

# 2011



## **Emergency Response Protocols to Active Shooters**

**Retail-specific supplement to DHS  
Active Shooter Materials**



### **About the Emergency Response Protocols**

As a part of a long-standing partnership between the National Retail Federation (NRF) and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), active shooter emergency response protocols were created. NRF has facilitated meetings and conversations between DHS, retailers, mall security and law enforcement regarding active shooters to create these materials. Initially in 2008 the materials included an informational booklet, pocket guide and break room poster, which NRF complemented with a retail-specific guide. DHS is now adding a no-cost online training program titled Active Shooter, What You Can Do. The training is targeted to reach a broad range of individuals, including managers and associates. The program will supplement retailers' internal training already provided to employees. In light of this new publication, the retail-specific guidelines have been updated to reflect new incidents and relevant information.

### **About the National Retail Federation**

As the world's largest retail trade association and the voice of retail worldwide, the National Retail Federation's global membership includes retailers of all sizes, formats and channels of distribution as well as chain restaurants and industry partners from the U.S. and more than 45 countries abroad. In the U.S., NRF represents the breadth and diversity of an industry with more than 1.6 million American companies that employ nearly 25 million workers and generated 2010 sales of \$2.4 trillion. [www.nrf.com](http://www.nrf.com)

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# Section 1: Introduction

Just eight days into 2011, a terrorizing incident unfolded in Tucson, Arizona. In the parking lot of a grocery store, a political rally turned into a nightmare when an active shooter opened fire killing six, including a nine-year old girl and a federal judge. The shooting wounded thirteen others and Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords. As the nation watches her long road to recovery and mourns those whose lives were lost, scores of businesses, governmental entities and communities have reviewed their crisis response plans.

In another recent example, upon hearing a loud disturbance in the mall, several specialty stores responded to the emergency as an active shooter incident and put in place their corporate emergency response protocols. The incident turned out to be an irate individual wreaking havoc on the mall but customers and associates alike reacted quickly as there is heightened sensitivity and awareness of random violence that could potentially escalate.

As a result of these types of incidents, starting in 2008 NRF brought the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) together with retailers, mall security and law enforcement to create emergency response protocols and guidelines to active shooters. Initially, the materials created by DHS included an informational booklet, pocket guide and break room poster, which NRF complemented with a retail-specific guide.

While shooting incidents and workplace violence issues continue to be an unfortunate reality plaguing communities and businesses throughout the country, DHS is now adding a no-cost online training program titled Active Shooter, What You Can Do:

<http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/IS907.asp>

The training is targeted to reach a broad range of individuals, including managers and associates. While individuals respond instinctually to crisis situations, these materials are intended to help associates be prepared to respond if an active shooter situation erupts. The program will supplement retailers' internal training already provided to employees.

As retailers continue to update their existing policies and procedures to make sure that their stores and facilities have prepared, planned, drilled and re-trained for crisis situations, there is still a need to keep information in front of associates. In light of this new publication, the retail-specific guidelines have been updated to reflect new incidents and relevant information.

# Section 2: Active Shooter Overview

## What is an Active Shooter?

According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 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<sup>1</sup>. Typically the immediate deployment of law enforcement is required to stop the shooting and mitigate harm to victims. Active shooters usually will continue to move throughout building or area until stopped.

## Shooting Incidents

When shots are fired, the cause or motive may not be determined for hours, days or even weeks. Many of the protocols provided in this document will serve as a guide for shots fired during a robbery, workplace violence incident, civil unrest, or other shooting incident.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, "Active Shooter: How to Respond," October 2008

## Section 3: Profile of Shooting Incidents

Shooting incidents are all unique and arise under different circumstances. Whether it's a disgruntled associate, a troubled outsider seeking revenge in a public setting or a shoplifter intent on escaping the law, if gunfire is involved, the response is immediate.

In a recent study published by the New York City Police Department (NYPD), over 200 shooting incidents were profiled<sup>2</sup>. While each of the shooting incidents occurred under a different set of circumstances and the characteristics of the shooters varied widely, there were some commonalities amongst them. Below is a profile of shooters based on NYPD's study.

### Profile of Shooter

- An overwhelming majority of the shooters are male.
- The median age range of shooters is 35, with spikes of school shootings by 15-19 year-olds and a spike of incidents at other types of facilities by 35-44 year-olds.
- Nearly all shootings were carried out by a sole attacker.
- Nearly 4 out of 10 attacks involve more than one weapon.
- Typical incidents result in 0-2 deaths and 0-2 casualties.
- Active shooters are, oftentimes, members of the community they target – either in a professional or academic relationship with at least one of the victims.
- Of the incidents reviewed, attacks involving professional relationships were predominantly carried out by current employees of the company over disagreements among co-workers. Less than a third of these workplace attacks were the result of a former/downsized employee.

