

ACTIVE SHOOTER RISK MANAGEMENT

PART II: CRITICAL EVENT RESPONSE PLANNING

By Art Crow

An earlier article, *Active Shooter Risk Management: Assessing the Threat*, published in the June 2019 FMCC Newsletter, focused on understanding the difference between mass shooting and active shooter incidents. We also reviewed the importance of assessing and responding to violence and threats in the workplace as a proactive measure to identify potential active shooter behavioral indicators and lessen the likelihood of an active shooter incident. This article will focus more on preparedness planning considerations that go beyond the typical *run-hide-fight* training that is the core of most active shooter emergency response plans.

Duty of care - Identifying *hardened* shelter in place locations within a facility and providing run-hide-fight training to all onsite personnel are critical elements of any active shooter emergency response program; but there is more to preparedness planning. The legal duty of care for a company to provide a safe and secure workplace makes it incumbent upon facility managers, risk managers and senior management to develop and implement emergency response plans, and identify solutions to mitigate the active shooter threat.

Virginia Beach - While doing what I thought was my final review of this article, the active shooter event in which 12 people were killed and 6 wounded at the Virginia Beach municipal building occurred (May 31, 2019). Over the next few days I watched the media briefings with city officials, the Chief of Police and US federal investigative agencies, and read news articles on the event and investigation as it unfolded. The questions asked and the responses to them reinforce the importance of organizations having effective zero-tolerance workplace violence policies, threat assessment teams to evaluate unacceptable behavior, and emergency action plans for response to active shooter incidents. Some items that stuck out from these briefings which will be addressed throughout the remainder of this article include:

- In the weeks prior to the shooting, the shooter was *alleged* to have had begun acting strangely, been involved in physical scuffles with fellow city employees, and was threatened with disciplinary action prior to the incident (New York Times, June 1, 2019). IF this allegation is true, it brings into question why he was not suspended or terminated for this behavior.
- The family of one of the victims in the shooting is asking the city to open an external investigation into the massacre, and is requesting release of all information and records about the gunman for further review (Virginian-Pilot, June 7, 2019).
- The shooter used his municipal access card to gain access through card reader controlled doors on multiple floors in the building. Although it may not be applicable in this incident, anytime a worker is suspended or terminated, they should be required to turn in any access cards or keys they have been issued. If the access card is not surrendered, it should at least be deactivated in the facility's access control system. If the person was issued keys and they were not surrendered, consideration must be given to rekeying any door/equipment locks the person may have had a key to. There are countless instances where a terminated employee

ACTIVE SHOOTER RISK MANAGEMENT

PART II: CRITICAL EVENT RESPONSE PLANNING

By Art Crow

returned to a facility and gained access with an access card or keys not surrendered upon termination.

- The shootings took place on 3 of the 4 floors in the Municipal Building. The City Manager said that Building 2 will be closed indefinitely and that significant amount of relocation effort is underway to identify alternate locations, get furniture [and other office equipment]. ([Media Briefing, ABC News 8, June 2, 2019](#))
- Police Chief Jim Cervera described the offices as a “honeycomb” and a “maze” due to renovations over the years. He also said that the building was extremely difficult to navigate, police did not have floor plans, nor did they have time to review them if they did have them. ([Media Briefing, ABC News 8, June 2, 2019](#))

A familiar template - For planning purposes, active shooter emergency action plans are not much different than any other business continuity/disaster recovery (BCDR) plan. The key elements being:

