



National Retail Federation[®]

The Voice of Retail Worldwide

2008

**NRF-ICSC Emergency Response
Protocols to Active Shooters**

Retail Supplement to DHS Active Shooter Materials

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Section 1: Introduction

We live in a dangerous world and the stakes keep getting higher. Following the shootings, which occurred in retail stores, during the 2007 holiday season and continued into 2008, retailers, mall developers and law enforcement across the country recognized the need for additional planning and response protocols, similar to the efforts currently underway in schools and churches, to handle these critical incidents.

On March 31, 2008 over 30 retail loss prevention executives, law enforcement officers and mall/property management executives met to discuss emergency response protocols to active shooter situations. The nature of these events, various store scenarios (specialty stores versus department stores) and case studies from past incidents were used to create the information below.

The National Retail Federation (NRF) and International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) worked directly with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and retailers to expand the information made available to the private and public sectors. The purpose of this document is to supplement the information published by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Commercial Facilities Sector Team as a retail-specific document. DHS published training materials to address response protocols to active shooters in any commercial facility. This document is a guide for the retail community and can be adapted for the development of your crisis response in the event of an active shooting incident at a retail store.

Section 2: Active Shooter Overview

What is an Active Shooter?

According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, an **Active Shooter** is an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area; in most cases, active shooters use firearms(s) and there is no pattern or method to their selection of victims. Active shooter situations are unpredictable and evolve quickly. Typically, the immediate deployment of law enforcement is required to stop the shooting and mitigate harm to victims. Because active shooter situations are often over within 10 to 15 minutes, before law enforcement arrives on the scene, individuals must be prepared both mentally and physically to deal with an active shooter situation.

Section 3: Timeline of Recent Shooting Incidents, 2004 – 2008

Table 1 provides an overview of shooting incidents in/near retail locations. These incidents and other violent crimes occurring in mall parking lots are receiving nationwide media attention and causing legislators to react via revised gun control laws, gun-carry laws (allowing employees to carry guns to work), as well as camera requirements on mall/store parking lots.

Table 1 – Overview of Recent Shooting Incidents, 2004-2008			
Date	Location	Shopping Center/Store	Wounded
Nov. 18, 2004	St. Petersburg, FL	Gateway Shopping Center	1 wounded, 3 killed (2 victims & shooter)
Feb. 13, 2005	Kingston, NY	Hudson Valley Mall	2 wounded
Nov. 1, 2005	Tacoma, WA	Tacoma Mall	6 wounded
May 27, 2006	Oklahoma City, OK	Crossroads Mall	1 injured, 1 killed (shooter)
Nov. 18, 2006	Annapolis, MD	Westfield Annapolis Mall	2 injured
Feb. 12, 2007	Salt Lake City, UT	Trolley Square Mall	4 wounded, 6 killed (5 victims & shooter)
Apr. 29, 2007	Kansas City, MO	Ward Parkway Center	2 wounded, 4 killed (3 victims & shoot)
June 13, 2007	Columbia, SC	Columbiana Shopping Center	1 wounded (estranged wife), 1 killed (her father)
Nov. 27, 2007	Houston, TX	Greenspoint Mall	2 dead (shooter & his girlfriend)
Dec. 5, 2007	Omaha, NE	Westroads Mall, Von Maur Department Store	4 wounded, 9 killed (including shooter)
Jan. 26, 2008	Jacksonville, FL	Regency Square Mall	1 killed (shoplifter), 1 wounded (police officer)
Feb. 2, 2008	Tinley Park, IL	Lane Bryant Store	1 wounded, 5 killed (1 associate, 4 customers)
Mar. 3, 2008	West Palm Beach, FL	Wendy's Restaurant	4 wounded (customers), 2 killed (1 diner & 1 shooter)
Mar. 15, 2008	Tukwila, WA	Westfield Southcenter Mall	1 wounded, not life-threatening
Apr. 3, 2008	Miami, FL	Dolphin Mall	5.5 hour lock-down of mall to search for 4 suspects.
Jun. 17, 2008	Tampa, FL	Lakeland Mall	1 wounded (gang member involved in fight)
Jul. 2, 2008	Atlanta, GA	Popular Coffee Shop	2 wounded, not life-threatening
Oct. 8, 2008	Nashville, TN	Knoxville Center Mall	1 killed, 1 wounded (shooter)

Profile of Shooter

- In all 18 of the shootings, the suspect was male.
- In 12 of 18 (67%) incidents, the shooter was between the ages of 15-25; In 2 of 18 (11%) incidents, the shooter was in their late 20s to late 30s; In 4 of 18 (22%) shootings, the shooter was between the ages of 42-60.
- In 4 of 18 (22%) incidents, the shooter committed suicide before police were able to respond.