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<sup>2</sup> New York City Police Department, "Active Shooter Recommendations and Analysis for Risk Mitigation"

## Examples of Shooting Incidents

Active shooter incidents have a direct impact on retailers and shopping centers causing emotional trauma for store associates and guests. They also have a direct affect on the economic stability and sense of community that the shopping centers provide. These incidents and other violent crimes occurring in mall parking lots have received nationwide media attention and caused legislators to react by putting forth new gun control laws and gun-carry laws (allowing employees to carry guns to work) and camera requirements on mall/store parking lots. Based on the Tucson incident, policymakers nationwide have taken a second glance at their personal safety and security measures, as well as decisions to host meetings and gatherings in public spaces.

Examples of recent shooting incidents in/near retail locations are in the table below

<b>Examples of Recent Retail Shooting Incidents</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Shopping Center/Store</b>	<b>Wounded</b>
Nov. 1, 2005	Tacoma, WA	Tacoma Mall	6 wounded
May 27, 2006	Oklahoma City, OK	Crossroads Mall	1 injured, 1 killed (shooter)
Feb. 12, 2007	Salt Lake City, UT	Trolley Square Mall	4 wounded, 6 killed (5 victims & shooter)
Apr. 29, 2007	Kansas City, MO	Ward Parkway Center	2 wounded, 4 killed (3 victims & shoot)
Dec. 5, 2007	Omaha, NE	Westroads Mall, Von Maur Department Store	4 wounded, 9 killed (including shooter)
Feb. 2, 2008	Tinley Park, IL	Lane Bryant Store	1 wounded, 5 killed (1 associate, 4 customers)
Mar. 3, 2008	West Palm Beach, FL	Wendy's Restaurant	4 wounded (customers), 2 killed (1 diner & 1 shooter)
Mar. 15, 2008	Tukwila, WA	Westfield Southcenter Mall	1 wounded, not life-threatening
Oct. 8, 2008	Nashville, TN	Knoxville Center Mall	1 killed, 1 wounded (shooter)
May 18, 2009	Los Angeles, CA	Beverly Center	1 killed
Dec. 20, 2009	Atlanta, GA	Cumberland Mall parking lot	1 wounded
Jul. 2, 2010	Burbank, CA	Kmart	2 wounded
Jan. 8, 2011	Tucson, AZ	La Toscana Village Mall	14 wounded, 6 killed
Mar. 29, 2011	Glen Burnie, MD	Marley Station Mall	1 wounded

## **Section 4: Active Shooter Policy Reference**

Whether you are a retailer, employee, customer or mall management associate, the basic rules apply for shootings that occur within:

- department stores
- specialty stores
- anchor stores/big box
- the common area of a mall
- strip center stores
- parking lot of a mall/strip center

### **Basic Guidelines for individuals present during an active shooting incident:**

1. Assess the situation
2. React
  - a. Evacuate
  - b. Hide out/Shelter-in-Place
  - c. Take action
3. Call 911 when it is safe to do so

For retailers of all sizes and sectors needing assistance, refer to Appendix A, “Active Shooters: In-Store Response Protocol Sample”, which contains sample policy language being used by retailers. The sample protocols document is intended to be a reference to help you navigate establishing your own company’s active shooter policy.

# **Section 5: Crisis Response – Overall Considerations for a Retailer**

## **Crisis Response**

Before April 20, 1999, not many people knew about Columbine, Colorado. Now, people automatically associate “Columbine” with one of the deadliest school shootings in U.S. history. Based on the learning’s from Columbine, first responding officers to active shooting crises will now quickly assess the situation and immediately take action. Anyone perceived as a vital threat will be eliminated.

Pre-Columbine, law enforcement would contain the area, fully assess the situation and then attempt to negotiate with the offender(s) until resolution of the incident. If negotiation failed or the offender(s) escalated the incident, the local SWAT team/Quick Response Team (QRT) would then initiate a tactical response. The learning’s from Columbine and other massacres have proven that it is better for law enforcement to enter the situation immediately and try to stop the violence. Shooters who have the intent of harming as many victims as possible typically go into the situation not expecting to leave alive (suicide-by-cop), thus the shooter inevitably engages with police officers.

