a hurry or does it have a heightened sense of urgency or tension about it?
- Is the person hiding in shadows or behind objects in an apparent attempt to keep from being clearly seen?
- Is the person being evasive when asked a direct question?

If you think there is a suspicious person on campus, contact the EMU Department of Public Safety immediately.

3. *Thinking Ahead/Decision-making*

By starting to assess the situation as soon as possible, we gain control over a portion of the event and our actions. We use the information gathered and place it in to the context of the situation. We then assess possible actions and consequences and make decisions on what actions to take. Research shows that if you have thought in advance about what you would do in the event of an incident your chances of survival are greatly improved. Doing this effectively depends on the quality of the information gathered in the event and the timeline for taking action.

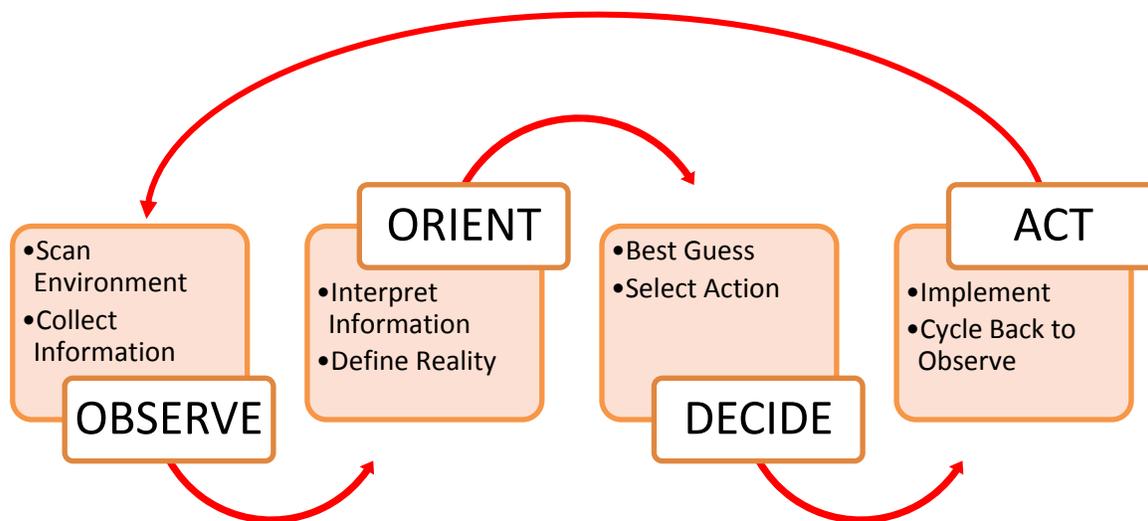
One model, or process, sometimes applied to situational awareness is the OODA Loop. The OODA Loop components are:

Observation: Scan the environment and gather information from it.

Orientation: Use the information to form a mental image of the circumstances. Orientation emphasizes the context in which events occur, so that we may facilitate our decisions and actions.

Decision: Consider options and select a subsequent course of action.

Action: the implementing & physical playing-out of decisions



The OODA Loop isn't meant to be a static, linear "do this, then this" type model. The goal of the model is to increase the speed with which you orient and reorient based on new information coming in. You want to be able to make a smooth and direct transition between what you observe, how you interpret it, and what you do about it.

When you make these transitions rapidly, you're in a position to be proactive, and you can take advantage of the situation that the shooter isn't even aware of yet. Boyd calls this "operating within your opponent's OODA Loop".

If we consistently go through the OODA cycle faster than the shooter, it gains us an advantage. By the time the slower side acts, the faster side is doing something different from what was observed, and the shooter's actions may be delayed and less effective. Remember, every second counts while waiting for responders to arrive.

Conclusion

Active shooter incidents are filled with uncertainty. They are volatile, complex and ambiguous and are beset with both lack of clear and complete information and physical impediments.

Active shooter environments require quick decisions under stress. In order to make good decisions, it is necessary to make a quick and accurate assessment of the situation and you must be prepared to make split-second decisions that could save lives.

The situational factors are best conveyed by the adage "*no plan survives the battle.*" In other words, planning, training and experience only go so far, as every situation and personality is unique. And more importantly, these unique situations have to be handled under tremendous time pressure. Our ability to gather information, use the information to create a "picture" of the incident and then being able to project into the future and make decisions is critical to giving us the ability to make quality decisions.

Lastly, we need to maintain a victor's mindset and adapt our behavior as the situation unfolds. When you are prepared mentally to overcome all obstacles and accept the worst, your chances of coming out alive are greatly improved.

Page Intentionally Left Blank

ATTACHMENT 1: ACTIVE SHOOTER/CAMPUS VIOLENCE

[excerpt from the EMU Emergency Response Procedures]

An active shooter is an armed individual who has used deadly force and continues to do so with unrestricted access. The incident may be over quickly and can occur at any time and any location. It can involve a single shooter, multiple shooters, close encounters, distant encounters, random victims and mobile confrontations.

