Cal OES

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE
OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

ACTIVE SHOOTER AWARENESS GUIDANCE

September 2016
Cal OES Law Enforcement Division

www.caloes.ca.gov

Latest Update includes Access and Functional Needs (AFN) Considerations

CALIFORNIA GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

ABOUT THIS UPDATE

On December 2, 2015, terrorists attacked the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino, California. Because the center serves individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, initial reports indicated the attack was an assault on the disabled. Though it was later learned not to be the case; the thought of an attack on individuals with disabilities raised serious concerns. Paramount among those concerns was the general recognition that there was a lack of guidance and training regarding the access and functional needs (AFN) considerations associated with an active shooter attack. To address this important issue, the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services' (Cal OES) Office of Access and Functional Needs (OAFN) spearheaded the development of an active shooter awareness guidance.

The guidance, which is the first-of-its-kind, was created by bringing together a work group consisting of representatives from law enforcement, the California State Council on Developmental Disabilities, emergency managers, the California Specialized Training Institute and other disability stakeholders.

The guidance informs the following three audiences regarding how to promote the safety and security of individuals with disabilities and persons with an AFN during an active shooter attack:

1. Workforce management

Workforce management has a primary responsibility for the safety and security of their staff. As individuals with disabilities and AFN are employed throughout the workforce, management needs to understand how best to integrate their needs into emergency planning, such as evacuation procedures and crisis communication during an active shooter attack.

2. Individuals with disabilities and access and functional needs (AFN)

The current mantra taught for personal protection during an active shooter attack is "Run, Hide, Fight". While reasonable and appropriate, each of those steps has AFN-related implications. Persons with disabilities and AFN should ensure their individual needs are integrated into their organization's emergency evacuation plan, develop a "buddy system" for assistance evacuating or concealing themselves to avoid an attacker and think creatively about how to use personal assistive devices (e.g., canes, crutches, wheelchairs) as weapons if needed during an active shooter attack.

3. Law enforcement/first responders

Law enforcement and first responders called upon to respond to an active shooter incident may encounter individuals with disabilities or persons with AFN among the survivors. These persons may not be able to hear, physically comply with or cognitively understand direct commands. Law enforcement and first responders need to be informed regarding what to expect and how to communicate effectively with individuals with disabilities and AFN during and after an active shooter event.

This updated version of the Active Shooter Guidance includes AFN considerations that will yield a safer, more resilient whole community.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Profile of an Active Shooter 5

The Active Shooter Environment 5

Taking Action in an Active Shooter Situation 6

1. Run (evacuate) 6

2. Hide 9

3. Fight (taking action against the active shooter) 11

Communication with Law Enforcement 13

Communicating Effectively during an Active Shooter Situation 14

Future Active Shooter Awareness Training and Contact Information 17

PROFILE OF AN ACTIVE SHOOTER

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.

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. Other times, individuals at the site of an attack take action to mitigate the threat (though this is advised only as a last resort).

THE ACTIVE SHOOTER ENVIRONMENT

The active shooter environment is complex and dynamic. Individuals threatened by an active shooter(s) have to function with little to no warning in a manner that promotes safety and security for themselves and possibly others. This can be extraordinarily challenging without prior training and preparation. Active shooter environments have the potential to push individuals to their physical, emotional and mental limits and can create intense feelings such as fear, panic, disbelief, grief and anger.

The human response to danger evokes a wide array of reactions commonly understood as "Fright, Flight or Fight". A person may be frightened to such a degree that they are frozen and unable to move, others immediately take flight in order to get away from danger or hide, and others may instinctually fight back by confronting the active shooter. It is possible for any one individual to experience all of these reactions over the course of an incident and there is no right or wrong instinct.

Sensory considerations are also relevant as individuals may be dealing with blaring fire or security alarms, flashing lights, water from sprinkler systems, the sounds of gunfire and screaming associated with an active shooter environment.

Understanding the realities of the active shooter environment before an event is important because it enables individuals to prepare themselves in advance to react decisively and thoughtfully. Doing so not only increases their chances for survival; it increases the likelihood that persons who are able to do so will be empowered to assist those around them either through a "buddy system" or less formally as needed.