Shooting incidents begin and end in such a short period of time (usually under 10 to 15 minutes) that by the time first responders arrive on the scene, the shooting is usually over and either the shooter has fled or has killed himself. Since these incidents are so spontaneous and lethal, off-duty officers and concerned citizens respond instinctively and engage the shooter. The components of a crisis response plan should address how a retailer will:

- Prepare
- Respond
- Follow-Up

**Will your policy serve your employees and customers during an emergency?**

# **Prepare: How can a retailer prepare for an active shooter situation?**

**Create an emergency plan that addresses critical policies and procedures for: reporting, responding and reacting to emergencies.** The plan should be created by gathering input from several stakeholders including human resources, facilities, loss prevention, operations, safety, training department (if one exists), property manager/mall management, local law enforcement and/or emergency responders. Additional considerations are below.

## **Align communication strategy for/with**

- Internal store operations (employee-to-employee)
- Communicating to customers and all employees (employee-to-customer)
- Mall security (Retailers located in the mall/shopping center/strip center)
- Law enforcement
- Team/leadership at corporate headquarters

## **Coordinate with mall/shopping center management**

- Conduct regular meetings for retailers within the mall/shopping center, mall management and law enforcement
- Establish points of contact between retailers/mall management
- Outline roles of retailers/mall management
- Coordinate when off-duty police officers are on the payroll of retailers/mall management

## **Coordinate with local law enforcement**

- Provide access to the building (provide master keys)
- Provide building plans for emergency responders
- Establish relationships with law enforcement to stay abreast of any local trends and understand first responder activities

## **Consider altering existing facilities set-up, if necessary**

- All store phones should have 911 access or clear emergency dialing instructions so employees or customers are not put at risk
- Store phones without access to dial 911 or clear alternate dialing instructions could put employees/customers at risk
- Keys for the drop gate in the back office or on a lanyard carried only by a few authorized personnel might not ensure that a gate is dropped/door is locked if shooting breaks out in a common area and your store is located within a mall
- Refer to Appendix B, "Active Shooters/Random Threat Plan: Risk Assessment," as a reference when conducting an assessment of your stores/facilities

- Include provisions for individuals with special needs and/or disabilities in plans, evacuation instructions, and any other relevant information.

### **Coordinate hide out/shelter-in-place and escape plans**

- Pre-select potential hide out/shelter-in-place locations to identify safe areas within the facility
- Designate an evacuation meeting location and inform all employees
- If possible, outline at least two evacuation routes that are conspicuous and well marked
- Coordinate how to meet and account for employees once evacuated (check-in procedure)
- Outline how you will evacuate multi-floor stores
- Outline how you will account for your associates
- Train employees to encourage customers to follow them to the evacuation area
- Train employees not to leave the safe location area until law enforcement authorities have instructed them to do so

### **As first responders' primary responsibility is to eliminate the threat, train associates on what to expect visually and verbally from first responders. First responders will:**

- Not be able to stop to help injured persons or answer questions until the environment is safe
- Proceed to the area where shots were last heard
- Stop the shooting as quickly as possible, including with lethal force (if necessary)
- Typically respond in teams of four
- May be dressed in street clothes, regular patrol uniforms or may be wearing tactical equipment such as external bulletproof vests, Kevlar helmets and other tactical equipment
- Arrive at the scene armed with rifles, shotguns or handguns, and might use pepper spray or tear gas to gain control of the situation
- Need to take control and mandate the actions of all persons in the area which could include shouting out commands or even pushing individuals to the ground for their safety

### **Educate associates to assist law enforcement and:**

- Remain calm and quiet
- Avoid asking for help or directions
- Follow instructions of first responders (Note: Law enforcement officers in tactical gear may appear intimidating because of their protective gear.)
- Put down any items and immediately raise hands while spreading fingers apart
- Keep their hands empty & visible at all times (put down bags/packages)
- Avoid making any sudden movements
- Avoid pointing, screaming and/or yelling

- Indicate the location of the shooter to law enforcement officers (if it's known and can be done inconspicuously)

#### **Inform associates that:**

- First-responding law enforcement will **NOT** help any of the wounded/injured until the shooter is no longer a threat; rescue teams will come in later to aid the wounded/injured
- They may be treated as a suspect
- They will need to remain on the premises for a while after the shooting; the entire area is a crime scene and law enforcement will usually keep everyone in the area until they have been processed
- Your store might be turned into a temporary processing center for law enforcement officials
- Dependent on proximity and amount of casualties, your store may turn into a temporary recovery unit/emergency room/morgue
- Emergency medical personnel will also arrive at the scene and rescue teams will treat and remove any injured persons
- Customers and visitors may look to employees, managers or uniformed officials to direct them to safety, as they are familiar with the building and workspace