- Conduct a risk assessment to identify the likelihood of an event occurring.
- Identify any adverse impacts on the business should an event occur.
- Develop risk mitigation and emergency response action plans/procedures.
- Develop a communications strategy – internal and external. Many workers in the Virginia Beach incident were alerted by phone calls, text messages, or word of mouth to shelter in place or evacuate the location ([CNN, Nicole Chavez and Amir Vera](#)). Is there an internal communication policy and supporting technology in place to notify all staff members of an active shooter or other emergency event in the facility?
- Develop a business continuity plan to ensure continued business operations should a facility or portion of a facility no be useable as a result of the event.
- Develop a disaster recovery plan, including budget and resources required to recover from the event and restore the facility to normal operations.
- Train key stakeholders and the general workforce population on their roles and responsibilities in the event an incident occurs. While most facilities have volunteer Emergency Response Teams (ERTs) or Fire Wardens who facilitate emergency evacuation in the event of a fire alarm, there is usually not much consideration given to what team member responsibilities should be in an active shooter incident. Most are taught to run-hide-fight like everyone else in the workplace. But in the high stress and often confusing active shooter scenario people seek leadership and direction, and the person they will most likely look to for immediate direction in an active shooter incident is the person they know to be the ERT member or fire warden in their work area. While ETR members and fire wardens must never put themselves in harm’s way, it is imperative that they have strong character and be able to take control and give direction in very stressful situations. This is why selection for these positions should be on a best capable and not first come/first serve basis. Preference should

ACTIVE SHOOTER RISK MANAGEMENT

PART II: CRITICAL EVENT RESPONSE PLANNING

By Art Crow

be given to anyone with military, emergency medical service, fire fighter, law enforcement or search and rescue experience as these people are more likely than not act more calmly and take a leadership role in stressful situations.

Mitigate impacts - As discussed in the previous article, while the likelihood of an active shooter event occurring is very low, the adverse impact on an organization should an event occur is very high. Reflecting on the Virginia Beach incident, these impacts and some planning considerations include:

- Loss of life and personal injury. Are there sufficient first aid kits, automated external defibrillators (AEDs), and First Responder personnel trained in First Aid/CPR/AED located throughout the facility? Does First Responder training include gunshot trauma emergency treatment? Sucking chest wound? Arterial bleeding? Abdominal and head injuries? Will they be able to perform life-saving emergency first aid measures in a high stress situation? It is important to stress to First Responders that they should only administer first aid if their own life is not in danger.
- Psychological impact on witnesses, victims, the general workplace population, and the family members of the victims. "There was a lady on the stairs, unconscious, blood on her face, blood on the stairwell," Weeden told CNN affiliate WAVY. "We didn't know what happened." ([CBS 46 News](#)) Is there an employee assistance program available for people to seek psychological counseling after the event? Does the organization have the capacity to provide assistance to the family members of victims? What level of support should they provide?
- Loss of use of a portion of the facility while it is being processed as crime scene by law enforcement. This can take a matter of days to weeks depending on the extent of the scene and number of victims. If the shooter engaged multiple victims in multiple locations within the facility, how will people and operations from that area be relocated while restoration efforts are underway? If the incident occurred in the main lobby, are there provisions for an alternate lobby where guests such as business partners, customers and other visitors can be received and signed in? In the Virginia Beach incident, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the building became unusable until such time as restoration efforts can be completed. This will most likely take months to accomplish.
- Clean up and restoration of the affected area. Blood is a biological hazard and requires a specialized hazmat cleanup team. Hazmat cleanup teams usually cost in the area of \$250 per hour per person (with a minimum of two people), plus the cost of hazardous waste disposal bags/containers. Carpeting may need to be replaced, and walls cleaned or patched and painted. An incident such as the one in Virginia Beach can easily exceed \$200,000 - \$250,000 in restoration costs. Once restoration is complete, will people who worked in that area even want to go back to work in the same area after restoration? Are there plans in place to repurpose an affected area should workers not want to return to work in it?

ACTIVE SHOOTER RISK MANAGEMENT

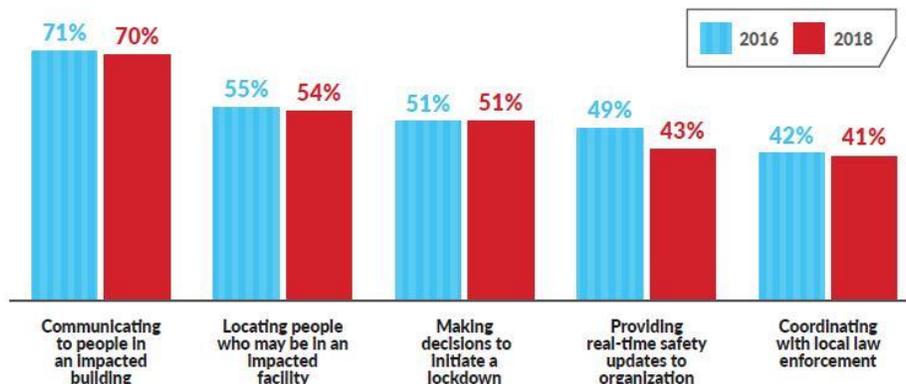
PART II: CRITICAL EVENT RESPONSE PLANNING

