

35 Lifesaving Tips when Facing an Armed Intruder or Active Shooter at Your Construction Company or Jobsite

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Even with all of the violent incidents occurring in today’s world, your chances of being involved in an active shooter situation are slim; unfortunately, armed intruders and active shooter incidents are occurring with greater frequency every year.

For this reason it is critical that your employees receive training on how to rapidly respond to an armed intruder or active shooter incident on the construction site – whether working within a manufacturing facility or at an outdoor construction site.

Statistics indicate that a little more than 60% of active shooter situations are over within five (5) minutes – the shooter leaves the area, the shooter takes their own life (about 40%), or law enforcement/a prepared citizen neutralizes the situation. Knowing exactly what to do during those few minutes may mean the difference between life and death for you, a coworker and many others on your construction site.

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Simply stated, an active shooter seeks three factors:

- *Easy 'targets of opportunity'* – a shooter on a construction site has an intended 'target(s)' in mind. That 'target' may be a supervisor, a fellow employee, or anyone that presents themselves to the shooter. Unlike an armed robber where the main objective is to commit a theft or robbery (wanting to rob individuals of valuables and then leave the area), an armed/active shooter is there to kill. If their original 'target' is not available, the active shooter will see those 'easy targets of opportunity' – oftentimes innocent bystanders who simply are in the wrong place at the wrong time.
- *Little or no barricades or restrictions that will limit their movement.* History tells us that an active shooter is very familiar with their 'targets' and understands their way around your construction site. Constant supervision and the use of barrier restrictions such as fencing may slow but not stop a shooter's movements on a construction site.
- *Little or no supervision or confrontation that will restrict or end their actions.* An active shooter is not seeking any type of confrontation with anyone until they reach their intended 'target.' Confrontation by a site supervisor or foreman, employees, or law enforcement is not desired.

Whether your construction company has implemented Run-Hide-Fight, Lockdown, Evacuation or other crisis action protocols, it is critical that your company comprehends how to place as many 'roadblocks' as possible between your employees and the intruder/shooter to increase your chances of surviving an active shooter event.

Honestly ask yourself, are all of your construction employees prepared to deal with an armed intruder or an active shooter on a job site? Take the time to share these proven lifesaving ideas with your employees:

Be prepared to 'act not react.' People die when they mistakenly believe they must confirm the crisis is real. If you hear a sound that you perceive to be a gunshot, it is a gunshot until proven otherwise. It's acceptable to individually initiate lockdown or run-hide-fight protocols – if it's proven to be a non-crisis, that's OK.

Wherever you are working on a construction site, create mental 'action scripts.' An 'action script' is your mental rehearsal plan of 'what if' scenarios regarding your immediate response to variety of crises – 'if this happens I will do that.'

Examples of construction site 'action scripts' include:

- When working within a manufacturing facility, take the time to locate at least two (2) evacuation exits from the building.
- Understand how doors and windows open (and to where they open) in case of an emergency evacuation.
- Clearly understand your client's emergency notification system for lockdown, evacuation, armed intruder, and other crises. Is their notification system a bell system, an audible alarm, a P.A. announcement, etc.?
- Wherever you may be working, identify those objects that provide concealment and cover protection.

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LOCKDOWN & BARRICADING CONCERNS WHEN WORKING INDOORS

When your construction work site is within a facility, your only option may be to lockdown and barricade.

Practice ‘rapid response’ lockdown. During an emergency lockdown, seconds can mean the difference between life and death. Identify the process and actions that you will take to lockdown and/or barricade your occupied space.

Ensure your barricade responses are ‘gross motor skill based.’ Remove any body actions that are ‘fine motor skill based’ – for example, placing keys in the door keyhole and turning, any precise movements or tasks with your fingers such as tying rope or electrical cords to a door knob to hold it shut. During a stressful crisis, these actions will be slow and at times impossible to perform. Simplify by using pre-tied items, carabiners, or pre-lock doors so all you have to do is shut the door.

Identify objects that will be used to barricade your location. This means pre-plan your lockdown and barricade actions and identify the exact objects that will be utilized.

Plan the barricade objects in order – even number the order in which they are to be used when barricading. Always use objects of substantial size and weight when barricading. Don’t just pile small objects such as chairs in front of the door, they will not stop an intruder and will limit or obstruct your ability to respond and get out of the room if the door is breached. If barricaded properly, a door breach should be a rare occurrence.

Once barricaded or in lockdown, avoid standing directly in front of the door or area entrance in case the shooter fires through the door. This area is known as the ‘fatal funnel.’

Make it appear as if no one is in the room or barricaded area. Turn off lights, silence all cell phones, keep quiet, and don’t cast shadows under the door. If you must use your cell phone, cover your head with your clothing so the cell phone does not emit light which may give away your position.

Identify a secondary exit (door, window, breach a wall) that you can get out if needed. Even when in a secured lockdown, look for ways to exit the area in case the shooter were to breach your barricading.

Assume the ‘Defend Your Room’ position if you cannot get out. Position yourself against the wall, 2-3 feet from the knob side of the door. Have a ‘pre-planned, improvised weapon’ and be ready to use it. Construction workers have access to heavy tools and fire extinguishers that can be used as weapons. Remember, it’s time for ‘action vs. reaction’ – you attack first – action always beats reaction.