#### **Outline store response and recovery protocol for key departments**

- Each store layout is unique, so each store needs response and recovery protocols, as outlined by corporate policy

#### **Run a table top exercise and/or simulate an active shooter situation**

- Get the key stake holders involved within the mall/shopping center
  - Law enforcement/first responders
  - Mall developers
  - Retailers (specialty and department stores) - employees at store locations and corporate headquarters
  - Stand-in Customers (people with little/no knowledge of the store layout)

#### **Train employees to be aware of their surroundings and potential active shooters could involve:**

- Suspicious Individuals – Store/Mall Security response to observing suspicious individuals
- Associates – An active shooter may be a current or former employee. Employees typically display indicators of potentially violent behavior over time. Create a method for associates to notify human resources/management of this behavior.
- Associates with tenuous domestic situations – An active shooter may be related to an associate and or a spouse/domestic partner. Create a method for associates to notify human resources/management of domestic troubles.

## **Respond: What is the right response for your store?**

### **Considerations for Your Response Program**

- Store Profile (specialty or department store)
- Security/Loss Prevention Personnel/Store Management on-site
- Assess the Situation
- Contact the Police (911)
- Decision to Evacuate or Hide Out/Shelter-in-Place
- Public Address Announcement
- Company Notification
- Public Relations/Media Response

### **Training Considerations**

- Simple and instinctual response
- Implemented by various management levels
- Include drills or walkthroughs
- Follow up on a periodic basis

## **Follow-Up: What will your recovery efforts entail?**

Once the active shooter has been incapacitated, the follow-up to the situation needs to be as comprehensive the preparation.

### **Immediate Response**

- Account for all individuals
- Dependent on proximity to the shooting and the extent of casualties, your store may become:
  - a temporary processing center
  - a temporary recovery unit/emergency room/morgue
- Thoroughly document the series of events through interviews and forensics

### **Associates & Customers**

- Obtain available counseling for all involved
- Create a 'safe' feeling so associates and customers will return
- Determine method for notifying families of individuals affected by the active shooter, including notification of any casualties

### **Lessons Learned**

- Analyze the active shooter situation and create a post-mortem report.
- Identify strengths and weaknesses exhibited during the event
- Make improvements to the emergency plan

### **Business Interests**

- Follow through with public relations/media strategy and include mall management, if appropriate
- Identify and fill any critical personnel or operational gaps left in the organization as a result of the incident

## **Section 6: Conclusion**

A shooting incident is not what retailers, customers and employees expect when reporting to work or enjoying a leisurely afternoon of shopping. However, history has shown us that it is critical to think about these situations and prepare. People will respond instinctively to these panic situations, however by training and teaching employees some of the basics, they will have that to fall back on during these crisis situations, when seconds matter.

Active shooting situations may not be preventable however the amount of damage and life lost can be minimized. Working with industry experts and law enforcement/first responders, the sample response protocols have been outlined.

## Appendix A

# Active Shooters: In-Store Response Protocol Sample

If an active shooter or other violent situation occurs in/near your store,  
**TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION!**

1. **ASSESS THE SITUATION** – Determine the most reasonable way to protect your own life. Customers are most likely to follow the lead of in-store associates and management during an active shooter situation. **Do not endanger your safety or the safety of others.**
  
2. **REACT** – Determine the location of the shooter (inside or outside store). Based on your assessment, react to the situation at hand in the method safest possible for you and those around you. The shooter may be moving through the mall, store, back corridors, entrances, or out to the parking areas. There may be danger from the gunfire of the attacker, and responding police officers. You must choose which action to take:
  - a. **EVACUATE** – If the shooter is in the store, and it is safe to do so, evacuate the store.
    - Run away from the sound, putting as much distance between you and the shooter as possible.
    - Have an escape route and plan in mind.
    - Warn individuals not to enter an area where the active shooter may be.
    - If it is safe to do so, evacuate regardless of whether others agree to follow.
    - Leave your belongings behind.
    - Help others escape, if possible.
    - Prevent individuals from entering an area where the active shooter may be.
    - Keep your hands visible so it is clear to first responders that you are not armed.
    - Follow the instructions of any police officers.
    - Do not attempt to move wounded people.
    - Call 911 when it is safe to do so
    - Go to pre-established company meeting spot.
  
  - b. **HIDE OUT/SHELTER-IN-PLACE** – If safe evacuation is not possible, find a place to hide where the active shooter is less likely to find you. Take staff and customers to the back area, away from exposure to glass and the mall common area or the outside area. Stay hidden if possible and away from windows and exterior doors. Your hiding place should:
    - Be out of the active shooter's view.
    - Provide protection if shots are fired in your direction (i.e., an office with a closed and locked door).
    - Not trap you or restrict your options for movement.
    - Block entry to your hiding place and lock the doors.