By Art Crow

- Adverse impact on public image. After an active shooter incident, an organization can expect to be inundated with media inquiries, as well potential civil actions filed on behalf of victims or their surviving family members. The organization's communications/public relations and legal departments need to be ready for this onslaught of questioning and scrutiny. Did the organization take all reasonable measures to identify, mitigate and respond to an active shooter event? Was there a zero-tolerance workplace violence policy in place? Does the company have a Threat Assessment Team (TAT) to evaluate violence behavior in the workplace? If there shooter is/was an employee, contractor or vendor, what behaviors did they display before the incident? Did the TAT evaluate the shooter's behavior? Did the organization have an effective method for mass communication in place? Did the company have active shooter response procedures in place and were personnel training in these procedures? When was the last time the organization conducted an active shooter drill? It should be noted that media outlets will attempt to contact everyone who worked at the site; whether they were a victim, witness or even at work when the incident took place. Corporate communications departments need to have prewritten/prepared statements ready for media inquiries. Media interviews should also be closely coordinated with law enforcement to provide a unified message that does not impede the ensuing investigative process.

Communication leads the challenges - Reflecting on the Everbridge® 2018 Active Shooter Preparedness Survey¹ report described in article 1, the survey found that 4 of the 5 biggest concerns/challenges security and emergency preparedness leaders felt their organizations would face in an active shooter event were related to (1) communication, (2) locating impacted persons, (3) initiating lockdown, (4) providing real-time updates, and (5) coordinating with law enforcement.

During A Location-Specific Active Shooter Incident, What Are Your Biggest Challenges/Concerns?



Source: Everbridge® 2018 Active Shooter Preparedness Survey

The biggest challenge - Communications in an active shooter incident has many facets as events unfold, from initial notification – a witness/victim makes first notification – to emergency announcement

ACTIVE SHOOTER RISK MANAGEMENT

PART II: CRITICAL EVENT RESPONSE PLANNING

By Art Crow

to all occupants, emergency response agencies (police, ambulance services and fire department), security, corporate management, etc. With most active shooter events ending in “5 minutes or less”², it is extremely important that critical event information be communicated quickly and effectively to everyone involved: law enforcement, security, the workforce and the facility crisis management team. Keep in mind that when the first notification is made, there is already a minimum of one killed or wounded person in the workplace. This is why the first call must always be to 911 (or other law enforcement emergency number).

Not surprisingly, law enforcement expresses some of the same concerns when it comes to response to active shooter incidents. While writing this article I reached to out law enforcement contacts and asked them what their biggest concerns were when responding to active shooter incidents. This led me to Frank Rodgers, retired Deputy Superintendent of the New Jersey State Police and CEO of [Critical Response Group](#), who put it best when he said... “Communications, unfamiliar territory and interoperability.” Just like security and emergency response leaders, law enforcement and other emergency response agencies’ biggest concerns are communication, locating impacted persons, providing real-time updates, and coordinating with multiple law enforcement and emergency response agencies.

We have 5 minutes - Understanding that in most active shooter incidents all critical event information needs to be gathered and disseminated in 5 minutes or less, it is more likely than not the actual shooting aspect of the incident will be over before anyone in the facility has a chance to review their emergency action plans or make all required notifications. While it may seem like a daunting and almost insurmountable task to make all of this happen in less than 5 minutes, there actually is an app for that.