The frequency and devastating effects of the 2007 Holiday Season shootings initiated reaction from the retail loss prevention community, mall developers and law enforcement to work together more closely on planning for these occurrences.

Section 4: Active Shooter Policy Reference

Whether you are a retailer, employee, customer, mall management associate or law enforcement officer, the basic rules apply for shootings that occur within:

- department stores
- specialty stores
- anchor stores/big box
- the common area of a mall
- strip center stores
- parking lot of a mall/strip center

Basic Guidelines for individuals present during an active shooting incident:

1. Assess the situation
2. React
 - a. Evacuate
 - b. Hide out/Shelter-in-Place
 - c. Take action
3. Call 911 when it is safe to do so

For retailers of all sizes and sectors needing assistance, refer to the Supplementary Document “Active Shooters: In-Store Response Protocol Sample”, which contains sample policy language being used by retailers. The sample protocols document is intended to be a reference to help you navigate establishing your own company’s active shooter policy.

Section 5: Crisis Response – Overall Considerations for a Retailer

Crisis Response

Before April 20, 1999, not many people knew about Columbine, Colorado. Now, people automatically associate “Columbine” with one of the deadliest school shootings in U.S. history. Based on the learning’s from Columbine, first responding officers to active shooting crises will now quickly assess the situation and immediately take action. Anyone perceived as a vital threat will be eliminated.

Pre-Columbine, law enforcement would contain the area, fully assess the situation and then attempt to negotiate with the offender(s) until resolution of the incident. If negotiation failed or the offender(s) escalated the incident, the local SWAT team/Quick Response Team (QRT) would then initiate a tactical response. The learning’s from Columbine and other massacres have proven that it is better for law enforcement to enter the situation immediately and try to stop the violence. Shooters who have the intent of harming as many victims as possible typically go into the situation not expecting to leave alive (suicide-by-cop), thus the shooter inevitably engages with police officers.

Shooting incidents begin and end in such a short period of time (usually under 10 to 15 minutes) that by the time first responders arrive on the scene, the shooting is usually over and either the shooter has fled or has killed himself. Since these incidents are so spontaneous and lethal, off-duty officers and concerned citizens respond instinctually and engage the shooter. The five components of a crisis response plan should address how a retailer will:

- Prepare
- Prevent
- Respond
- Stabilize
- Recover

Will your policy serve your employees and customers during an emergency?

Prepare: How can a retailer prepare for an active shooter situation?

- Align communication strategy for/with:
 - Internal store operations (employee-to-employee)
 - Communicating to customers and all employees (employee-to-customer)
 - Mall security
 - Retailers located in the mall/shopping center/strip center
 - Law enforcement
 - Team/leadership at corporate headquarters

- Coordinate with mall/shopping center management
 - Conduct regular meetings for retailers within the mall/shopping center, mall management and law enforcement
 - Establish points of contact between retailers/mall management
 - Outline roles of retailers/mall management
 - Coordinate when off-duty police officers are on the payroll of retailers/mall management

- Coordinate with local police
 - Provide access to the building (provide master keys)
 - Provide building plans for emergency responders

- Consider altering existing facilities set-up, if necessary
 - All store phones should have 911 access or clear emergency dialing instructions so employees or customers are not put at risk
 - Store phones without access to dial 911 or clear alternate dialing instructions could put employees/customers at risk
 - Keys for the drop gate in the back office or on a lanyard carried only by a few authorized personnel might not ensure that a gate is dropped/door is locked if shooting breaks out in a common area and your store is located within a mall
 - Refer to the Supplementary Document “Active Shooters/Random Threat Plan: Risk Assessment” as a reference when conducting an assessment of your stores/facilities

- Coordinate escape plans
 - Designate an evacuation meeting location and inform all employees
 - Coordinate how to meet and account for employees once evacuated (check-in procedure)
 - Outline how you will evacuate multi-floor stores
 - Outline how you will account for your associates
 - Train employees to encourage customers to follow them to the evacuation area

- Train associates on what to expect visually and verbally from first responders. **First responders will:**
 - Proceed to the area where shots were last heard
 - Stop the shooting as quickly as possible, including with lethal force (if necessary)
 - Typically respond in teams of four
 - May be dressed in regular patrol uniforms or may be wearing external bulletproof vests, Kevlar helmets and other tactical equipment
 - Arrive at the scene armed with rifles, shotguns or handguns, and might use pepper spray or tear gas to gain control of the situation
 - First responder teams will assume control and mandate the actions of all persons in the area