- Potential safe locations might include a secure stockroom, office, emergency stairwells, utility closet, mall corridors, etc.

**KEEP SAFE** – Stay inside your Store, unless instructed to do otherwise by the police officials or other local authorities. **Do NOT open the door** for anyone that cannot provide you with appropriate first responder/security identification and/or show you a badge. If the active shooter is nearby:

- Lock the door.
- Silence your cell phone and/or pager. (Even the vibration setting can give away a hiding position.)
- Hide behind large items (i.e., cabinets, desks).
- Remain quiet.
- Consider the difference between cover and concealment. Cover will protect from gunfire and concealment will merely hide you from the view of the shooter. Choose the best space that is available quickly.

**LOCK UP** – If it is safe to do so, **lock all store doors**. Determine key holders, as they may vary by company. For stores with multiple exits, lock store doors closest to vicinity/direction of shooter, if it is safe to do so. Determine the automatic and manual ways to close the door.

- c. **TAKE ACTION** – As a last resort and only when your life is in imminent danger, attempt to incapacitate the active shooter. Act with physical aggression against the shooter, throw items, improvise weapons, yell and commit to your actions.

3. **COMMUNICATE** – When it is safe to do so: Call out and describe the situation.

- a. **Inform customers and associates** – State over the Public Announcement System and store radios that a person is in the building shooting a weapon. Sample announcement: ***"Attention we have a 911 situation occurring please move to a secure area immediately."*** Repeat 3 times.

- b. **Call 911** – Be prepared to provide as much information about the shooter as possible, including physical description/location of shooter:

- i. Location of the active shooter(s)
- ii. Number of shooter(s), if more than one
- iii. Physical description of shooter(s)
- iv. Number and type of weapon(s) held by the shooter(s)
- v. Number of potential victims at the location

- c. **Contact appropriate internal and external partners** – When safe to do so contact and update loss prevention/store management, mall security and corporate office.

4. **GET OUT – Follow all instructions given to you by authorities.** You may be requested to exit your area with your hands above your head and be told to leave all bags and packages in the Store. Remain calm, and follow officers' instructions.
  
5. **How should you react when law enforcement arrives**
  - a. Remain calm and follow officers' instructions.
  - b. Immediately raise hands and spread fingers.
  - c. Keep hands visible at all times.
  - d. Avoid making quick movements toward officers such as attempting to hold on to them for safety.
  - e. Avoid pointing, screaming and/or yelling.
  - f. Do not stop to ask officers for help or direction when evacuating, just proceed in the direction from which officers are entering the premises.
  
6. **After the Event**
  - a. As soon as possible, the appropriate individuals at store operations and the corporate office should be contacted.
  - b. Establish an evacuation area outside the store for all customers and store associates until the situation is resolved.
  - c. Set up Store Command Center. This should be the store's central communication post. Ensure someone is always stationed at the Command Center phone to take and give information as needed.

**Appendix B**

**Active Shooters/Random Threat Plan: Risk Assessment**

The chart below may be used to assist you in identifying considerations for your plan.

	YES	NO
<b>PHYSICAL</b>		
Is your store in a mall?		
Is your location a stand-alone store?		
Is your store near a major highway?		
Is your store near a major train route?		
Is your parking lot adequately lit?		
Is your parking lot patrolled regularly by either mall security or the police?		
Do you have a full time Loss Prevention staff?		
Does your store have a closed circuit (CCTV) system?		
Does your store have an emergency generator?		
Does your store have a P.A. system? If not, do you have a megaphone?		
How close is your cash office to an exit?	ft.	
Are your stockrooms locked at all times?		
Does management know where risers and utility shut-offs are located?		
Does management know where risers and utility shut-offs are located?		
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>		
Has there been prior criminal activity or civil complaints against your store?		
Do you have an active cooperative alliance with mall security and the local police?		
Is your store near a crime magnet, such as a late night entertainment venue or near property in disrepair or abandoned?		
Is there a history of crime in the area where your store is located?		
Are there AEDs (automatic defibrillator devices) in the mall?		
How far is the closest medical facility?	mi.	
What is the average response time from the local police, fire and paramedics?	min.	
<b>PEOPLE</b>		
Do you have adequate staffing levels for each shift?		
Do you have emergency contact information for all associates?		
Are any associates trained in first aid, CPR or AED's?		



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