TAKING ACTION IN AN ACTIVE SHOOTER SITUATION

When an Active Shooter is in the vicinity, individuals should quickly determine the most reasonable way to protect their own life. Typically, the best response to an active shooter situation will be for individuals to either: Run (Evacuate); Hide; or Fight (Take action against the active shooter within their ability).

1. Run (evacuate)

The absolute best, most ideal response to an active shooter situation will be to evacuate the premises and get out of harm's way or get to a safe location. While evacuation sounds like a simple or straightforward approach to ensuring personal safety, doing so under the duress and chaos of an active shooter situation can be difficult. It is important to plan ahead to increase the likelihood that people will be able to use their best judgment, assess an accessible escape path and attempt to evacuate the premises.

Everyone should understand when evacuating during an active shooter scenario, individuals need to:

- Evacuate regardless of whether others agree to follow;
- Leave all non-lifesaving belongings behind;
- Help others escape, (if possible use "buddy system");
- Prevent individuals from entering an area where the active shooter may be;
- Keep their hands visible;
- Follow the instructions of any law enforcement or first responders; and
- Not attempt to move wounded people.

Workplace management

Managers have the primary responsibility for ensuring their staff is prepared to evacuate places of work during emergencies. Management is responsible for:

- **Evacuation planning**. Management needs to ensure that the workplace has emergency preparedness and/or evacuation plans. Plans should define how staff will evacuate quickly, effectively and safely. Plans need to be communicated to all staff and practiced/exercised regularly (including tabletop exercises and physical drills). Management needs to ensure that staff members are familiar with evacuation/exit routes from all areas of the building (i.e. each floor of a multi-story building, including common

areas). Plans should integrate accommodations for individuals with disabilities or persons with access and functional needs. Accommodations could include assistive devices, evacuation chairs and keeping aisles clear of clutter or items that may impede evacuees from leaving the premises.

- The buddy system. Management (and/or evacuation lead personnel) should coordinate closely with staff to understand and include the assistance/accommodation that may be needed by individuals with disabilities or access and functional needs during an active shooter situation. Establishing a "buddy system" whereby disabled and non-disabled colleagues work together to ensure the safe evacuation of all workers is an integral step in the process of planning to survive an active shooter attack.
- **Situational awareness**. Management need to ensure that everyone is accounted for inside and outside of the workplace at all times. This includes visitors, teleworkers, employees working in the community, etc. Management should ensure staff members are trained to update their calendars and keep supervisors aware of time away from the workplace (paid time off, jury duty, illness, etc.). Management should work to identify accommodation needs and incorporate those needs into emergency plans.
- **Cross-training**. Management should implement cross-training as part of the organization's emergency management process to ensure as many employees as possible are familiar with and trained on evacuation procedures. This should include the evacuation lead personnel, floor wardens, the facilities team, and property management.

Individuals with a disability or an access and functional need (AFN). Individuals with a disability or an AFN have the most awareness of their specific evacuation needs. As such, it is the responsibility of the individual (assisted as appropriate by his or her representative, behavioral therapist or personal care assistant) to:

- Inform management regarding any gaps or needs for accommodations that exist in their organization's emergency preparedness or evacuation plans;
- Inform management when individual is expected to be away or out of the office for extended time to ensure the individual is accounted for during safety checks and roll calls;
- Establish a "buddy system" with coworkers. "Buddies" should educate partners concerning the respective physical, psychological and communi-

cation assistance needed to increase their safety during an active shooter attack. A back-up buddy system is also recommended;

- Have an escape route and safety plan in mind specific to their respective needs; and
- Practice escape routes and safety plan by locating exits and locking offices and conference rooms before and during drills and exercises.