Example app - Critical Response Group’s “[Collaborative Response Graphics](#)” (CRG) is a geospatial mapping and event communications application based on British Aerospace (BAE) Systems’ [Geospatial eXploitation Products](#)TM (GXP) platform that provides a “Common Operating Picture for both field personnel and central command” to “ensure the safety and security of critical infrastructure through advanced operational planning and incident response.” This product is built off of the same platform used by military Special Operations Forces to provide battlefield/objective map graphics, facility floor plans, and real-time communications and event information to mission operators in the field. In short, a satellite image of the facility and its location are loaded into a secure database, floor plans are then overlaid onto the facility image, the image is broken down into assigned grid squares and key points are identified. The owner (facility) can provide access to this database to law enforcement and other emergency response agencies. When an incident occurs - active shooter or other emergency incident - emergency responders and other designated persons can access the application via a computer or mobile device (laptop, tablet, cellphone). Responders can pull up at facility and floor plans, and communicate with each other through the application. Links can also be sent to the cellphone of a person in the affected area that when clicked on, provide the person’s exact location in the facility or at the site. The links at the beginning of this paragraph take you to videos that can provide a better picture of the application(s) and their capabilities.

ACTIVE SHOOTER RISK MANAGEMENT

PART II: CRITICAL EVENT RESPONSE PLANNING

By Art Crow

The obvious question is... How much does this application cost? Surprisingly little. The current price for corporations is \$1,500 for the site/facility image and \$1,500 for each floor overlaid on it; with an annual maintenance fee of \$300 - \$400 that allows the owner to provide updated floor plans as renovations are made to existing facilities. For educational facilities the price is \$1,000 for the site/facility image and \$1,000 for each floor overlaid on it. Although I've never been one to recommend one product or technological solution over another, when it comes to emergency response capabilities I have to admit this is hands down the best product out there that addresses the common incident response concerns expressed by organizational security and emergency response leaders, law enforcement, and emergency response agencies in general. It is currently deployed in over 700 schools in New Jersey and many more around the country, and is being used by hospitals, amusement parks, professional sporting venues, and houses of worship.

Involve first responders in planning and execution - Once law enforcement and other emergency responders arrive on site, they need to be able to access the all areas of the facility/site. In the New York Police Department's (NYPD) [2016 Active Shooter Recommendations and Analysis for Risk Mitigation](#) report, they recommend facilities assemble emergency response resource kits for responding law enforcement personnel. The kit should include:

- Access control devices (keys, access cards, key fobs)
- Current floor plans
- Handheld radios with access to security frequency
- Mobile closed-circuit television (CCTV) feed access (e.g., tablet with remote access)

Consideration should also be given to entering into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with local police or 911 dispatch center to provide them remote (web) access to site CCTV cameras. This would allow dispatchers to provide real-time site conditions to responding agencies. The MoU can include language outlines that access is provided for emergency incident response purposes only and that access to or use of the site's CCTV system for any other is prohibited. This will protect the organization should any legal matters arise as a result of the application being accessed or used for any other purpose.

Conclusions - Active shooter emergency response planning is not much different from planning for any emergency condition a facility may face. The essential components are the same:

- Identify risks - their potential impact and likelihood of occurrence.
- Develop mitigation and response strategies and practical plans.
- Have a communication plan and keep it current.
- Develop business continuity and disaster recovery (BCDR) plans to ensure business resiliency.

While there may be advance warning for some emergency events, such as weather related emergencies, flooding, wildfires, etc., and they may last for hours, days or weeks, active shooter events are for the most

ACTIVE SHOOTER RISK MANAGEMENT

PART II: CRITICAL EVENT RESPONSE PLANNING

By Art Crow

part unpredictable and are over within a matter of minutes; making rapid communication with the workplace population and responding emergency service agencies the most critical aspect of active shooter response planning. Once law enforcement and other emergency response agencies arrive on site, the effectiveness of their response can be greatly enhanced if they are provided with access to facility floor plans, access devices, and technology solutions that allow them to monitor and communicate situation information and updates in real-time.

¹ [Everbridge® press release and link to downloadable report](#)

² [FBI Active Shooter Report, 2000-2013](#)

Art Crow is President & Principal Consultant at [Oppaset Security Consulting](#) in Indiana, US.