

The BCM Professional's Playbook:

# Make Active Shooter Preparedness Part of Your Business Continuity Program



The FBI defines an active shooter as “a situation in which a shooting is in progress and an aspect of the crime may affect the protocols used in responding to and reacting at the scene of the incident.” From 2000-2013, there were approximately 11 incidents per year. A full 70% of these took place in a business, commerce, or educational setting. In 40%, the crime fell within the definition of a “mass killing.” This means three or more persons—not including the shooter—were killed. Notably, 60% of incidents ended before law enforcement arrived. The FBI states: “Unlike a defined crime, such as a murder or mass killing, the active aspect inherently implies that both law enforcement personnel and citizens have the potential to affect the outcome of the event based upon their responses.” We cannot over-emphasize the importance of active-shooter training as part of Business Continuity Management (BCM).

## An Active Shooter: The Worst-Case Scenario

Tragically, active shooter events—in which an individual is actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined or populated area—occur with greater frequency each year. With most incidents occurring at a business, school, or healthcare facility; employers now realize the need to prepare for—and respond to—such events. Since active shooter incidents are 18 times more likely than workplace fires, some courts have ruled that active shooters are a “recognized hazard” as defined by OSHA. Such a hazard certainly falls within Business Continuity Planning.

### In this playbook, we address the following:

- ✓ Regulatory Concerns and Legal Requirements
- ✓ Knowing When to Run, Hide, or Fight
- ✓ Building an Effective Active-Shooter Program
- ✓ Training and Communications

## Regulatory Concerns and Legal Requirements

OSHA states: “Each employer shall furnish to each of his employees employment and a place of employment which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to his employees.” They mandate employers with more than 10 employees have an Emergency Action Plan with emergency procedures based on the type of event.

The legal obligation of employers to provide a safe working environment for employees continues to evolve—and so will workplace violence best practices. By incorporating these changes into your existing life safety program, you can adopt them with minimal disruption or employee angst. Beyond Business Continuity Management software, Strategic BCP® leverages expertise in life safety to offer active shooter training—something no other software or consulting company currently provides.

## Knowing When to Run, Hide, or Fight

An effective training program will incorporate active shooter awareness into your existing life-safety program using a methodology that is already familiar to your staff. In school, we all learned a simple, easy-to-remember phrase for fire safety. “Stop, Drop, and Roll” taught each of us what to do if our clothes caught on fire. There is a similar technique for active shooter incidents:

- **Run:** The first goal is to leave if safe to do so. Know the route you plan to take. Encourage others to leave with you, but do not linger. Know your entire route before taking the closest exit.
- **Hide:** If leaving is not an option, hide. Find a room with a door that locks from the inside. If no doors lock, find a room without windows. In all instances, barricade the door if you have time.
- **Fight:** If you cannot leave or hide and your life is in danger; try to distract, stun, or overwhelm the shooter through loud noises, rapid movement, visual distractions, and creation of distance.

### Game-plan checklist:

- ✓ Determine how prepared employees are to receive active-shooter awareness training.
- ✓ Determine how well your employees understand the layout of your building or campus.
- ✓ Determine if your employees fully understand when it is appropriate to run, hide, or fight.

## Building an Effective Active-Shooter Program

Just as hanging a poster is not the same as developing a policy, having evacuation routes on the walls is not the same as having an effective Emergency Action Plan. Ultimately, you want to train your employees without alarming them. The best and most-effective way to do this is to introduce active-shooter response training as just another part of your existing life safety program. That way, you are just adding another layer to the worst-case procedures with which employees are familiar.

Present the topic under the Life Safety umbrella. You already prepare employees for fire or weather. Most have seen fire drills since childhood—and understand why they are necessary. This makes active shooter awareness another piece of the life safety program. If you do not conduct fire or disaster drills, avoid leading with active shooter preparedness. Moving from no life safety training at all directly to active shooter awareness can agitate employees. Start with fire and inclement-weather drills. Once that is routine, add active shooter awareness.

Once the active-shooter is part of life-safety, incorporate the scenario into BC planning. Considering the stakes, the initial response to an active shooter is unrelated to other BC events. As such, no BCM solution can sufficiently address those critical first decision points. You can, however, create and exercise an effective plan.

## Training and Communications

Another critical piece of effective planning is the correct instructor. Many trainers in this specialty are active or former law enforcement. While they have significant relevant experience, their presentations often feature photographs of weapons, perpetrators, bloody crime scenes, or even victims themselves. Your goal should be to train your employees, not to alarm them with shocking images or stories of gloom and doom. The right trainer will be able to tailor the presentation to the audience—whether general staff, management, HR, or risk professionals.

In addition to Run, Hide, Fight; effective training adds another important step: Alert. Consider that these incidents happen quickly, with 70% ending in five minutes and 15% ending in two minutes. The quicker you alert employees, the sooner they can get out of danger. That is why an effective employee-notification system—such as Everbridge®—incorporates all available communication tools—including e-mail, text messaging, walkie-talkies, two-way radios, and your public-address system. Our own ResilienceONE® BCM software fully integrates this communications platform—rather than simply pulling data from it.

### Game-plan checklist:

- ✓ Structure a training program that is effective for personnel at each organizational level.
- ✓ Choose a trainer who will not intimidate, frighten, or otherwise agitate your personnel.
- ✓ Choose a Business Continuity Management system with effective communication tools.
- ✓ Plan to use every available communication tool available to relay critical information.

## Conclusion: Make Active Shooter Training a Part of Life Safety

A safe work environment once focused on slippery floors and air quality above safe zones and evacuation routes. Today, unfortunately, everyone must prepare for a much more dangerous and increasingly possible event—an active shooter entering the workplace. To make this manageable, deploy effective Business Continuity Management software. Systems like ResilienceONE® from Strategic BCP include comprehensive emergency-notification tools to quickly notify all employees and vendors in the event of such a critical disruption.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**James Green** (CBCP, CUERME)

James Green is a Senior Consulting Manager for Strategic BCP and a BC, Life Safety, and Crisis Management professional with over 17 years of industry-related experience. He has trained over 2000 people in Active Shooter Response—receiving praise for his engaging, communicative style. His other specialties are life safety, crisis management, process improvement, team building, and operations.

Since 2004, Strategic BCP®—innovator of ResilienceONE® business continuity planning and risk management software—has been leading the way in elevating the productivity and relevance of BC professionals. For a closer look at better ways to assess and manage risk, continuity, disaster recovery, and compliance—all in one comprehensive program—contact us:

**Toll-free:** 866.594.SBCP (7227)

**E-mail:** [solutions@strategicbcp.com](mailto:solutions@strategicbcp.com)

**Website:** [www.strategicbcp.com](http://www.strategicbcp.com)