

Elements of an Effective Active Shooter Course

This fact sheet is designed to help law enforcement leaders and trainers determine whether an active shooter training fits their needs. Law enforcement leaders and training personnel should review these topics and activities and determine whether their current active shooter training successfully incorporate these features. In addition, they should ensure that their courses' lesson plans are clear and detailed to provide standardization across various instructors that may teach the course and that classroom time is used efficiently (e.g., by assigning required pre-class reading to reduce lecture time).

- **History of key active shooter incidents that led to changes in tactics and medical response.** There are lessons to be learned from past active shooter incidents, such as good/bad command and control, good/bad communications, good/bad tactical response, good/bad leadership, etc.
- **Breaching, including hands-on drills using mechanical breaching tools** (e.g., bolt cutter, sledgehammer, Halligan)
- **Ensuring officer and bystander safety during in active shooter response.**
- **Equipment and Tactics necessary to combat an active attacker, including one with superior firepower**
- **Realistic scenarios, including the following features in some instances:**
 - Closed and locked doors requiring officers to find alternate entrances to the threat area
 - Simunition use to most effectively simulate an officer being confronted and shot by a subject
 - Drills for solo and two-, three, and four-officer response
- **A focus on how to stop the killing, stop the dying, and evacuate the wounded to a higher level of trauma care, including the following considerations:**
- **Tactical**
 - Decision-making beyond shoot/don't shoot scenarios.
 - Articulating the "why" behind any decision, and supporting it by law and policy.
 - Gathering information/ intelligence en route, upon arrival, and throughout the incident.
 - Parking at the scene.
 - Bound and Overwatch to breach point using all senses to identify stimulus and determine appropriate response.
 - Driving toward the sound of last known gunfire searching for, locating, and neutralizing the shooter.
 - Tactical reloads, checking for injuries to self, room entries emphasizing speed, surprise, and violence of action.
- **Medical**
 - Tourniquets, pressure application to control blood loss, when to use chest seals, when to pack a wound with gauze, recovery position.
 - Casualty collection points, linking up with EMS and law enforcement evacuation of wounded.
 - Establishing a safe corridor for evacuation.
- **Mental/psychological training including the following:**
 - Move only as fast as you can see, think/process information, and shoot.
 - Drills on controlling breathing and stress reduction so tunnel vision and auditory exclusion.
 - The will to go into a situation knowing you may be shot or killed but doing it anyway because it is your job.
 - Understanding the mindset of an active shooter set on indiscriminately killing as many people as possible before being killed or captured by law enforcement. This is not a person who wants to negotiate for freedom or that of their victims. This point should be reinforced in all law enforcement trainings so responding officers can take appropriate action.
 - Avoiding the mindset of "it can't or won't happen here," which sets all involved up for failure. The mindset of law enforcement should be, "it will happen here, so how do we prepare and ready ourselves for when it happens?"
 - Priority of life: community members, officers, subject. Ensure the officers know the most important task is to save the lives of innocent community members involved in the attack

For more background on developing training, please refer to the [COPS Office](#) recent [report](#) of the critical incident review of active shooter incident at Robb Elementary School, or the new 12 Tenets of Training.