Law enforcement/first responders. When law enforcement arrives on scene, their primary responsibility will be to eliminate the threat. Once the active shooter has been neutralized, they will facilitate the evacuation of survivors and treatment of the injured with first responders. During the post-shooting evacuation, law enforcement/first responders should be sure to:

- Take AFN considerations into account when entering the building. This means understanding that depending on any one individual's disability or AFN they may not understand or be able to follow commands to show their hands, to get on the ground or to move as directed. Individuals may exhibit behaviors that are counter-intuitive due to their disability or AFN, such as putting on headphones or laughing as a means of coping with the stress of the environment;
- Remember that individuals who may approach law enforcement for assistance could be unable to hear, have limited understanding of the circumstances, or require escorting;
- Ask individuals if they have a disability or AFN that they should be aware of and how they can assist them or accommodate their needs during evacuation;
- Give concrete, plain directions; and
- Use visual or gestural cues to assist individuals with disabilities and AFN during evacuation.

2. Hide

When evacuating the premises is not possible, individuals in an active shooter situation should hide for safety. Because active shooter situations typically last no longer than 10 – 15 minutes, hiding from the attacker(s) is a highly effective method for promoting individual security. Understanding that, depending on where people may be during an attack, there may or may not be many places to hide. Everyone should consider the following when thinking about potential areas for concealment:

- Hiding places should be out of the active shooter's view;
- An ideal hiding place will not trap the individual or restrict individual's options for movement; and
- The area should provide protection if shots are fired in individual's direction.

To minimize the chances of an individual's hiding place being found:

- Silence cell phones (turn off vibrate);
- Turn off any source of noise (i.e., computers, radios, televisions, assistive devices);
- Pull down shades or window coverings;
- Hide behind large or hard items (i.e., cabinets, desks); and
- Remain quiet.

To prevent an active shooter from entering an individual's hiding place:

- Lock the door;
- Turn off lights; and
- Blockade the door with heavy furniture.

Workplace management. Management should integrate hiding within their active shooter training protocols and provide explanation and demonstration to staff. Training should reiterate that being able to effectively conceal oneself could prevent injury or death during an active shooter situation. Management can create "safe rooms", train staff to identify potential weapons in those areas and encourage them to think creatively regarding concealment. The concealment protocols should be included in the emergency preparedness plan.

Individuals with a disability or an access and functional need (AFN). Depending on

their specific disability or AFN, it may be difficult for some individuals to hide. For example, individuals who use wheelchairs may find it challenging or impossible to hide under a desk or in a closet. Because each individual knows what will or will not work for them, persons with a disability or an AFN (assisted as appropriate, if needed, by their representative, behavioral therapist or personal care assistant) should:

- Plan ahead by identifying potential areas to hide throughout their workplace prior to an incident occurring;
- Coordinate with management and colleagues/"buddies" ahead of time regarding the type of assistance they can provide to help with concealment;
- Use assistive devices or durable medical equipment to secure hiding spot (such as parking and locking heavy wheelchairs in front of a door);
- Practice self-soothing techniques to remain calm and collected; and
- Look for improvised weapons that can be used aggressively within individual's ability.

Law enforcement/first responders. When it is time for individuals to vacate their places of concealment, law enforcement/first responders need to provide loud, clear, plain, concrete instruction announcing it is safe for persons to make their presence known. In doing so, they should consider that:

- Some individuals with a disability or an AFN may not be able to hear or understand verbal instructions;
- Depending on their disability or AFN, some individuals may require physical assistance to exit their place of hiding or being unconcealed;
- Law enforcement/emergency medical services (EMS) should always ask individuals with a disability or an AFN if they need assistance and seek instruction before grabbing or physically moving them; and
- Law enforcement/EMS should avoid separating individuals with a disability or an AFN from their personal care assistant, service animal, durable medical equipment, or assistive device(s).

3. Fight (taking action against the active shooter)

When evacuating the premises is not possible, hiding is not an option and an individual's life is in imminent danger, the last resort should be to disrupt and/or incapacitate the active shooter(s). Individuals choosing to take action and fight need to commit and act as aggressively as possible against the active shooter(s). This action should be decisive, without hesitation and encompass the following:

- Improvising weapons from nearby items (e.g. fire extinguisher);
- Yelling and throwing items;
- Fighting as best they can within their ability; and
- Having a "Not Today" attitude (deciding that today is not the day they are going to die).