DAY TO DAY AWARENESS

Day to day awareness is your best personal and professional protection mechanism. No matter where you are or what you are doing on the job site, develop a thorough understanding of your surroundings. Know how to safely evacuate the area; know how to barricade your area/room; and as a last resort understand how and when to fight the intruder.

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It is important to always be observant. Use all of your senses, being attentive to your surroundings at all times. 'Intuitive concern' means trusting your instincts and intuition. We get in trouble when ignoring what our gut is telling us. When you sense an unexplained concern or uneasiness about someone or something, look deeper at the situation or person and identify if there is danger or pending attack.

Understand your surroundings every time you enter a building. Look around – try to find at least two (2) exit routes out of each area/room, the building, and the job site itself. Take the time to enter and leave using different routes. This familiarity with the job site layout will be beneficial during a real evacuation.

Always 'Say Something.' Learn to report all suspicious activities, people, or vehicles to law enforcement. It is law enforcement's job to determine if the activity is something other than it appears to be. The safest construction companies are those that expand this concept and follow 'Hear or See Something, Say or Do Something.' If you hear something (in person), see comments (graffiti) that threaten violence, or view statements or questions on social media that cause concern, bring that concern to your supervisor and/or the authorities. This also means if you see or hear signs of imminent danger - gunshots, yelling, screaming, or reports of an intruder - don't go to verify what is happening, ACT!!!! - initiate your pre-planned 'action script.'

Clearly understand your client's and your company's response plan to a variety of crises. Consider using crisis plan protocol stickers which can be installed inside of your hard hat.

Look around the area or job site for potential weapons. Every job site contains many objects that can be used as weapons to distract or even disable an armed intruder or shooter.

Understand how to implement your personal 'Ripple of Safety.' During a lockdown or evacuation, know how to:

- Get yourself safe as quickly as possible
- Notify others so they can get safe and begin their own 'ripple of safety'
- Activate your organization's emergency notification system
- Call '911'

Initially your biggest obstacle will be DENIAL – get by this denial and ACT!

RUN – HIDE – FIGHT CONCERNS

Remember, you can survive a construction site active shooter incident. The best response plans are those that allow you to switch and move between response alternatives as the context of the incident evolves and changes.

'MOVE WITH PURPOSE' – playing dead or freezing will most likely get you killed – action will provide a chance and may save your life – so learn to 'move with purpose.' The context of your situation will dictate your purpose. An armed intruder or active shooter situation will evolve rapidly and new details may be limited; you must also be able to adjust as the situation changes.

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If you are in another area of the building or job site when an initial attack occurs, your response alternatives will differ from those individuals who are in the immediate area of shooter. Active shooter situations are dynamic and evolve quickly. If the shooting starts down an internal hallway from your location, your options are to lockdown/barricade (if you are in a lockable space) or create distance if you have no lockable space or there is a clear path to an exit. The shooting down the hall could very quickly migrate to your space which dramatically changes what life saving alternatives work best. The closer you are to the shooter, the less response alternatives you will have. If you are near the shooter and your exit is blocked and there are no secondary exits (windows, doors, etc.) you probably have two choices - do nothing and die or go on the offensive and give yourself a chance to live.

If you are in close vicinity to the shooter, utilize a distraction. Throw *anything* at his/her face to create 'openings of opportunity' for you to create distance between yourself and the shooter, lockdown/barricade, leave the area through a secondary exit, or if no other option exists – engage the shooter.

RUN

Simply stated, you run to get out of the area quickly and safely creating distance between yourself and the shooter. As simple as it may sound - always run away from the sound of gunfire.

If you are in a hallway or an open space with the shooter, create more distance between you and the shooter by placing large heavy items called 'cover' –items that will stop bullets – steel, concrete, heavy machinery, etc. - between yourself and the shooter.

At times all you may have is '*concealment*' - beneficial, but it only protects you from the shooter's view and will not stop bullets. Concealment objects include drywall, bushes, hollow core doors, most furniture, etc... Understand once the shooter knows you are on the other side of the concealment item you could be shot directly through that item. NOTE: The majority of job site trailers would be considered concealment and would provide little or no protection from bullets fired from an active shooter.

When running away from a shooter, create distance and 90 degree angles between you and the shooter. This can be accomplished by moving into opposing hallways, rooms, alcoves, doorways, around site equipment/vehicles, etc...

Remove any highly reflective clothing or hard hats when running away from a shooter. Wearing brightly colored clothing of this nature can make you an easily identifiable 'target' for the shooter.

Once you have evacuated the immediate area, scatter from others and run as far away as you can. Don't evacuate as a group! A shooter's eyes will be drawn to a group of individuals who are running together – a great opportunity to 'flock shoot' victims. Only when you are safe should you call '911.'

Be prepared to provide exact details to the '911' operator. When you call '911' don't assume the person you are speaking to knows your exact location; some '911' calls go to a county wide dispatch center. Inform the operator of the city and your exact location, "I'm at ABC Company, 123 Main Street... and there is an active shooter in the building." If possible give description of shooter's appearance, weapon types, location, direction of travel in building, location of known injured, etc.

