

# Active Shooter Training

Presented By:  
Chatham Emergency Management Agency





# Objectives



- Understand the threat of active shooter events
- Learn the Avoid, Deny, Defend response model
- Identify ways to prepare your congregation and facility
- Practice decision-making through scenarios





# Why this Matters



- Increase in targeted violence at religious institutions
- Vulnerability due to open-door policies
- Importance of proactive planning and training



# What is an Active Shooter?



- An individual attempting to kill in a confined and populated area
- Evolves quickly
- Often no pattern or method to selection of victims
- An active shooter situation continues until stopped by:
  - Law Enforcement
  - Death by Suicide
  - Intervention



# Notable HOW Incidents



- Emanuel AME Church - Charleston, SC (2015)
  - 9 killed during Bible study
  - Shooter was welcomed into the group before opening fire
- First Baptist Church – Sutherland Springs, TX (2017)
  - 26 killed, 20 injured during Sunday service
  - Shooter entered through the front door with a rifle



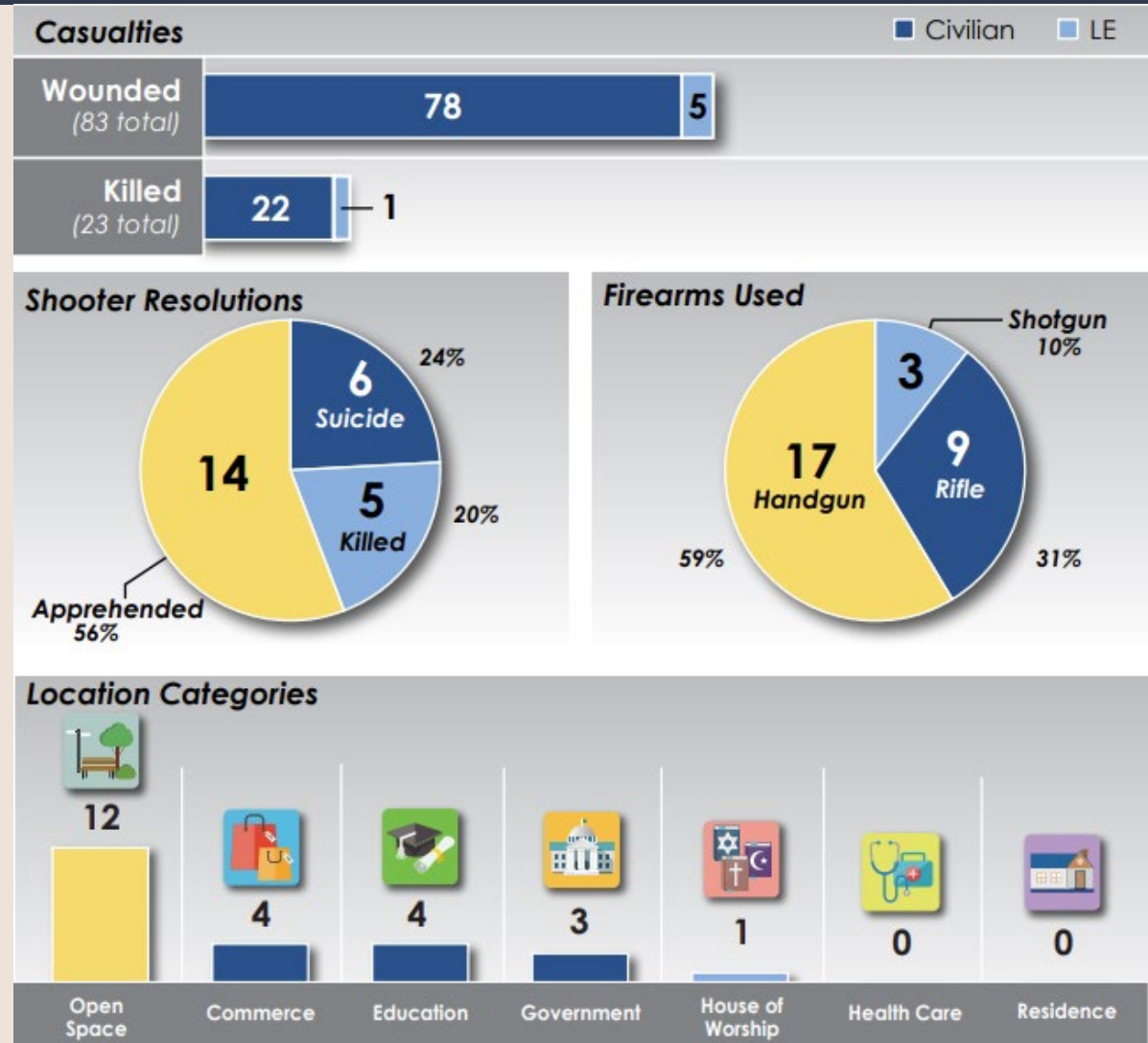
# Notable HOW Incidents



- Tree of Life Synagogue– Pittsburgh, P A (2018)
  - 11 killed during Shabbat services
  - Shooter targeted based on religious identity
- West Freeway Church of Christ – White Settlement, TX (2019)
  - 2 killed before armed volunteer neutralized shooter
  - Incident lasted 6 seconds

# 2024 Active Shooter Incidents

- 24 Incidents
  - 19 Different States
- 106 Casualties
- 25 Shooters
  - 22 Male
  - 3 Female





**ADD**

- Avoid
- Deny
- Defend





# Avoid

- Have an escape route and plan in mind
- Leave belongings behind
- Take others with you if possible
  - You may need to leave wounded behind
  - You can't help others if you become a victim yourself



# Avoid

- Call 911 and Provide:
- Exact address of Incident
- Number of shooters
- Description of shooter(s)
  - Clothing, build, race, identifiable markings
- Type of weapon(s)





# Deny

- Find a place to hide where shooter is less likely to find you
- If possible determine a place that will not trap you
- Lock the door
- Barricade the entry way with available objects
- Turn off lights
- Silence cellphone
- Remain quiet



# Defend

- Defend yourself as a last resort
- Improvise weapons (fire extinguishers, chair, etc.)
- Commit to your actions
- Work as a team if possible



# Law Enforcement Arrival

- Immediate goal is to stop the threat
- Will not stop to help injured
- They will shout commands

