

Active Killers: A Developing Threat

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Note: This document is not finished and has probably not been completely cited properly.

Introduction

As time progresses, mass killings seem to be happening more often. These incidents usually occur in what are called “soft targets”, which are areas that may not have tight security and don't have armed responders readily available. These places are generally crowded areas, like schools, malls and other open shopping areas, college campuses, nightclubs, and other businesses. The Department of Homeland Security adds that a “soft target” is easily accessible to large numbers of people, and adds sports venues, hotels, places of worship, festivals, and parks to the list.

Terminology

One thing they do not always share, is type of weapon used, which leads to confusion. “Active shooter” implies that the suspect is shooting people, which makes certain countermeasures more appropriate than others. In the OSU attack, the attacker ran over people with a car and stabbed others. If you evacuate a building into a parking lot or wide sidewalk to get away from what is reported as a shooter, you could be entering into a killing field, if the suspect is actually in a car.

Another problem is that driving and shooting are not inherently criminal activities. What separates these incidents from activities performed by law-abiding citizens, is that they are directed against other citizens. Because of this, Ron Borsch suggests that “active killers” is a better term because it implies criminal activity and includes all types of murders. This could serve to eliminate one point of confusion in a fast-paced, confusing situation.

Rapid Mass Murder (RMM) is an even better term

- 1. Citizens, mostly unarmed, perform two thirds of all “Rapid Mass Murder”© aborts.*
- 2. In citizen aborts, initiation by a single citizen stops the killing eight out of ten times.*
- 3. Law enforcement performs one third of all “Rapid Mass Murder”© aborts.*
- 4. In law enforcement aborts, initiation by a single officer stops the killing seven out of 10 times.*

(Ellifritz, New)

Characteristics

As seen in “The Police Response to Active Shooter Incidents”, the perpetrators of these acts may share many characteristics. They are likely to have more than one target. Their actions are usually an expression of anger. The suspect may be suicidal, but responders should not expect the suspect to have committed suicide. Escape is not usually a high priority. Most don't hide their identity, some may make social media postings about their actions. Suspects make detailed plans, and may have diversions or traps ready. They may either choose a location with a tactical advantage, or some remain mobile.

Wikipedia lists terrorism, mental illness, extreme anger, and working for a cause as possible motives for the attacks. “The Police Response...” mentions that the attacks are not for a financial profit; they aren't trying to have prisoners released; and that fame and recognition play a role. The School Shooting Wiki mentions infamy, notoriety, and a desire to be remembered. A man, aged 52, who threatened to shoot up the West Virginia University campus gave his reason as “he couldn't think of anything better to do and wanted to leave a legacy.” (WDTV) On August 5, 2019, he plead guilty and said “he was planning to shoot up WVU's campus in the name of ISIS”. (Dean, Man)

Attacks by foreign terror organizations and fighters could possibly fall into one of the above reasons, or it could be an entirely different scenario.

“The goal was not to kill 69 people on Utoya. The goal was to kill them all,”

Active shooters generally plan their massacres and train for them. Cho at Virginia Tech actually practiced shooting at targets arranged as students hiding under desks at a public shooting range.

- Want to avoid confrontation with police or armed citizens

Take note where these shootings happen...in areas that don't have people carrying guns. As Lt. Col. Dave Grossman says *“If the shooter wanted a fight, he would have started shooting up the police station.”* The shooter doesn't want a fair fight. He wants a massive body count. In order to accomplish his goal, he will target a disarmed population like a school.

History shows that the single worst fear an active shooter has is effective resistance from police or armed citizens foiling his plans for notoriety. In nearly every past event, the shooter has either surrendered or killed himself as soon as he is faced with effective resistance.

(Ellifritz, 9)

Targets

- may be chosen for emotional reaction (Ellifritz, Terrorist)
- may have nothing to do with being bullied (Ellifritz, 9)
- may target a teacher, principal, or janitor to get keys (Ellifritz, 9)

Tactics

- Bombs and active shooter combination may become more prevalent (Ellifritz, Terrorist)
- Attacks may be thoroughly planned (Ellifritz, 9)
- may pull fire alarm to get people moving out of the building into the target zone (Ellifritz, Active killers using fire alarms...)

Media Influence

The desire to leave a legacy and be remembered at any cost has given rise to the “Don’t name them” movement (<http://www.dontnamethem.org/>). In today’s constant bombardment of news coverage, not drawing attention to the killer’s names takes away the remembrance.

Weapons

“The Police Response...” reports statistics of weapons used. 60% used handguns, 27% used rifles, 9% used shotguns. 41% had multiple weapons. 4% had body armor. 2% had improvised explosive devices (IED). Other attackers have used knives and machetes, and a few have used cars, trucks, and even a bulldozer.

