



## **ACTIVE ATTACKER PLANNING**

*The development of an active attacker plan should take into consideration the working culture of the organization or business because what works for one, may not work for all. Consulting with relevant stakeholders can help in the development of an effective plan. The following recommendations follow a four-phase approach, addressing strategies around prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. Effective emergency planning also requires an alignment with appropriate legislation and obtaining proper approvals. The information contained in this booklet should be considered in the development and implementation of an active attacker emergency plan.*

## *What can I do to reduce my organization's exposure to the impact of an active attacker incident?*

Prevention is the first step in reducing the risk of an active attacker event. The detection of potential threats before an attack occurs may interrupt and prevent a hostile individual.

- 1. PROMOTE A CULTURE OF SAFETY:** Ensure that staff are provided with awareness training on the signs/indicators that an individual may be planning an attack or has violent intentions. Consider promoting the idea of "if you see something, say something", which may increase staff's ability to identify potentially violent individuals. Establishing an anonymous hotline or email may work as an effective tool for employees to report concerning behaviour. Available documents from the Ministry of Labour ([www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-labour](http://www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-labour)) and Public Safety Canada ([www.publicsafety.gc.ca/index-en.aspx](http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/index-en.aspx)) can be used to help increase awareness. See Page 4 of this guide for indicators of potential violence.
- 2. CONSIDER A THREAT EVALUATION AND MANAGEMENT PROCESS:** Consider developing a formal process for reporting and evaluating the risk of individuals who may have violent intentions. This evaluation process may apply to staff, clients or members of the public.
- 3. EVALUATE YOUR FACILITY'S PHYSICAL SECURITY:** Consider a risk assessment model, such as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles, a multi-disciplinary approach to deterring criminal behavior through physical and environmental design. If your organization is located in York Region, contact the York Regional Police Crime Prevention Unit at 1-866-876-5423, ext. 6718 to learn how you can have CPTED assessment completed for your facility.
- 4. ENSURE ADEQUATE SECURITY MEASURES:** Review your current security policies and systems to ensure they clearly address deterrence, detection and intervention and ensure your staff is aware of these important elements.
- 5. CONSIDER A VISITOR SCREENING POLICY:** Unauthorized access to your facility may pose a serious security risk.
- 6. MONITOR SOCIAL MEDIA:** Consider leveraging your staff's use of social media to promote messaging to staff and the public. Monitor and develop a system to address posts or comments which may suggest risks to personnel or property.
- 7. ACQUIRE BUSINESS INSURANCE:** Consider insuring your business for losses that may occur as a result from an active attacker incident.
- 8. REPORT SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITIES TO POLICE. WE WILL RESPOND TO THESE CALLS.**

### *What can I do now to prepare for an active attacker incident?*

Emergency planning provides your staff with instructions, processes and systems they can employ during a critical event. Consider plans which are concise and easy to understand and then ensure employees are properly trained.

- 1. EXERCISE EMERGENCY PROTOCOLS:** Assess the risk of an active attacker incident at your location. Consider training staff utilizing the *Run, Hide, Defend* principles. Appropriate practical exercises should accompany this training and may include discussions, tabletop exercises and full-scale drills.
- 2. DEVELOP AN EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION STRATEGY:** During a critical event, clear communication is vital. Ensure you have an effective emergency communication plan that can quickly and easily reach all relevant stakeholders, addressing the needs of staff, clients, members of the public and first responders. Communication tools might include email, smartphone push notifications through text or an app, emergency messaging on computers, public address systems, portable radios and social media platforms.
- 3. ENGAGE EMERGENCY SERVICES:** Ensure emergency response agencies are consulted and aware of your emergency planning policies. Consider including them in your training and exercises.
- 4. DETERMINE WHO IS IN CHARGE:** Ensure your emergency plan identifies personnel in charge of the various aspects of your plan, including internal and external notifications, directing first responders, establishing emergency routes and other site-specific information.
- 5. CONSIDER ENHANCED FIRST AID TRAINING:** Place emergency medical kits in accessible, strategic locations and ensure staff is provided with appropriate training and awareness.
- 6. ENHANCE YOUR BUILDING'S SECURITY:** Consider special access and denial controls for doorways and a visitor screening policy.
- 7. TRAIN REGULARLY:** Ensure that training on evacuation and lockdown procedures are conducted on a pre-determined schedule, such as annually or semi-annually.
- 8. MAINTAIN THREAT-ASSESSMENT PROTOCOLS:** Ensure active threat-assessment protocols are maintained and regularly updated to intervene and disrupt potential and emerging security concerns.
- 9. CONSIDER ASSEMBLING EMERGENCY KITS FOR FIRST RESPONDERS:** See page 10 for items that should be included in kits designed for first responders. They should be located outside your facility, but close enough to access easily.

# INDICATORS OF AN ACTIVE ATTACKER

An individual rarely becomes an active attacker without displaying indicators of potentially violent behaviour over time. If these indicators are recognized, they can often be addressed before an attack occurs. Taken individually, some of these indicators may not be cause for alarm, but if several are identified, you should consider alerting someone of your concerns.

