

Critical Incident Response Group

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Active Shooter and Mass Casualty Incidents



For information about the 9/16/13 Washington, D.C. Navy Yard shootings, please see related [press release](#).

An active shooter is an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area.

Overview of the FBI's Role

When an active shooter incident takes place, local and state law enforcement are always the first on the

scene. The FBI, however, has played a role in supporting the response to virtually every major incident in recent years and has much to offer in terms of expertise and resources.

Shortly after the tragic shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut in December 2012, the FBI sought ways its personnel could better assist its law enforcement partners. Two actions enhanced these efforts.

First, the Investigative Assistance for Violent Crimes Act of 2012, signed into law by the President in January 2013, permits the U.S. attorney general—at the request of appropriate state or local law enforcement personnel—to provide federal assistance after active shooter incidents and mass killings (defined by the law as three or more people) in public places. The attorney general delegated this responsibility to the FBI.

Second, working with other cabinet agencies, the FBI is finding ways to help prevent and respond to active shooters. A White House working group—consisting of the Department of Justice (DOJ), Department of Homeland Security, Department of Education, and Department of Health and Human Services—is part of a broader initiative, Now is the Time, undertaken after the Sandy Hook shootings. DOJ and the FBI were specifically tasked with training law enforcement and other first responders to ensure that protocols for responding to active shooter situations are consistent across the country.

Operational and Victim Assistance

Once an active shooter incident occurs, the FBI—usually through its Critical Incident Response Group—proactively assists state or law enforcement first responders. We can send multiple investigators to the scene, establish a field command post headed by an FBI executive, and/or mobilize and deploy to the scene evidence response teams, behavioral analysis and crisis management personnel, bomb technicians, SWAT teams, and experts in working with the news media. As appropriate, we may also stand up a command post at FBI Headquarters composed of various operational and behavioral Bureau components.

Another important part of our operational response is our victim assistance program. The FBI's Office for Victim Assistance (OVA), established in 2001, provides a variety of support services to victims/family members, first responders, investigative teams, and other operational elements. OVA assets available to support active shooter incidents include our field office victim specialists and members of our Victim Assistance Rapid Deployment Team from around the country, who are specially trained to handle mass casualty incidents.

Training for Law Enforcement

With DOJ and its Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), we're teaming up with the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) program, which was developed in Texas and is primarily funded by BJA and the state of Texas. ALERRT has trained more than 40,000 law enforcement first responders and has been adopted by the FBI as a national standard for special agent tactical instructors. Many state and local police departments have also adopted it as a standard for active shooting response, ensuring law enforcement officers arriving on the scene understand how others are trained to respond.

Approximately 100 FBI tactical instructors from around the country are trained in the ALERRT protocols after



Law enforcement officers and first responders at an active shooter presentation sponsored by the



For the Public: Responding to an Active Shooter Crisis Situation

This video, recently produced by the Houston Mayor's Office of Public Safety and Homeland Security, dramatizes an active shooter incident in the workplace. Its purpose is to educate the public on how to respond during such an incident. **Warning: The initial sequence in this video may be disturbing.**

Watch the video under the "Run.Hide.Fight" tab on the [ReadyHouston website](#).

For more information on how the public can prepare for and respond to active shooter situations, visit the [Department of Homeland Security Active Shooter Preparedness webpage](#).

And to assist those charged with the safety of elementary, secondary, and college-level students and attendees at houses of worship, the Departments of Education, Justice (led by the FBI), Homeland Security (led by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA), and Health and Human Services have developed emergency management planning guides for schools, colleges and universities, and religious facilities to deal with threats (including active shooter situations) and hazards. The guides, available below, were created in response to a tasking from the President and are part of his broader [anti-gun violence initiative](#) announced in January 2013. **(More details on the planning guides)**

- [Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans \(pdf\)](#)
- [Guide for Developing High-Quality Emergency Operations Plans for Institutions of Higher Education \(pdf\)](#)
- [Guide for Developing High-Quality Emergency Operations Plans for Houses of Worship \(pdf\)](#)

Active Shooter Statistics

- The average active shooter incident lasts 12 minutes, while 37 percent last less than five minutes. (Source: John Nicoletti, lecture entitled "Detection and Disruption of Insider/Outsider Perpetrated Violence")

attending the 40-hour train-the-trainer course. They are now using this knowledge to assist with the increased demand for the training by state, local, tribal, and campus law enforcement agencies.

In addition to ALERRT, FBI field offices are bringing law enforcement command staff together to discuss best practices and lessons learned from prior mass shooting incidents. These two-day conferences include discussions and instruction related to specific aspects of active shooter cases, including pre-event indicators (i.e., behavioral analysis), complex crime scenes and evidence collection, crisis management, victim assistance, media matters, and improvised explosive devices used by active shooters. These conferences are followed by tabletop exercises based on real-life incidents.

In April 2013 alone, more than 4,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, and law enforcement commanders from state, local, tribal, and campus law enforcement came together and discussed collaborative efforts to face down this threat. The conferences will be held on an ongoing basis in order to continue these discussions and to ensure that the law enforcement community is best prepared for future threats.

Law enforcement agencies can contact their local FBI office for more information on ALERRT training and FBI-hosted conferences.

FBI Resources for Law Enforcement

We currently have a number of publications on our website related to the active shooter topic. They include:

- Addressing the Problem of the Active Shooter
- Those Terrible First Few Minutes: Revisiting Active-Shooter Protocols for Schools
- Workplace Violence Prevention
- Campus Attacks

The FBI's Law Enforcement Enterprise Portal (LEEP) is an important component in the effort to provide access to tools and resources for law enforcement, intelligence, and criminal justice communities by using single sign-on technology. The Law Enforcement Online (LEO) website, available through LEEP, features active shooter information, lessons learned, and best practices and can be used to run a multi-jurisdictional virtual command center. LEEP is a secure, Internet-based communications portal for law enforcement that promotes collaboration and information-sharing by providing access to sensitive but unclassified information.



For law enforcement agencies interested in the above training, or for additional information on how the FBI can assist your agency before, during, or after an active shooter incident, please contact your local FBI office.

Additional Resources:

- Active Shooter Event Reference Guide (pdf)
- U.S. Active Shooter Events: 2001-2010 (pdf)
- Indicators of School Crime and Safety (pdf)
- ALERRT
- FERPA Guidance (pdf)
- HIPAA Guidance (pdf)
- White House
- Bureau of Justice Assistance
- Department of Homeland Security
- Department of Education
- Department of Health and Human Services

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Close

- Two percent of the shooters bring improvised explosive devices (IEDs) as an additional weapon. **(Source: Blair & Martaindale, "United States Active Shooter Events from 2001 to 2010")**
- In 10 percent of the cases, the shooter stops and walks away. In 20 percent of the cases, the shooter goes mobile, moving to another location. **(Source: Blair & Martaindale)**
- Forty-three percent of the time, the crime is over before police arrive. In 57 percent of the shootings, an officer arrives while the shooting is still underway. **(Source: Blair & Martaindale)**
- Patrol officers are most likely responding alone or with a partner. When responding alone, 75 percent had to take action, and a third of those officers are shot by the intruder. **(Source: Blair & Martaindale)**