Training for an event

Cotter lists 5 tips for training for Active Killer incidents. Everyone involved should take part in the training, including law enforcement, the fire department, EMS, and 911 Dispatch. Responders should network with other disciplines, so each knows what to expect from the other, so that everyone works better as a team. Verbal communication should be emphasized, in the heat of the moment, critical information could be missed.

“The Police Response...” mentions that responders must expect a fight – the suspect could be suicidal, but could be waiting for “suicide by cop”. In 17% of incidents, responders operated outdoors. Off-duty or plainclothes officers may have an identifier, but should holster their weapon, identify themselves, and comply with instructions from other officers as they respond. Training should include scene assessment, room entry techniques, building clearing, victim rescue, and explosive device recognition.

The Columbine incident brought an end to the old method of “contain, isolate, and negotiate”. (Fretz) It may be appropriate for hostage situations or where the suspect can't harm victims, but it is not appropriate for an Active Killer incident where the goal is the murder as many victims as possible.

Dan Marcou mentions training the public in the Five stages of an active killer event:

Fantasy stage: The subject gets the idea

Planning stage: The subject starts collecting information

Preparation stage: Materials are gathered

Approach stage: The subject is on the way to the event

Implementation stage: The event is happening

Stopwatch of Death

These incidents are very fast-paced. During the Columbine incident, all the victims were shot within 13 minutes of the first call. Many incidents are over in three to four minutes. Six people were murdered and 13 injured in 15 seconds during the attack on Congresswoman Giffords. (Borsch)

Ron Borsch developed what is called "The Stopwatch of Death", where:

number of murder attempts / number of minutes = X

The 1966 Texas Tower attack resulted in ½ attempt per minute, the 1984 McDonalds attack was also ½ attempt, but the Virginia Tech attack was 7.9. (Fretz)

With each new attacker trying to beat the kill count of the last attacker, "the shortest response time saves lives". (Fretz)

Situational Awareness

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bHq4dbQB14&t=155s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPHqgvXkENg&t=246s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihJCfuZfoT8&t=149s>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MU7YOhA_Zbg

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=serK1z6t6CA>

Citizen Response

“The body cannot go where the mind has not been.” -- Unknown

If you have not thought about an event occurring and have not decided what you do if it does happen, you will have to spend critical seconds trying to decide what to do.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UrCeAL-QR8g>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-PPRtXXkd0M>

AVOID

The best place to be when something bad is happening, is somewhere where it is not happening. Some use the 'rule of thumb' that states if you hold your thumb up while looking at the scene, and can cover the entire scene with the thumb, you are probably far enough away at the moment. The 'rule of donut' is similar, in that you look through the hole in the donut, except that with this method, you have a snack.

Be aware of your surroundings. If you hear suspicious noises, do not hesitate to act. Go to the nearest safe exit. Take advantage of cover and concealment.

The students who escape the school by fleeing generally survive (Ellifritz, 9)

Pulling the fire alarm may not cause people to hurry out of the building

Hinder communications

(Ellifritz, Should)

Don't evacuate into an open parking lot where a bomb could be hidden in a car.

(Ellifritz, Don't)

Hearing fireworks, popping balloons, or construction noises unexpectedly is cause for alarm.

Sound may be muffled and hard to locate.

Wearing headphones may cause you to not hear the sounds

(Ellifritz, Recognizing)

DENY

Keep the attacker away. Lock and/or barricade the door. Turn the lights off. Silence your phone. Stay out of view.

In a longer term event, door locks are not likely to keep a determined attacker out. (Ellifritz, 9)

Each room should have

1. Resources to barricade doors
2. Paper writing instruments
3. Medical supplies
4. Alternate communication devices
5. Food water and entertainment options
6. Flashlight and dust masks
7. Saw to cut escape hole in wall
8. Glass breaking hammer
9. Rope ladder for 2nd and 3rd floor

(Ellifritz, Parent's)

DEFEND

Be aggressive and do not fight fair. This is not a contest, and your life depends on what you do.

Cover stops bullets, concealment hides you. Some examples of cover include, dense wood, concrete, steel, granite, the engine side of the vehicle, and concrete planters; while concealment includes the trunk side of the car, drywall, sofas, and trash cans. (Emerson,)

Cover vs Concealment

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L2Cg3nQc7AM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vIJCSs0SP8&t=9s>

Taking cover:

"The Buick of Truth"

Windshield inside to out

<https://www.theboxotruth.com/the-buick-o-truth-1-windshields-insideout/>

Windshield outside to in

<https://www.theboxotruth.com/the-buick-o-truth-2-windshields-outsidein/>

Pistols and car doors

<https://www.theboxotruth.com/the-buick-o-truth-3-pistols-and-car-doors/>

Rifles and car doors

<https://www.theboxotruth.com/the-buick-o-truth-4-rifles-and-car-doors/>

Shotguns and car doors

<https://www.theboxotruth.com/the-buick-o-truth-5-shotguns-and-car-doors/>

Concrete blocks

<https://www.theboxotruth.com/the-buick-o-truth-6-concrete-blocks/>

The engine

<https://www.theboxotruth.com/the-buick-o-truth-7-engine/>

Electric vehicles and fires

<https://www.theverge.com/2018/7/3/17530646/tesla-battery-fire-electric-vehicles-transportation-science>

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-03-25/tesla-fires-what-first-responders-don-t-know-about-fiery-evs>

The batteries used in these cars don't respond well to shock and being punctured. The usual end result is a hard to put out fire.