Workplace management. When training staff on active shooter situations, it is important that management underscore the importance of thinking creatively and being committed when physically taking action against an active shooter.

Individuals with a disability or an access and functional need (AFN). Individuals with varying physical, emotional or developmental capabilities may be limited, completely or partially, in the degree to which they are able to fight an active shooter. However, individuals with a disability or AFN should consider using durable medical equipment or assistive devices as improvised weapons with which to attack an active shooter. For example, using a power chair to ram an active shooter; using a cane as a bat; or hitting an active shooter with a cast.

Law enforcement/first responders. Law enforcement and first responders entering an active shooter environment should take note to ensure they do not confuse someone taking action against an active shooter with an assailant.

When Law Enforcement Arrives

Law enforcement's role is to stop the active shooter as soon as possible, which means officers will proceed directly to the area in which the last shots were heard without stopping to help injured persons.

Officers will usually arrive in teams of four and may wear regular patrol uniforms or external bulletproof vests, Kevlar helmets and other tactical equipment. They may be armed with rifles, shotguns and handguns. Officers will shout commands, provide non-verbal instruction and may push individuals to the ground for their safety.

Individuals in an active shooter situation can assist law enforcement during their response by doing the following:

- Putting down any items in their hands (e.g., cell phone, bags, jackets);
- If possible, immediately raising their hands and spreading fingers;
- Keeping hands visible at all times;
- Avoiding quick movements toward officers, such as holding on to them for safety;
- Avoiding pointing, screaming and/or yelling; and
- Avoiding asking officers for help or directions.

To avoid causing additional fear, stress or emotional strain; it is critical for individuals with a disability or AFN and their support or buddy system partner(s) to be aware of how law enforcement will respond to an active shooter incident. Ensuring everyone understands this is a collaborative process between workplace management, individuals with a disability or an access and functional need and law enforcement.

Workplace management. In training, it is important for management to explain to staff how law enforcement will respond to an active shooter incident. As a part of the explanation, management should indicate that during a response:

- There may be loud noises such as bangs, yelling and sirens;
- There may be officers in military-style gear;
- There may be smoke that obstructs vision or irritates the eyes and throat; and
- Individuals may be pushed to the ground by law enforcement for their safety.

Individuals with a disability or an access and functional need (AFN). Individuals with a disability or an AFN need to understand the importance of:

- Remaining calm;
- Staying put until cleared by law enforcement;
- Utilizing self-soothing techniques (if needed);
- Following officers' instructions; and
- Using a "Buddy System" if helpful.

Law enforcement/first responders. The more information responders have prior to entering an active shooter situation, the better. Situational awareness can be difficult to gather, but details matter – especially as they relate to who is inside the building. Knowing ahead of time whether there are individuals with a disability or an AFN on site and what type of disability or AFN they have can help officers ensure a safe and effective response.

Communication with Law Enforcement

Workplace management. Individuals with a disability or an access and functional need and law enforcement need to communicate before, during and after an active shooter attack. As part of being proactive with their emergency preparedness plan, property management or facilities managers should communicate their emergency plans with first responders and law enforcement regularly. Law enforcement should reach out to learn about the disability and AFN-related needs within the communities they serve. Management should institute a "roll call" system into their emergency preparedness plan as a means to accounting for all staff once they have reached a safe location or assembly point.

Individuals with a disability or an access and functional need (AFN). Individuals need to know that, once they have reached a safe location, they will be held in that area by law enforcement until the situation is under control and all witnesses have been identified and interviewed. As such, no one should leave until law enforcement authorities have instructed them to do so.

Law enforcement and workplace management should also work together to help ensure everyone understands that, when possible, persons in an active shooter incident should communicate the following information to 911 operators:

Location of the active shooter(s);

- Number of shooters, if more than one;
- Physical description of shooter(s);
- Number and type of weapons held by the shooter(s);
- Number of potential victims at the location; and
- Identify any AFN needs and locations.