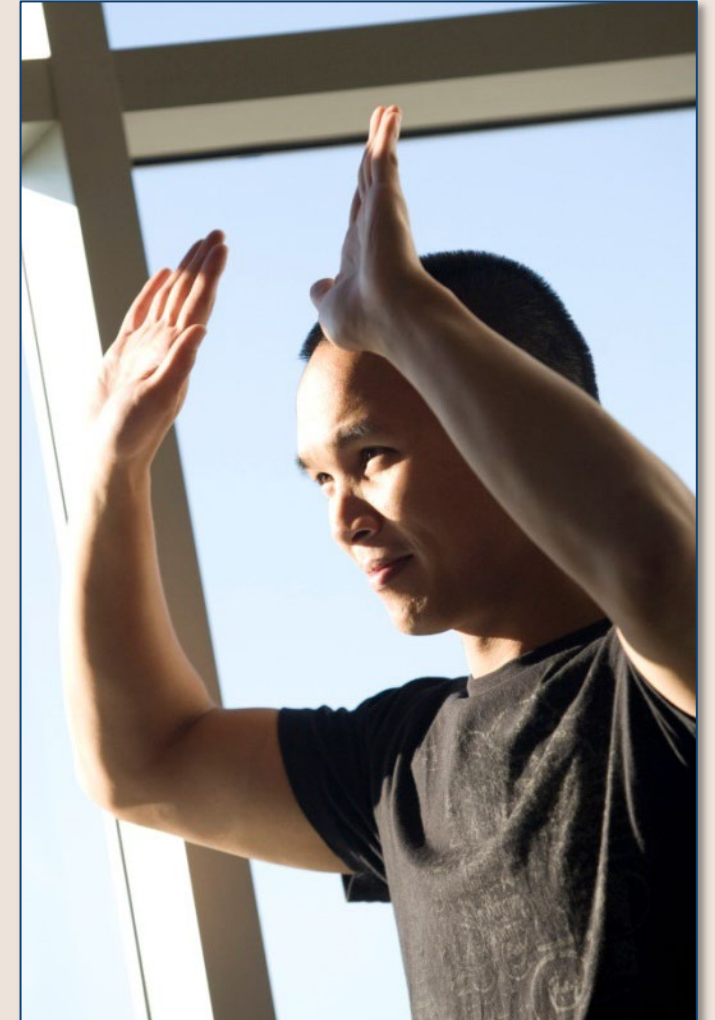




# Law Enforcement Arrival



- Keep your hands empty and in plain sight
- Follow their orders – save questions for later
- Understand that rescue of the wounded will not occur until threat neutralized





# In Practice





# Prepare Yourself



- Your Mental Preparation is important!
- You will have to THINK FOR YOURSELF when an incident occurs
- Be prepared to ACT ON YOUR OWN
  - Do not wait for law enforcement to arrive
  - Many incidents are over before law enforcement arrives





# Prepare Yourself



- Plan – Have a plan for your surroundings
- Evaluate – Determine the best response
- Respond – Take action
- Avoid
- Deny
- Defend



# MITIGATING ATTACKS ON HOUSES OF WORSHIP

Security Guide

DECEMBER 2020

## Preparedness for Houses of Worship

- Physical Space
- Training
- Creating an Emergency Action Plan
- Special Considerations





# Building Security Measures



- Lock exterior doors during services
- Use cameras and access control systems
- Install panic buttons or alert systems
- Identify safe rooms or secure areas



# Congregational Preparedness



- Train greeters, ushers, and volunteers
- Conduct regular drills
- Encourage “See something, say something”
- Communication plan for emergencies

# The Power of Hello

- Simply saying “Hello” can provide opportunity to observe and establish a connection
- OHNO Approach



# Observe

## Behavior

Is the person appearing to study security measures in the house of worship? Do they seem to be trying to avoid a camera?

Has the person left their car idling without apparent reason?

Is the person seeming to linger a long time in their vehicle?

Is this person trying to go unnoticed?

Is this person asking about other members or leadership?

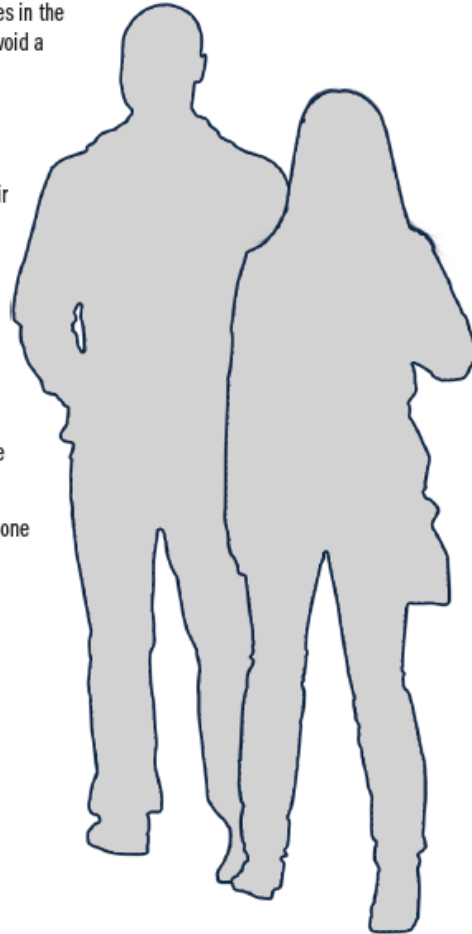
Is this person demanding to speak with clergy or house of worship leadership?

Is this person repeatedly walking in and out of the service or sanctuary?