Laminated bullet proof glass and pistols

<https://www.theboxotruth.com/the-box-o-truth-47-laminated-bullet-proof-glass-pistols/>

Laminated bullet proof glass and rifles

<https://www.theboxotruth.com/the-box-o-truth-48-laminated-bullet-proof-glass-rifles/>

Busting an engine block

<https://www.theboxotruth.com/the-box-o-truth-54-busting-an-engine-block/>

Cars are not cover: MP5 vs van

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p3hZ4hoReTQ>

Improvise weapons

These can be: steel barrel pens, umbrella, umbrella with heavy objects taped inside, large fishing weights, a rolled up newspaper used to stab, coins in palm, handkerchief or sock, canes, chairs, arm length chain with padlock, hot liquids, large staplers, flashlights, books, computers, keyboards, belts

Fire Extinguisher

- use as striking weapon
- spray can blind person or cause coughing
 - spray until empty and then strike with it
- Hold the grip of the extinguisher with your strong hand. Support the body of the extinguisher with your non-dominant hand, ideally placing your thumb over the hose to keep it in place. Aim the “muzzle” of the hose at the terrorist and keep spraying until the extinguisher is empty. Once empty, keep the same grip and thrust the bottom of the canister into the terrorist’s face repeatedly.

Three people would be ideal, one to spray, one to tackle and one to get the gun.

(Ellifritz, Using)

Powerpoint or overhead projectors could be used to temporarily blind someone coming in the door. (Ellifritz, Parent’s)

Ambushing the killer

Alon Stivi (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r2tleRUbRHw>) recommends turning out the lights, and two people line up beside the door while everyone else goes to the far corner out of the line of sight. When the subject enters the room, some people throw objects to distract, while the two by the door rush the subject and tackle them to the floor. Going for the knees helps put them down.

Vehicle Attack Countermeasures

ISIS has been instructing terrorists to use easy to access vehicles and knives to attack targets.

“Though being an essential part of modern life, very few actually comprehend the deadly and destructive capability of the motor vehicle and its capacity of reaping large numbers of casualties if used in a premeditated manner,”

(Ellifritz, OSU)

Metal “hedgehog” type defenses are effective against vehicles and tanks, but aren’t very aesthetically pleasing. Concrete flower planters can add decoration and defense. Narrow roadways with tight turns can keep a vehicle from gaining speed and also limit the size of vehicle.

Barriers

Bollards (steel poles) can be inserted in the ground to keep vehicles out (Ellifritz, Protecting)

Fences

Walls

Jersey barriers (Ellifritz, Protecting)

Large blocks of concrete (Ellifritz, Protecting)

Gates

Hydraulic defenses

1. Deny vehicular access to the event.
 - a. Blockade material should be able to stop a large truck
 - b. Wooden or water-filled plastic barriers are not enough
2. Create a buffer zone
3. Position police vehicles as interceptors to stop vehicles in the buffer zone
 - a. Officers in the vehicles should be equipped with shotguns with slugs
 - b. Officers should shoot through the windshield, side windows or door panels to target the driver
4. City vehicles should be positioned to block access routes
5. Police vehicles in the perimeter can act as blocking or ramming vehicles if perimeter is breached
 - a. Vehicle should be capable of stopping a large truck
6. Position an officer with a megaphone near the center of the event to provide instructions in case of breach

(Ellifritz, Preventing)

Building security measures

ID card readers can limit access to a building and show the names of the ID cards swiped to enter. These are negated by someone stealing another's ID card and using it. They are also defeated by 'tailgating', where someone pretends to have lost their card and the person in front of them holds the door open. Monitored cameras may give an early warning of an intruder.

Denying access to a room could include an eye bolt on each side of the door with a chain or piece of rebar slid in them. Door openers can be locked with zip ties or a belt. If the floor isn't slick, a chair could be put under the door knob. Large furniture like desks and filing cabinets could be pushed in front of the door.