- Educate associates to assist law enforcement and:
 - **remain calm and quiet**
 - follow instructions of first responders (Note: Law enforcement officers in tactical gear may appear intimidating because of their protective gear.)
 - keep their hands empty & visible at all times (put down bags/packages)
 - point out the location of the shooter to law enforcement officers (if it's known)
- Inform associates that:
 - first-responding law enforcement will **NOT** help any of the wounded/injured until the shooter is no longer a threat; rescue teams will come in later to aid the wounded/injured
 - they may be treated as a suspect
 - they will need to remain on the premises for a while after the shooting; the entire area is a crime scene and law enforcement will usually keep everyone in the area until they have been processed
 - your store might be turned into a temporary processing center for law enforcement officials
 - dependent on proximity and amount of casualties, your store may turn into a temporary recovery unit/emergency room/morgue
- Outline store response and recovery protocol for key departments
- Run a table top exercise and/or simulate an active shooter situation
 - Get the key stake holders involved within the mall/shopping center
 - Customers
 - Law enforcement/first responders
 - Mall developers
 - Retailers (specialty and department stores)
 - Employees at store locations
 - Employees at corporate headquarters

Prevent: How do you prevent an active shooter?

- **Suspicious Individuals** – Store/Mall Security response to observing suspicious individuals
- **Associates** – An active shooter may be a current or former employee. Employees typically display indicators of potentially violent behavior over time. Create a method for associates to notify human resources/management of this behavior.
- **Associates with tenuous domestic situations** – An active shooter may be related to an associate and or a spouse/domestic partner. Create a method for associates to notify human resources/management of domestic troubles.
- **Local Trends** – Establish relationships with law enforcement to stay abreast of any local trends and understand first responder activities.

Respond: What is the right response for your store?

- Considerations For Your Response Program
 - Store Profile (specialty or department store)
 - Security/Loss Prevention Personnel/Store Management on-site
 - Assess the Situation
 - Contact the Police (911)
 - Decision to Evacuate or Hide Out/Shelter-in-Place
 - Public Address Announcement
 - Company Notification

- Training Considerations
 - Simple and instinctual response
 - Implemented by various management levels
 - Include drills or walkthroughs
 - Follow up on a periodic basis

Stabilize: How can you stabilize a situation during the midst of a critical/crisis situation?

- Plan ahead and have a contingency plan
- Inform employees of the plan and train on how to react/respond
- Have a public relations plan in place to mitigate the damages after the shooting

Recover: What will your recovery efforts entail?

- Immediate Response
 - Thoroughly document the series of events through interviews and forensics
 - Dependent on proximity to the shooting and the extent of casualties, your store may become:
 - a temporary processing center
 - a temporary recovery unit/emergency room/morgue

- Associates & Customers
 - Obtain available counseling for all involved
 - Create 'safe' feeling so associates and customers will return

- Business Interests
 - Media Strategies with mall management

Section 6: Conclusion

In conclusion, this type of training is outside the bounds of what most retailers, customers and employees should expect when reporting to work/enjoying a leisurely afternoon of shopping. However, history has told us that it is critical to think about these situations, prepare for the worst and hope/expect the best. People will respond instinctually to these panic situations, however by training and teaching employees some of the basics, they will have that to fall back on during these crisis situations.

Active shooting situations may not be preventable however the amount of damage and life lost can be minimized. Working with industry experts and law enforcement/first responders, the sample response protocols below have been outlined.

Active Shooters: In-Store Response Protocol Sample

**If an active shooter or other violent situation occurs in/near your Store,
TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION!**

1. **ASSESS THE SITUATION** – Determine the most reasonable way to protect your own life. Customers are most likely to follow the lead of in-store associates and management during an active shooter situation. **Do not endanger your safety or the safety of others.**
2. **REACT** – Determine the location of the shooter (inside or outside store). Based on your assessment, react to the situation at hand in the method safest possible for you and those around you. The shooter may be moving through the mall, store, back corridors, entrances, or out to the parking areas. There may be danger from the gunfire of the attacker, and responding police officers. You must choose which action to take:
 - a. **EVACUATE** –If the shooter is in the store, and it is safe to do so, evacuate the store. Have an escape route and plan in mind and leave your belongings behind. Keep hands visible so it is clear to first responders that you are not armed. Run away from the sound, putting as much distance between you and the shooter as possible. Go to pre-established company meeting spot.
 - b. **HIDE OUT/SHELTER-IN-PLACE** – **Stay hidden** if possible and away from windows and exterior doors.
 - i. **HIDE OUT/SHELTER-IN-PLACE** – Take staff and customers to the back area, away from exposure to glass and the mall common area or the outside area. Go to a secure stockroom, office, emergency stairwells, utility closet, mall corridors, etc. Block entry to your hiding place and lock the doors.
 - ii. **KEEP SAFE** – Stay inside your Store, unless instructed to do otherwise by the police officials or other local authorities. **Do NOT open the door** for anyone that cannot provide you with appropriate first responder/security identification and/or show you a badge.
 - c. **TAKE ACTION** – As a last resort and only when your life is in imminent danger. Attempt to incapacitate the active shooter. Act with physical aggression and throw items at the active shooter.
 - d. **LOCK UP** – If it is safe to do so, **lock all Store doors**. Determine key holders, as they may vary by company. For stores with multiple exits, lock Store doors closest to vicinity/direction of shooter, if it is safe to do so. Determine the automatic and manual ways to close the door.