Is this person attempting to get an usher or someone else to leave the sanctuary with them?

Is this person behaving as a 'lookout,' nervously glancing out of doors and windows?

Is this person standing alone or facing the congregation when others are seated?



## Content

Is this person loitering (and not entering the house of worship) without reasonable explanation?

Is this person alone or part of a group?

Is this person familiar with the house of worship? Do they seem to know where they are going?

Is this person familiar to me or anyone in the community?

Is this an appropriate time for a new guest to be at the house of worship? (Is the congregation meeting for a private vs. public event?)

Is this event advertised?

Is the person asking questions about house of worship functions, event schedules, or attendance?

Does the person who has entered seem unfamiliar to all other congregants?

Is the person behaving in some way that is very inconsistent with the norms of the site?

## Attire

Is this person wearing unusually inappropriate clothing for the house of worship environment?

Is this person wearing military style gear such as tactical gear?

Is this person appearing to conceal something under their clothing?

Is this person carrying anything that may seem unusual for the surroundings?



# Initiate a Hello



## INITIATE A HELLO

As staff welcome visitors, a kind greeting with eye contact can make the difference in how a visitor reacts, even if they are angry or upset. This interaction is the essence of the Power of Hello.

Practice the Power of Hello by doing or saying the following:

*Tip: These are important questions, and active listening is key.*

*Hello, how  
are you?*

*Welcome, is  
this your first  
time here?*

*How can I assist  
you today?*

*Are you looking  
for someone in  
particular?*

*Is there any way  
we can make today  
more meaningful  
for you?*



### SECURITY TIPS

If an unknown visitor arrives, be polite, engage in conversation, and steer them to a clearly visible seat.

**Without documentation, it is very difficult to prove an incident occurred.** Ensure that staff document every encounter they have with suspicious person(s). This information could be used in law enforcement actions or judicial proceedings.

# Navigate the Risk



## NAVIGATE THE RISK

Observe, consider the context, and mentally assess the situation.



The Power of Hello relies, in part, on an individual's ability to detect behavior that would arouse reasonable suspicion of terrorism or other criminal activity. The following indicators warrant prompt reporting.

### SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY INDICATORS

- Expressed or implied threats to commit acts of violence or destruction
- Abusive language that a reasonable person might find threatening
- Statements or behaviors indicative of suicidal or homicidal ideations
- Inappropriate statements about harming others
- Exaggerated or violent gestures (e.g., clenching fists or jaws) that could be interpreted by a reasonable person as threatening or intimidating

### CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ARMED INTRUDER

- Movement like touching a presumptive firearm secured at hips or waist
- Unusual body movements (positioning oneself or moving in a manner to shield a weapon from view)
- Bulges in clothing indicative of a weapon

If staff encounters any individual displaying these tendencies or someone who appears to be armed, they should obtain help, contact law enforcement and notify house of worship leadership immediately.

# Obtain Help



## OBTAIN HELP

**Be aware, alert, and ready to summon help.** Leverage relationships with local law enforcement for nonemergency notifications. If staff feel threatened, they should calmly walk away and lock the doors, note a physical description of the individual; and call 9-1-1.

When reporting to authorities, consider the five “W’s”:



**WHO** is doing something suspicious?  
What do they look like? What are they wearing?



**WHAT** are they doing that arouses suspicion?



**WHEN** did they act suspiciously?



**WHERE** did the suspicious activity take place? Where is the person now?



**WHY** is the person acting suspiciously?  
Could they be under the influence of alcohol or **drugs**?



## SECURITY TIPS

**Invite local police to tour the facility so that they are familiar with the layout of the facility and associated buildings.** Provide law enforcement with floor plans and access to locked and secured areas.

**Know how to lock the doors quickly and be ready to do so the moment trouble develops.** The goal is to prevent outside danger from coming inside to harm the congregation.

**Consider locking unused offices and rooms.** If staff can walk into a room or office, someone who wants to commit a crime can do so as well.