The personal safety and security of our campus community is of the greatest importance and the University strives to ensure the safety of its students, faculty, staff and visitors. The following response protocols are designed as guidelines to help you respond appropriately in situations which compromise your personal safety.

Armed Suspect/Active Shooter

1. If you witness an armed individual/suspicious person on campus at any time:

- Do not approach the person. Remain calm.
- Contact EMU Public Safety at 734.487.1222 or call 911⁷ immediately.
- Be ready to provide a physical description of the individual:
 - age
 - weight
 - hair color and length
 - clothing
 - facial hair
 - other distinguishing features
- If the individual is in a vehicle, attempt to get the vehicle make, model and color as well as the license plate number, if possible.
- Maintain your own safety. Follow the instructions provided to you by EMU Police.

2. If an armed suspect/active shooter is outside your building:

- Move to a secure inner area of the building, preferably a room that can be locked, and remain there until an "all clear" instruction is given.
- Turn off all the lights and close and lock all windows and doors.
- Close all window blinds and curtains.
- Contact 911 or EMU Public Safety at 734.487.1222 with your location.
- Wait for the "all clear" instruction to be issued. (This can be issued over EMU text alerting, in-building or outdoor public address message or in person by a police officer.)

⁷ A 911 call made from a campus phone goes to EMU Police Dispatch. A mobile phone call to 911 goes to the City of Ypsilanti or Washtenaw County Public Safety Dispatch. In order to reach EMU Police Dispatch from your mobile phone, call 734.487.1222.

3. If an armed suspect/active shooter is inside the building:

- If it is possible to flee the area safely and avoid danger, do so.
- If it is unsafe or impossible to flee, lock all doors and secure yourself in your space.
- Close all window blinds and curtains.
- Silence mobile phones, pagers and other audio devices.
- Contact 911 or EMU Public Safety at 734.487.1222 with your location.
- Use available concealment options and remain silent.
- Wait for the "all clear" instruction to be issued. (This can be issued over EMU text alerting, in-building or outdoor public address message or in person by a police officer.)

4. If an armed suspect/active shooter comes into your class or office:

- There is no specific procedure which can be recommended to ensure your safety in this situation.
- Remain calm.
- Put distance between yourself and the offender. Make use of shielding if possible i.e., desk, filing cabinet, etc. between you and the suspect.
- If flight is impossible and there are no other options, make a personal choice to negotiate with or overpower the armed suspect.
- If possible, keep an escape route behind you.
- If the offender leaves your area, lock your door immediately. Remain in the area (unless your safety is in jeopardy), and await further instructions.
- Call 911 or EMU Public Safety at 734.487.1222. Attempt to get the word out to other faculty/staff/students if possible.
- Wait for the "all clear" instruction to be issued.

5. If you encounter an armed suspect/active shooter outdoors:

- Remain calm.
- Move away from the suspect or the sounds of gunfire.
- Move to locations that provide cover from the line of fire - walls, vehicles, other large objects.
- Attempt to get the word out to other faculty/ staff/students if possible. Call 911 or EMU Public Safety at 734.487.1222.
- Wait for the "all clear" instruction to be issued.

How to Evacuate Safely

- Have a route planned before attempting to leave.
- Do not attempt to carry anything with you while fleeing.
- Warn individuals in the area.
- As you evacuate, understand the concepts of concealment and cover.
- Move quickly and keep your hands empty and visible with palms exposed.
- Quickly check corners, intersections and rooms before you move into or through them.
- Do not attempt to remove injured people, but note their locations and provide the information to emergency responders.
- Proceed to a safe location, Keep in mind that the entire area is still a crime scene, and officers will need to obtain information from you before you leave.
- If you choose to leave, let someone know you are safe.
- Always comply with commands from law enforcement officers.

What to Expect from Responding Police Officers

Know what to expect from responding law enforcement personnel. Their primary objective is to immediately engage or contain an armed suspect/active shooter(s) in order to stop life-threatening behavior. Remember:

- Officers may move past you, as their objective is to immediately engage attacker(s).
- Officers will evacuate victims only after the threat is eliminated.
- Weapons may be pointed at you.
- You may be searched and handcuffed.
- Do not make sudden movements or run towards officers.
- Keep your hands visible to police officers at all times as they do not know if you pose a threat or not. **Raise your arms and show your empty hands.**
- Remain in a secure area until escorted out by public safety officers.

Potential Acts of Violence

If you are concerned that a violent incident may occur, contact EMU Public Safety at 734.487.1222. All reported incidents or threats of violence will be taken seriously.

Reports will be investigated promptly and appropriate action taken. EMU Police will:

- Investigate and assess the risk posed by the circumstance.
- Ensure all appropriate parties are notified.
- Determine the appropriate interventions.
- Document, plan and implement a risk abatement action plan as necessary.

