



## ***ABOUT RESPONDING TO VIOLENT BEHAVIOR OR AN ACTIVE SHOOTER***

LENGTH: 13 MINUTES

### **PROGRAM SYNOPSIS:**

Our workplace is full of hazards, hazards that can hurt us or kill us. Controlling these hazards and preventing injuries is the point of our safety and health program. One such hazard is the one presented by violent behavior or an active shooter armed with a gun or other weapon. Knowing how to respond when confronted with workplace violence can prevent injuries and fatalities. That is the point of our facility's plan for responding to these types of violent emergencies. So, pay close attention as we get to the point about responding to violent behavior or an active shooter.

Topics include being prepared for a violent emergency, indicators of potentially violent behavior, responding to violent behavior, fleeing from an active shooter scene, hiding from a shooter, fighting back against a shooter and responding to law enforcement.

### **PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:**

After watching the program, the participant will be able to explain the following:

- How to respond calmly and appropriately during an emergency;
- What indicators to look out for that indicate the potential for violent behavior;
- How to respond when confronted in a violent manner;
- What to do when fleeing the scene of an active shooter;
- How to properly hide or fight back against a shooter;
- How to respond when law enforcement arrives at an active shooter event.

### **PROGRAM OUTLINE**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

- To better prepare for workplace violence or an active shooter, our organization has developed a Workplace Violence Program to educate employees in recognizing and responding to violent behavior or an active shooter.
- For our workplace violence program to be effective, all workers must be prepared for a potential violent incident and understand how to respond properly when suddenly confronted by a violent situation.
- Just like any other workplace emergency, surviving an incidence of workplace violence requires a good understanding of the facility's emergency action plan.

#### **BEING PREPARED FOR A VIOLENT EMERGENCY**

- The point of our facility's emergency action plan is to allow all employees to respond calmly and appropriately should an emergency arise.
- When a violent emergency, such as an active shooter takes place, it is often a scary and confusing situation. In these types of conditions, many people are unable to focus or make decisions.
- When workers routinely practice for emergency situations and have put prior thought into where to go and what to do should an emergency arise, they are much more likely to default to their training and respond appropriately during an emergency event.
- Make sure you know the location of more than one exit near your work area in the event that it is unsafe to move towards the nearest exit.
- Also, make it a point to know the location of the closest telephone to your work area and make sure you understand how to connect to an outside line in the event you need to call 911 or summon emergency responders.
- The key to surviving an emergency situation, including an active shooter, is to stay calm and quickly move away from the danger. Being familiar with the company's emergency response plan and participating in emergency response drills gives you the best chance to do that.

#### **INDICATORS OF POTENTIALLY VIOLENT BEHAVIOR**

- The best way to prevent injuries or fatalities due to violence is to prevent the incident from occurring in the first place. Make it a point to learn the indicators of potentially violent behavior so you can report any suspicious behavior or actions.
- Some common indicators to look out for include: an increase in absenteeism or an obvious increased usage of alcohol or drugs.
- Another precursor for potential violence is depression or withdrawal. These may be accompanied by severe mood swings or unstable or emotional responses during normal conversations.
- Another indicator is when a person talks often about problems at home or makes unsolicited comments about weapons and violent crimes. These are all warning signs that a person is susceptible to violence.
- If you observe someone displaying one or more of these indicators of potential violent behavior, you should contact the human resources department or your supervisor and let them know what you have observed.

- It's important to report any instance of these types of indicators. While you may not want to get involved or you may worry about getting a co-worker "into trouble," you need to understand that doing so may allow them to receive the help they need and may thwart a violent incident.

### **RESPONDING TO VIOLENT BEHAVIOR**

- Of course, not all incidents can be prevented so you must know how to respond should someone confront you in a violent manner.
- When directly confronted by an angry or aggressive person, try to stay calm and keep your arms lowered in a non-threatening position. Do everything you can to avoid escalating the situation into a fight.
- Avoid crossing your arms and do not make fists. These are signs of aggression and can quickly escalate the situation.
- Try and stay at least five feet away from the other person and avoid contact.
- If the other person tries to make contact, take whatever steps are necessary to flee from the other person and report his or her behavior immediately.
- If you cannot get away, call out for help.