# Incident Response



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# Emergency Action Plan



- Evacuation routes and rally points
- Identify “safe areas”
- Communication plan/ procedures
- Family reunification plan



# Special Considerations



- Protecting the vulnerable
  - Children
  - Elderly
  - Disabled
  - Language barriers



# Risk



- Risk = Threat x Vulnerability x Consequence
- RISK: potential for an unwanted outcome resulting from an incident, event, or occurrence, as determined by its likelihood and the associated consequences. Risk is a function of threat, vulnerability, and consequence.





# Threat



- Risk = Threat x Vulnerability x Consequence
- THREAT: natural or man-made occurrence, individual, entity, or action that has or indicates the capability and intent to harm life, information, operations, the environment, and/ or property.



# Vulnerability



- Risk = Threat x Vulnerability x Consequence
- VULNERABILITY: physical feature or operational attribute that renders an entity open to exploitation or susceptible to a given hazard.



# Consequence



- Risk = Threat x Vulnerability x Consequence
- CONSEQUENCE: effect of an event, incident, or occurrence.



# Developing a Holistic Approach



- What are your threats and vulnerabilities?
- What is the likelihood of any given threat to occur?
- What are the consequences if those threats occur?
- What is your community's tolerance for the associated consequences?



# Developing a Holistic Approach



- What is your community's attitude toward security practices?
- What personnel resources do you have to direct, manage, and oversee security operations?
- What is your budget to support security initiatives, both immediate and long-term?



# Roles and Responsibilities



- Security Coordinator – Leads security program
- Security Planning Team – Supports planning and implementation
- Safety Team – Volunteers and greeters as first line of defense



# Developing a Holistic Approach



- What is your community's attitude toward security practices?
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# Planning Resources



- Security Planning and Assessments
- <https://www.cisa.gov/topics/physical-security/protecting-houses-worship/resources>



