



THE FLYNT GROUP INC.

*ACTIONABLE KNOWLEDGE*®

■ **Grim Realization:**  
Defeating the Active Shooter



## **Flynt Group White Paper** **Grim Realization: Defeating the Active Shooter**

This paper addresses a tightly defined problem: how to defeat an active shooter. There are many studies that seek to understand the active shooter's motivations, actions, and other traits. In contrast, this study focuses solely on an approach that terminates an actual attack.

Leaders are morally responsible for the safety of those in their charge. This is especially true when the protected are unable to protect themselves, like children. Whether the principal of a high school or the General Manager of a shopping mall, you have the ability to improve your facility's security to better protect those in your care. As a leader, the first step is to accept that responsibility.

In the tragic aftermath of an attack, some say the horrific event was "unthinkable," or they believed "this could never happen here." Of course, this is wrong. It is "thinkable" as attacks are regular news. It does happen "here" because here is anywhere, at any moment. As a leader, the second step is to admit it could happen in your facility – it can.

Defeating an active shooter requires the immediately available and efficient application of lethal force while evacuating and shielding people to limit the loss of life. Seconds, literally, mean lives. Honest leaders that accept their responsibility to protect their people and that admit their facility's vulnerability cannot help but reach a grim realization of what they must do. As a leader, the third step is to act on this realization.

Finally, a footnote; although not this paper's topic, for many reasons it is possible that our society will see more suicide bombings. The security measures to counter the active shooter threat also have some limited utility for the suicide bomber threat.

Flynt Group's mission is to equip our clients with *Actionable Knowledge*® to wisely manage their risk positions and achieve their goals across a broad spectrum of hazards and threats. Should we be able to provide further information, please contact us.

Sincerely,

Bill Flynt, Ph.D., LTC (R)  
President  
The Flynt Group, Inc.  
*Actionable Knowledge*®



## Executive Summary

Defeating an active shooter requires the immediate, simultaneous execution of defensive and offensive protection procedures. The defensive procedures evacuate and shield people from the threat. The offensive procedures efficiently, decisively neutralize the threat using lethal force. Defeating an active shooter entails five operational stages: deter; detect and warn; deny access, evacuate, and shield; active response; and, recovery.

Without both the defensive and offensive components of this best practice approach the probability for increased loss of innocent life and serious injuries is increased. An active shooter will eventually defeat even the best passive security; in the scenario of a disgruntled worker, the passive security measures may be entirely bypassed. And, inevitably, there will be people who cannot reach safe shelter or evacuate the scene. The efficient, immediate application of lethal force against an active shooter is the only solution that decisively ends the threat to innocent life.

## Principles

Protection from the active shooter is defined as the evacuation of people to a secure location or shielding them in secure, hardened safe locations, and the immediate, decisive neutralization of the active shooter using efficient lethal force.

In developing a program, the following traits should characterize its design:

**Comprehensive:** Planning should address all realistic scenarios at all possible locations against all potential actors (e.g., student, teacher, employees, deliveryman, workers, visitors, customers, spouses, etc.).

**Integrated:** The technologies and policies supporting the drill should work together smoothly and in a mutually reinforcing, coordinated fashion.

**Layered:** Procedures should afford protection in depth, and not simply depend on a pure perimeter protection approach. This is necessary as an active shooter may not be an external actor, but a trusted insider.

**Redundant:** The leader should ensure that protection does not rely for its success on a single person, device, or technology. If one system fails, there must be a backup.

**Continual:** The program's capabilities should be in place and ready for execution anytime they may be required. In the context of a mall, this applies at least for the entire period the mall is open. In the context of a high school, this includes extracurricular activities after school and on weekends.



## **Components of a Program**

### **Defensive Procedures**

Defensive procedures accomplish the requirement to delay the threat and evacuate, shield, and account for people while decisive force is brought to bear against the active shooter. If possible, safely evacuating people from the area to a secure, hardened facility is the preferred course of action. This completely removes people from harm's way, while simplifying the environment for the application of offensive procedures and subsequent responses by law enforcement.

If evacuation off site is not possible, then sheltering in place in secure, hardened locations is the next option. These safe locations should be reinforced with ballistic shielding materials and capable of withstanding a violent attempt to break into them.