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HIDE

If you hear gunshots (or what you perceive to be gunshots) and can't get out of the building, it's time to lockdown and barricade. Simply hiding under a table or desk with no barricade between you and the shooter will not protect you. When no other alternative is available - you can't create distance, lockdown barricade, or get out of a secondary exit - find a distraction object to throw at the shooter and create a plan in case the shooter finds you.

Plan to throw objects at the shooter's face and eyes - when they flinch it's time to act. Initiate your plan which could be to create more distance, get to a lockable space, create 90 degree angles or engage/attack the shooter.

Immediately lock and barricade the door. Use large, heavy, moveable objects to barricade the door. Tables, desks, filing cabinets, chairs and other objects can be used to block entry in to the room. These objects should also be used to block the door window so the shooter cannot easily see in to the room.

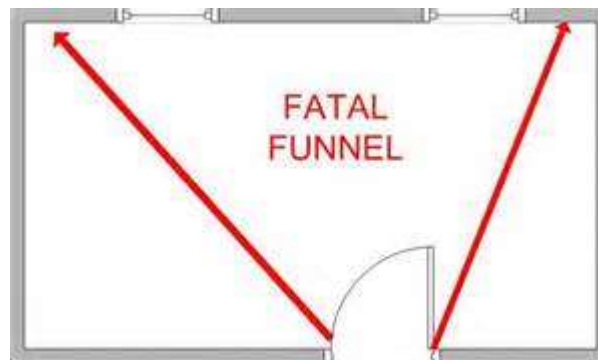
Turn off the lights and silence all cell phones. The noise or the illumination emitted from a cell phone may tip off the shooter of your location.

Always spread out throughout the area. Don't huddle together and create easy targets for the shooter.

Keep calm and quiet in the room. Make it appear that 'no one is home.'

Once your lockdown and barricading is complete, look for a secondary exit to get out of your location if necessary. Break a window and evacuate if you are able.

Never stand in the 'fatal funnel.' Past history indicates that shooters do not spend a great deal of time trying to breach a door unless they have a specific target in mind. Shooters understand they are 'on the clock' knowing that law enforcement will be responding soon. They may attempt for 4-6 seconds to enter the room. If unsuccessful in their efforts, they may fire a few rounds through the door, hoping to strike someone inside. It's then time to move on and look for 'easier targets of opportunity.' Instruct everyone to never stand in front of the door...avoid the 'fatal funnel.'



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FIGHT

Engage the shooter if running and hiding are not options.

Find anything to use as a weapon – tools, a fire extinguisher, your forearm/elbow, etc...

Attack the shooter's 'Trauma Susceptible Targets.' This includes the eyes, all sides of the neck, the clavicle, the solar plexus, the groin, ankles, and knees. Identify your target and 'drive through' with your weapon.

If possible, attack with numbers. If you have no other options, attack the shooter 'Gang-Fu' style. If even one person attacks the shooter, validate their decision and HELP THEM!

TEAM TACTICS (GANG-FU)

If you are using team tactics to attack the shooter, the first person attempts to control the weapon/arm to get the weapon pointed in a safe direction. The second person attacks 'Trauma Susceptible Targets' with a planned or improvised weapon or their forearm/elbow. Repeatedly strike through the target until the shooter is *completely* disabled.

When the weapon is disengaged from the shooter, remove it as far away from the shooter as possible. Do NOT have weapon in your hands as you exit the building/job site or when law enforcement arrives. Remember, law enforcement does not know who or where the shooter is located; having a weapon in your hands could lead to deadly consequences.

When law enforcement enters the area, listen and strictly follow their commands. Always maintain your hands above your head unless you are containing the gunman. Always allow law enforcement to take command of the situation.

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About the Author

Ted Hayes consults with businesses, school districts, and municipalities throughout Wisconsin to develop safety programs and risk management strategies. For over 29 years, Ted has served as a security and safety consultant to clients in Wisconsin and throughout the United States. In 2001, Hayes and Waukesha County (WI) Sheriff Bill Kruziki authored the book, "Not In MY Company! A Pro-Active Guide to Company Violence Prevention" and in November, 2014, Ted authored his second book, "If it's Predictable, It's Preventable – More than 2,000 Ways to Improve the Safety and Security in Your School."

During the fall of 1998, Hayes was a featured presenter at the Wisconsin School Safety Summit hosted by Attorney General James Doyle. Additionally, Ted has been a featured speaker for the:

- National Sheriffs Association
- National Association of Pupil Transportation
- Kansas Dare Officers Association
- Law Enforcement Training Network
- Wisconsin Attorney Generals Conference
- Wisconsin Company Counselors Association
- Wisconsin Association of School Boards
- Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials

In 2014, Hayes was chosen to the 'hot 100' list by Insurance Business in America.

Ted currently serves on the board of directors of the Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials (WASBO) and is a member of the WASBO Safety and Risk Management Committee. He also continues to author articles on school safety, security, and violence prevention. Ted can be contacted at ted.hayes@m3ins.com.

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