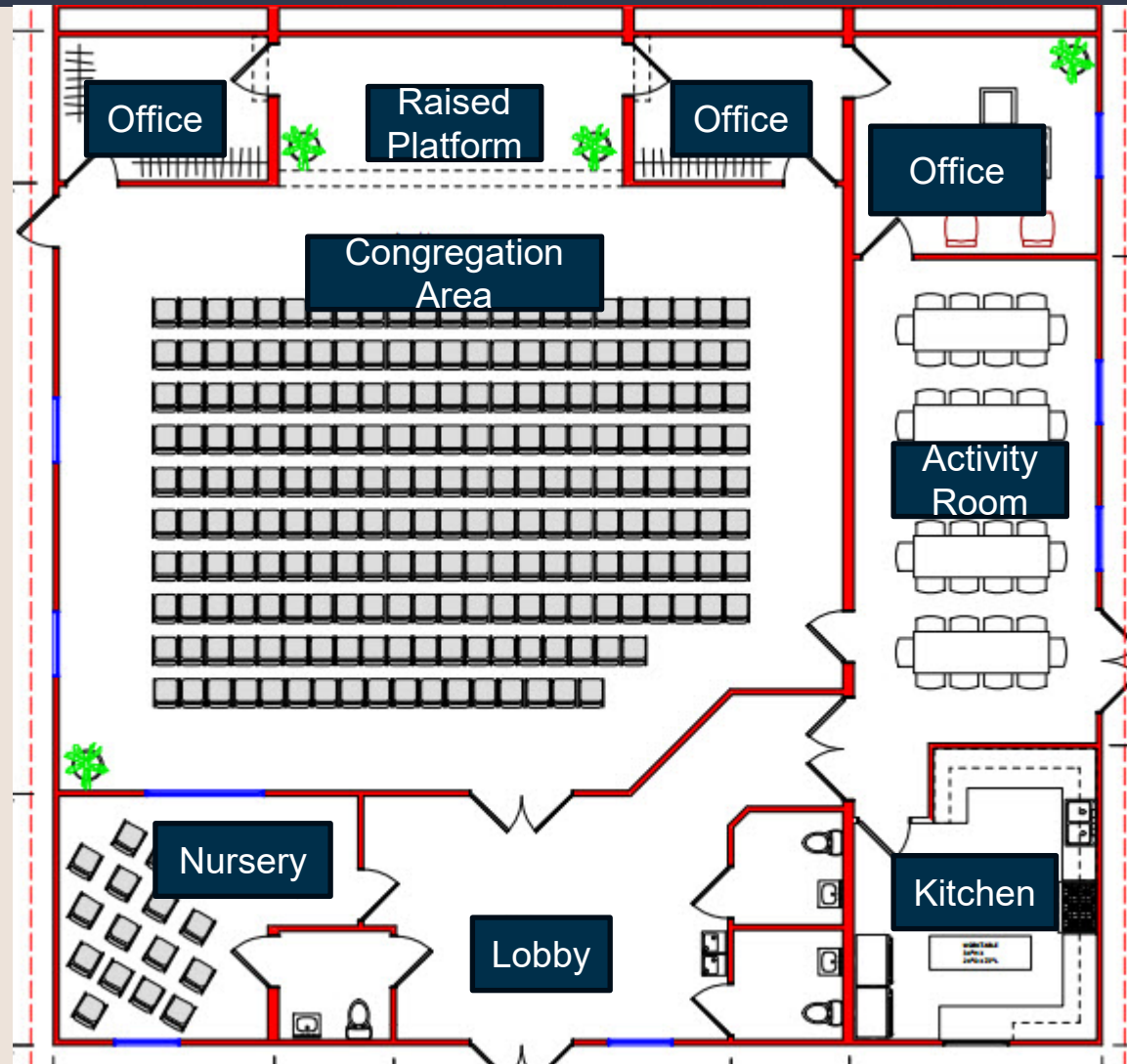
# Self Assessments



| QUESTION                                                                                                          | VERY LOW                                                                                | LOW                                                                                                        | MEDIUM                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | HIGH                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | VERY HIGH                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Does the house of worship have a security manager or security committee to make security management decisions? | The house of worship does not have a security manager or committee.                     | The house of worship has a security manager or committee, but security management activities are sporadic. | The house of worship has a security manager or committee. Security management activities are regularly scheduled, but not coordinated with other committees, departments, or groups (e.g., special events planning, childcare). | The house of worship has a security manager or committee. Security management activities are regularly scheduled and coordinated with other committees, departments, and groups, but additional personnel are needed to support the facility's security mission.                                                                                               | The house of worship has a security manager or committee. Security management activities are regularly scheduled and coordinated with other committees, departments, and groups, and staffing levels fully support the facility's security mission. |
|                                                                                                                   | <input type="radio"/> Very Low                                                          | <input type="radio"/> Low                                                                                  | <input type="radio"/> Medium                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <input type="radio"/> High                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <input type="radio"/> Very High                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 12. Does the house of worship conduct background checks on employees and volunteers?                              | The house of worship does not conduct any background checks on employees or volunteers. | The house of worship procures background checks on select individuals only.                                | The house of worship procures background checks on all employees and volunteers. However, the type of background checks conducted may provide minimal information, creating a false sense of security.                          | The house of worship procures thorough background checks on all employees and volunteers. Unique detailed checks are conducted according to an individual's position (e.g., credit checks for anyone handling money). However, background checks are conducted only initially (e.g., upon hire or when volunteer services began) and not on a recurring basis. | The house of worship procures thorough background checks on all employees and volunteers. Background checks are conducted initially and on a recurring basis.                                                                                       |
|                                                                                                                   | <input type="radio"/> Very Low                                                          | <input type="radio"/> Low                                                                                  | <input type="radio"/> Medium                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <input type="radio"/> High                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <input type="radio"/> Very High                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

<https://www.cisa.gov/houses-worship-security-self-assessment>

# Scenario





# Final Thoughts



- Hope is not a plan
  - Be proactive, not reactive!
- Plans should be trained and exercised

# Questions?

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