### **RESPONDING TO AN ACTIVE SHOOTER**

- Unfortunately, there are times when violent situations are compounded by the use of firearms. When a person is firing a gun in the workplace or other populated area, an active shooter situation is taking place.
- Being in proximity to an active shooter is an extremely scary and dangerous situation. Your survival depends on remaining calm and quickly taking the appropriate action.
- An active shooter is defined as "an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area." In most cases, active shooters use firearms and there is no pattern or method to their selection of victims.
- Active shooter situations are unpredictable and evolve rapidly. Typically, the immediate deployment of law enforcement is required to stop the gunman.
- Once law enforcement arrives on scene, these situations are often over within 10 or 15 minutes; however, during this time, you must take specific action in order to survive.
- Should an active shooter appear in your work area, you must quickly decide the most practical method for protecting your own life.
- Avoiding any contact with the shooter gives you the best chance to survive and there are two ways to avoid contact. You can run or you can hide.

### **FLEEING FROM THE SCENE**

- As soon as you see or hear an active shooter, your first reaction should be to quickly move away from the direction of the danger.
- But you can't just run around randomly in a panic, and you shouldn't run into dead end areas with no exits such as restrooms, offices or classrooms.
- Instead, you should move quickly and purposefully away from the shooter and towards an exit that will allow you to leave the building and avoid any possible contact with the shooter.
- This is why you should always make a mental note of the locations of primary and secondary exits in any room or building in which you enter.
- Keep in mind that the safest exit during an emergency may not be through the same door from which you entered.
- Once you decide to flee, do not waste time gathering your personal belongings; leave them behind. Time is critical to your safety and every second counts.
- Do not activate the fire alarm. This could put others in danger as they inadvertently evacuate to an area in the path of the shooter.
- Alert co-workers to the threat as you evacuate, but do not stop. Continue with your plan to evacuate regardless of whether others agree to follow.

### **HIDING FROM THE SHOOTER**

- An active shooter situation often occurs quickly and you may not have an opportunity to reach an exit without contacting the shooter. When this is the case your best option is to hide in the most secure area you can find and then work to deny the shooter access into your area.
- In many high casualty events, the shooter has easily entered unlocked rooms and shot multiple helpless victims who were hiding under desks and chairs; however, in these same incidents, the shooter quickly moved on from locked doors or blockaded doors after discovering that access would be difficult.
- The lesson to be learned here is that simply hiding and hoping the shooter won't find you is not enough. You must also deny access.
- If possible, lock the door, turn off the lights and be quiet so as not to alert the shooter to your presence.
- If the door can't be locked, try and secure it using other means or block it with large, heavy objects.
- In some actual incidents, survivors reported blocking a door with their own bodies to deny access to the shooter.
- Remember, in order to survive, you must do anything you can to deny the shooter access to your hiding area until law enforcement arrives.
- During an active shooting event, it is important to call 911 as soon as you feel it is safe to do so. It's okay if more than one person calls, the more information given to law enforcement the better.
- If possible, give a description of the suspect or report his identity if known. Give the last known location of the shooter and in which direction he or she was moving.
- If the gunman is nearby and you cannot speak, leave the line open and allow the dispatcher to listen to what is going on around you.

### **RESPONDING TO LAW ENFORCEMENT**

- Violent incidents, especially those with an active shooter, are often loud, confusing and chaotic. When law enforcement and other responders arrive on the scene, they will not be able to immediately tell the difference between the victims and the shooter.

- This is why you must know how to properly respond when law enforcement arrives. You do not want the responding officers to perceive you as a threat or confuse you with the gunman.
- Be aware that law enforcement may be arriving as you are exiting and they will be solely focused on finding and eliminating the shooter.
- Officers are trained to look at peoples' hands when evaluating them as a potential threat. This is why you should slowly raise your hands when you first notice an officer. Spread your fingers wide to make it obvious that you aren't holding a weapon.
- With your hands visible at all times, stay calm and follow the officer's instructions. Remember that the officer will be focused on finding the shooter and may simply move past you without speaking.
- Don't slow them down by grabbing at them or screaming at them about the shooter or about any victims.
- If an officer does speak with you, try to remain calm and speak slowly. Answer any questions that are asked and then continue towards a safe exit.
- The path to safety is typically in the direction from which the officers are entering the premises.
- The point here is to refrain from doing anything that may make you appear to be a threat or that will interfere with law enforcement locating and stopping the gunman as quickly as possible.

#### **FIGHTING BACK AGAINST THE SHOOTER**

- Do everything you can to avoid confronting the shooter. Do not be a hero. An unarmed and untrained person is no match for an active shooter, but if you are unable to run or hide successfully and are confronted directly by the shooter, you have no other choice but to aggressively fight back and take whatever action is necessary to save your life.
- If you believe that your life is in imminent danger, you must be aggressive and take whatever action it takes to survive.
- If there are other people present, work together to overpower the assailant. Focus your effort on controlling the gun or weapon. Then use whatever is at your disposal to incapacitate or restrain the attacker.
- Remember, once you have chosen to fight back, you must do everything you can to survive. Never give up.