3. **COMMUNICATE** – When it is safe to do so: Call out and describe the situation.
 - a. **Inform customers and associates** – State over the Public Announcement System and store radios that a person is in the building with a weapon. Sample announcement: ***"Attention we have a 911 situation occurring please move to a secure area immediately."*** Repeat 3 times.
 - b. **Call 911** – Be prepared to provide as much information about the shooter as possible, including physical description/location of shooter:
 - i. Location of the active shooter
 - ii. Number of shooters, if more than one
 - iii. Physical description of shooter/s
 - iv. Number and type of weapons held
 - v. by the shooter/s
 - vi. Number of potential victims at the location
 - c. **Contact appropriate internal and external partners** – When safe to do so contact and update loss prevention/store management, mall security, corporate office.
4. **GET OUT – Follow all instructions given to you by authorities.** You may be requested to exit your area with your hands above your head and be told to leave all bags and packages in the Store. Remain calm, and follow officers' instructions.
5. **How should you react when law enforcement arrives**
 - a. Remain calm, and follow officers' instructions.
 - b. Immediately raise hands and spread fingers.
 - c. Keep hands visible at all times.
 - d. Avoid making quick movements toward officers such as attempting to hold on to them for safety.
 - e. Avoid pointing, screaming and/or yelling.
 - f. Do not stop to ask officers for help or direction when evacuating, just proceed in the direction from which officers are entering the premises.
6. **After the Event**
 - a. As soon as possible, the appropriate individuals at store operations and corporate should be contacted.
 - b. Establish an area outside the store for all Associates and Executives to evacuate to after the situation is resolved.
 - c. Set up Store Command Center. This should be the store's central communication post. Ensure someone is always stationed at the Command Center phone to take and give information as needed.

Active Shooters/Random Threat Plan: Risk Assessment

The chart below may be used to assist you in identifying considerations for your plan.

	YES	NO
PHYSICAL		
1) Is your store in a mall?		
2) Is your location a stand-alone store?		
3) Is your store near a major highway?		
4) Is your store near a major train route?		
5) Is your parking lot adequately lit?		
6) Is your parking lot patrolled regularly by either mall security or the police?		
7) Do you have a full time Loss Prevention staff?		
8) Does your store have a closed circuit (CCTV) system?		
9) Does your store have an emergency generator?		
10) Does your store have a P.A. system? If not, do you have a megaphone?		
11) How close is your cash office to an exit?	ft.	
12) Are your stockrooms locked at all times?		
13) Does management know where risers and utility shut-offs are located?		
13) Does management know where risers and utility shut-offs are located?		
ENVIRONMENT		
14) Has there been prior criminal activity or civil complaints against your store?		
15) Do you have an active cooperative alliance with mall security and the local police?		
16) Is your store in a tornado-prone area?		
17) Is your store near a crime magnet, such as a late night entertainment venue or near property in disrepair or abandoned?		
18) Is there a history of crime in the area where your store is located?		
19) Are there AED (automatic defibrillator devices) in the mall?		
20) How far is the closest medical facility?	mi.	
21) What is the average response time from the local police, fire and paramedics?	min.	
PEOPLE		
22) Do you have adequate staffing levels for each shift?		
23) Do you have emergency contact information for all associates?		
24) Are any associates trained in first aid, CPR or AED's?		



About the National Retail Federation

The National Retail Federation is the world's largest retail trade association, with membership that comprises all retail formats and channels of distribution including department, specialty, discount, catalog, Internet, independent stores, chain restaurants, drug stores and grocery stores as well as the industry's key trading partners of retail goods and services. NRF represents an industry with more than 1.6 million U.S. retail establishments, more than 24 million employees - about one in five American workers - and 2007 sales of \$4.5 trillion. As the industry umbrella group, NRF also represents more than 100 state, national and international retail associations. www.nrf.com.

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