Accountability requires a well-designed and enforced personnel accountability plan that accurately and quickly reports to authorities the locations and status of the organization's people.

### **Offensive Procedures**

Immediately, decisively neutralizing the active shooter threat is best accomplished with well-trained and equipped, dedicated, on-site armed personnel.

Sources of suitable personnel may include off-duty law enforcement officers, contracted armed security officers, or equipping and training select staff or faculty members. If staff are armed, team members must undergo initial and periodic psychological evaluation, extensive training, and be enrolled in a Personnel Reliability Program to address potential material changes regarding each team member's suitability over time.

### **Stages of Response**

A best practice program addresses the operational framework's five stages: deter; detect and warn; deny access, evacuate, and shield; active response; and, recovery.

#### **Deter:**

An active shooter may be deterred if s/he thinks there is little probability of gaining access and that it is unlikely they will be able to inflict casualties.

This deterrence, as with a suicide bomber, is not about their personal safety. It is about choosing a target that best enables them to achieve their goal of inflicting mass casualties or killing specific individuals. Given a hard target, these threats can be deterred.

#### **Detect and Warn:**

Continuous, layered, in-depth environmental scanning for threats must provide maximum warning time.



Areas under continuous observation should include the entire facility and select areas that are not on-site, such as busses, bus stops, parking garages, etc. Interior spaces, all entrances, stairwells, and hallways should also be under video surveillance.

A component of early warning is an active program that identifies and reports suspect, aberrant, or hostile behaviors.

### **Deny Access, Evacuate, and Shield:**

Absent offensive procedures, eventually the active shooter will gain access, and the facility's physical security design should present a series of compartmented areas secured by barriers. These barriers ideally require access codes or proximity cards. This further isolates and slows the threat, while preserving freedom of movement for employees evacuating or moving to a shielded location.

If safely possible, evacuation is the best option; however, many facilities, by design, cannot be rapidly evacuated through multiple exits.

Multiple locations that are easily accessible throughout the facility must provide people who cannot safely evacuate with a secure, hardened shelter in place capability.

### **Active Response:**

Well-trained individuals and well-rehearsed teams executing solid tactical plans are vital to efficiently, rapidly neutralizing the active shooter. Equipment provided to team members should be exceptionally reliable, standardized across the team, of professional quality, and suited for extreme duty.

Professionally-developed policies, plans, procedures, and protocols, coupled with high-quality, professional initial, basic, advanced, and maintenance training is an absolute requirement. Organizations must obtain high-quality professional program development and training services. Ad hoc volunteerism in program development and training is not a sound option and exposes the organization to substantial risks.

### **Recovery:**

Recovery begins when the active shooter is neutralized. On-call grief counselors and other professionals should immediately begin work to facilitate healing. The priority is to the emotional and psychological needs of the organization's people and families. Efforts should include the rapid restoration of the physical environment to a serviceable state.

During recovery excellent leadership and personal outreach is critical to comfort and reassure people and solve problems. There is no higher task.



## Conclusion

Defeating an active shooter requires both defensive and offensive procedures. Reliance on a strictly defensive approach is not a best practice to prevent loss of innocent life, as even the best passive security measures will eventually fail. To decisively eliminate the danger to innocent life, immediate, efficient lethal force is required.

Flynt Group's mission is to equip our clients with *Actionable Knowledge*<sup>®</sup> to wisely manage their risk positions and achieve their goals across a broad spectrum of hazards and threats.

We understand that we must earn and protect our clients' trust. We do it every day.

Integrity is our code. Our discretion is absolute.

## Additional Resources:

We invite you to read our collection of related White Papers at [FlyntGroup.com](http://FlyntGroup.com) – just use your smartphone's tag app to snap the tag below. Need the Microsoft Tag App? Go to <http://gettag.mobi> on your phone's browser or find it in your mobile marketplace.

- A Thin, Bright Line: Protecting Against Active Shooters
- Time and Lives: Active Shooter Casualty Triage and Collection
- Preventing Blue on Blue: Anti-Fratricide Measures During an Active Shooter Response
- Blue Handover: Private Security to Law Enforcement Handover
- Bundling Arrows: Making a Business Case for Adopting an Incident Command System

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