

How to Create ‘Active Shooter’ Response Guidelines for Your Workers



‘It Would Never Happen at Our Workplace’

- 1989: Ecole Polytechnique: 15 dead
- 1992: Concordia University: (4 dead, 1 injured)
- 1999: OC Transpo: (6 dead)
- 2006: Dawson College (1 dead, 19 wounded)
- 2014: Western Forest Products (2 dead, 2 wounded)
- 2017: Islamic Cultural Centre of Québec City (6 dead, 19 wounded)

Although not as common as in the U.S., mass and random shootings in workplaces and other populated spaces are also a major problem in this country. Yet, many employers remain complacent, choosing to believe it would ‘never happen’ at their sites. Of course, employers at the sites of the incidents listed above probably felt the exact same way.

The 10 to 15 Minutes of Decision

So called ‘active shooter’ incidents typically happen suddenly and with no warning and unfold over a 10- to 15-minute span. So, by the time law enforcement shows up, the carnage is often already done. Result: The people at your workplace need to know what to do in those crucial minutes after the shooting begins and before help arrives. Such preparation can spell the difference between death and survival for dozens of your workers.

The Need for Active Shooter Response Guideline

In addition to providing training and staging workplace drills, you can prepare workers by giving them guidelines explaining what to do if an active shooter

incident occurs. Such guidelines can be freestanding or part of your Workplace Violence or Emergency Response policies and procedures. In either case, ensure your guidelines include at least the same 6 elements set out in our Model Active Shooter Response Guidelines

1. Statement of Purpose

Explain that the purpose of the guidelines is to help workers prepare in the unlikely event that an active shooter incident happens at the workplace (Guidelines, Sec. 1).

2. Definition of Active Shooter

Include a definition of 'active shooter,' i.e., one or more individuals making an actual effort to kill people in an ABC Company workplace or another confined and populated place, typically with firearms and on a random basis (Guidelines, Sec. 2).

3. Policy Statement

State your company's commitment to provide a violence-free workplace and note that the guidelines are there in case your prevention program fails and an active shooter incident happens. Add *gravitas* to the guidelines by explaining how they can spell the difference in whether a worker survives such an incident (Guidelines, Sec. 3).

4. The 3 Response Options

The meat of the guidelines is the section that explains in detail each of the 3 things workers can do if they find themselves in an Active Shooter situation, including (in order of preference):

- Running away;
- Hiding and sheltering in place; and
- As a last resort, confronting the active shooter verbally, indirectly or via direct attack.

(Guidelines, Sec. 4)

5. The Do's & Don'ts of Dealing with Enforcement Officers

The next thing workers need to know is what to do and not do if and when law enforcement officers arrive on the scene (Guidelines, Sec. 5).

6. The Information to Give 911

Last but not least, list the crucial information workers should be ready to give operators when calling 911 to report an active shooter incident.