Communicating Effectively during an Active Shooter Situation

When communicating with individuals with a disability or AFN during active shooter situations, it is important to always ask the person how you can best assist. Asking the individual before assisting maintains their safety, independence, and health, as they are the expert when it comes to their individual needs. Active shooter situations are rapid, complex events and becoming familiar with tips for effective communication can help ensure a safer and more effective response.

The following section outlines tips for communicating effectively with individuals with a disability or AFN. The tips are adapted and modified from the Texas Center for Disability Studies.

Blind/Low Vision

- Announce your presence, speak out, state the nature of the emergency, and then enter the area.
- Avoid shouting and speak directly to the individual.
- Offer assistance but allow the individual to explain what help is needed and avoid grabbing or attempting to guide them without first asking permission.
- When assisting, offer the individual your arm. As you walk, advise them of any obstacles (i.e. stairs, doorways, narrow passages, ramps, etc.).
- If leading more than one individual, ask them to help guide the person behind them.
- Once you have reached a safe location, provide a brief orientation of where the individual is located and ask if any further assistance is needed.

Cognitive Disabilities

Signs to look for that may indicate elevated stress levels:

- Fleeting eye contact;
- Repetitive or self-stimulating behaviors (rocking, hand-flapping; repeating words/sounds/phrases, wiggling fingers in front of the eyes, twirling/spinning, and/or jumping);
- Self-injurious behaviors (slapping, head banging, biting, hair pulling);
- Fear/panic;

- Non-responsiveness;
- Aggression;
- Running away; and
- Covering ears or screeching.

To enhance communication during times of elevated stress:

- Make eye contact;
- Be patient;
- Speak slowly, use plain and concrete language;
- Give one-step direction – wait two seconds and repeat;
- Be mindful of your body language (non-verbal cues);
- Do not touch; and
- Model the expected response (hands up, fingers apart, etc.).

Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- If possible, flick the lights when entering an area or room to get the individual's attention.
- Establish eye contact with the individual, not with the interpreter or "buddy", if one is present.
- Use facial expressions and have gestures as visual cues.
- Keep your face visible at all times and keep instructions in the present tense using basic vocabulary.
- Once individual is in a safe location, offer pencil and paper for written communication if no interpreter or "buddy" is present.

Mental/Behavioral Health

- Speak slowly and in a calm tone.
- Keep communication straightforward, clear and brief.
- If the person exhibits confusion, avoid giving multiple commands. Instead, ask or state one command at a time.
- Try to avoid interrupting a person who may be disoriented; just let them know that you have to move quickly.
- Have a forward leaning body position to show interest and concern.

Service Animals

- Evacuate the owner and the animal together. Avoid separating them whenever possible.
- If an animal is wearing a harness or vest, it is on duty. If you are asked to take the animal while assisting the individual, hold the leash and not the harness (if applicable).
- Service animals are not registered and there is no proof that the animal is a service animal. If the person tells you it is a service animal, treat it as such. However, if the animal is out of control or presents a threat to the individual or others, remove it from the scene.
- The animal may not be specially trained as a service animal. People with psychiatric and emotional disabilities may have a companion animal. Be understanding and treat the animal as a service animal.

Physical Disabilities

- Ask the individual how you can help before beginning any assistance.
- Ask the individual if he/she is able to stand or walk with or without the use of a mobility device.
- If the conversation will take more than a few minutes, sit or kneel to speak to the person at eye level.

Pregnant Women

- If the pregnant woman is otherwise healthy, she can be included in evacuation plans.
- Be as calming as possible as expectant mothers may become anxious during emergencies.
- Provide reassurance of assistance and meeting identified needs.
- Provide fluids once she has arrived to a safe location.

FUTURE ACTIVE SHOOTER AWARENESS TRAINING

Contact Information:

Cal OES Law Enforcement Branch
3650 Schriever Avenue
Mather, CA 95655
(916) 845-8700

For more information, visit us online
www.caloes.ca.gov

Read the latest news from Cal OES
www.oesnews.com