Barricading doors that open in / out

<https://northeastsecuritysolutions.com/why-security-professionals-oppose-classroom-door-barricades/>

<https://www.artofmanliness.com/articles/how-to-barricade-a-door/>

<https://guardiandefenseplan.com/how-to-barricade-a-door-effectively/>

Explosive Device

This could be a pressure cooker, car, truck, van, or many other things. The minimum safe distance increases with the size of the delivery method. Naturally, the larger the carrier, the further away you need to be.

https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/prep_ied_fact_sheet.pdf

<https://www.dni.gov/nctc/jcat/references.html>

Always watch for secondary devices. Sometimes, the primary device gets people to respond to the scene where they are injured by the secondary device that is set to go off later.

Sometimes you might be able to identify a suicide bomber before he detonates. Here's what to look for:

- Clothing that is bulky or excessive for the weather (to hide the bomb)
- Hands hidden (possibly holding the switch to detonate the bomb)
- A strange chemical odor or excessive cologne to cover up that smell
- The bomber focused, but unresponsive. Suicide bombers often have the "1000 yard stare" and are usually unresponsive to questions or commands
- Heavy luggage or backpacks that don't fit the situation. The average weight of a bomb used by a suicide bomber is around 20 lbs. The Madrid train bombers all had very heavy backpacks. The Moscow bomber placed his bomb in a rolling suitcase. Not all the bombers wear their bombs.
- Nervousness, excessive sweating, or repeated mumbling of a prayer or mantra
- Exposed wires anywhere on a person's body
- Repeated attempts to avoid security checkpoints and/or police officers

(Ellifritz, Armed)

Detonator may be radio controlled or activated by cell phone

Bomb squad should activate during active shooter event

Don't evacuate to a parking lot where a bomb could be hidden

(Ellifritz, Bombs)

Grenade attack

If you are within 3 steps of cover, get behind cover. If there is no cover, take two big steps away, put your hands over your ears, legs crossed, mouth open, elbows close to your side, face down with your feet towards the grenade. (Emerson)

Suspicious mail

www.osec.doc.gov/osy/PDF/SafeMailing.pdf

<https://about.usps.com/securing-the-mail/suspiciousmail.htm>

Stadium shooting

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Theater shooting

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1. Choose your seats wisely
2. Pick at least two exits
3. Keep your awareness up
4. Carry the right equipment
 - a. Flashlight
 - b. Medical gear
5. Think about what else you will need to escape
 - a. Good footwear
6. Parking outside the theater
7. Bombs are becoming a trend

(Ellifritz, Active shooter in a movie theater_

WHEN THE POLICE ARRIVE

Their first objective is to stop the shooter. Care must be taken that the right target is taken out, so that the killer's body count isn't increased by friendly fire.

Do not make sudden movements and do not run at the Police. Follow their commands quickly and specifically. Show your hands.

Police Action Plan

One officer can delay or disrupt the attacker. (Fretz) "The Police Response..." adds cautions to this. It is much more dangerous for the responder, in 57% of cases with a single officer entry, the scene is still active. 80% happen at one location, for the remaining 20% the attackers went mobile. About half of the incidents were over before the police arrived either from suicide, going mobile, or being shot or subdued by the victims. It also cautions that during solo entry into a hot scene, 1/3 of officers making the entry were shot.

More officers can cover more territory and may stand a better chance, but may not be present in time.

When law enforcement officers have successfully interdicted past rapid mass murderers, in 70% of occasions, the officer acted alone. The minority of remaining successes where two or more officers responded together resulted in only 30% of the interdictions. It's best that police departments play the odds and train officers to respond individually to RMM incidents, rather than wasting time waiting to assemble a multiple officer response team. (Ellifritz, Credit)

Because some attackers have used chains to lock doors, breaching equipment, like sledgehammers, bolt cutter, and pry bars, should be carried in vehicles. Ballistic shields should also be available. (Police) Many variables must be taken into account, like number of people, type of weapon used, terrain, target count, type of structure and whether it is fortified, and typical vs nontypical entry points. (Fretz, part 2)

- Police should be able to breach doors
 - Protocols should be in place to assure students it is actually the police
- (Ellifritz, 9)

As more people respond to the incident, incident command must be set up. (Fairbun) A scene commander can delegate people to deal with crowds and other responders. Responders can be divided into teams. Triage areas can be set up to deal with victims as they are extracted from the scene.

Contact Team

A Contact Team's sole purpose is to stop the attacker. The Diamond formation and T-formation are effective for groups, officers should practice as a team but prepare to enter as an individual. (Marcou)

Rescue/Extraction Team

The Rescue/Extraction team can locate and remove injured victims, direct victims to safer areas, and gather and relay information. (Police) This team must remain vigilant at all times – as events change they could become the Contact Team. (Police)

Perimeter Team

Perimeter Teams can be set up to protect fleeing persons, keep non-emergency personnel away from the scene, and possibly prevent the attacker's escape.

Medical

Medical may not be allowed in until building is clear

Battlefield medical skills are critical

Stop all massive bleeding

(Ellifritz, 9)

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