## *Indicators may include:*

- Increased use of alcohol and/or illegal drugs
- Unexplained increase in absenteeism
- Interpersonal conflicts with family, friends or colleagues
- Increased aggression towards others
- Noticeable decrease in attention to appearance and hygiene
- Depression or withdrawal, paranoia, nervousness and anxiety
- Noticeably unstable, emotional responses such as explosive outbursts of anger or rage without provocation
- Financial strains
- Suicidal comments such as “putting things in order” or having “had enough”
- Increasing talk of problems at home
- Talk of previous incidents of violence or expressing empathy with individuals committing violence
- Obtaining surveillance equipment such as cameras, GPS systems, night vision goggles
- Use of numerous cell phones and prepaid calling cards
- Increasing seclusion, avoidance of contact with others
- Conducting surveillance or intelligence-gathering on specific locations
- Acquiring training on or testing of weapons

# C: RESPONSE

## ***What should I do in if I am involved in an active attacker incident?***

Expect to be startled, fearful, anxious and perhaps in denial of what is occurring. These are normal reactions during these types of events. Your first priority is your personal safety; second is the safety of those in your immediate vicinity; and third, the safety of others in the same facility or immediate area.

Police response will focus on stopping the individual(s) from attacking. Officers will not be in a position to stop and provide medical assistance to those in need until the threat is over. When training staff you must advise them of expected actions by law enforcement and remember that actions by employees could be critical in helping to resolve the situation in a positive manner. Staff should take note of the description of the attacker and their last known location and provide it to police or 9-1-1. This information could become critical during the police response.

Active attacker emergency response plans should have defined clear objectives, goals and appropriate courses of action.

### ***If confronted by the suspect(s):***

- 1. Assess the situation and determine: What's important now (WIN)?**
- 2. Choose the appropriate action – *Run, Hide, Defend*.**
- 3. Call 9-1-1 as soon as possible.**

## **RUN**



If you have the opportunity, run away from the attacker. Don't let indecision slow you down. If the attacker stands between you and an exit, move quickly to safety and find a place to hide.

## **HIDE**



If you cannot run to safety, make it difficult for the attacker to see, hear or find you. Move quickly but remain calm. If you are in a group, scatter so that you don't make an easy target.

## **DEFEND**



Despite your attempts to run or hide, you may find yourself face to face with the attacker. Defending yourself is your last resort, but it may also afford you the chance to run or hide.

1. Ensure emergency responders have been contacted.
2. Implement your emergency communication plan.
3. Attempt to determine the location of the suspect(s), along with a description and any weapons they may be carrying.
4. Provide police with access to your facility that may include keys, access cards, access to live or recorded video, along with any floor plans, number of rooms and type of occupants. This should be done in advance and included in the emergency kits for first responders and the Go Bags located outside your facility (see page 10 of this guide).
5. Provide medical assistance to the injured.
6. When safe, assist in accounting for people who were at the location of the incident when it began.
7. Expect that access to your facility could be cordoned off, so consider alternative entry and exit options.
8. Expect reduced cell phone performance due to increase usage in the area.
9. Expect significant media attention. Identify a spokesperson in advance who can address the media.
10. York Regional Police can assist you in co-ordinating emergency messaging and it is highly recommended this be done in advance.

## *What happens after an active attacker event?*

In the aftermath of an active attacker event, you can expect to see a number of different government agencies become involved. This will have an impact on your day-to-day operations and can last for some time. Access to all or parts of your facility may be restricted for a significant period of time. Health and safety of staff may present new issues and complications. Prepare for extended business interruptions.

- 1. RESTRICTED ACCESS:** Expect police to restrict access to areas that were impacted by the incident. They may be unavailable for an extended period of time while police conduct the investigation. Consider developing a business continuity plan you can activate following an attack to support the operations deemed necessary.
- 2. MEMBER SUPPORT:** Staff may require additional support in dealing with events. Individuals directly or indirectly exposed to the incident may be significantly affected and the symptoms may manifest themselves in a variety of ways. Consider employing a mental health support team to assist members.
- 3. BUSINESS INTERRUPTION:** Staff members may be unable to work for extended periods to recover from both physical and/or mental injuries. In some cases, they may never return. Consider developing a business continuity plan to address such circumstances.
- 4. COMMUNITY SUPPORT:** Expect an outpouring of community support. This may require the management of donations, personnel and other offers of service that may arrive without notice. Be sensitive to the fact the event has likely affected the surrounding community as a whole.
- 5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** Continue leveraging the company's social media profile, to convey messages to both your staff and the public.
- 6. POST-EVENT SENSITIVITY:** Long after an incident, staff and the community may continue to express emotions in a variety of ways. For example, anniversary dates may be difficult for staff, the community and other stakeholders.

## ***What is Run, Hide, Defend?***

*Run, Hide, Defend (RHD)* is a defensive strategy for surviving an active attacker confrontation. These concepts are designed to provide citizens with the basic options to immediate threats of violence. They have been researched and proven effective in actual incidents in the past. Countries such as Great Britain and the USA have created similar strategies for their citizens.

*RHD* is an education tool to give citizens their best chance at survival, much like the Stop, Drop and Roll has been used in response to fire.

## ***Why has York Regional Police launched RHD?***

YRP is a national policing leader in improving public safety. While these incidents are rare in Canada, incidents of mass violence have occurred and can occur in the future. Preparing for critical incidents in advance is a proven survival tactic. Developing such tactics for our citizens with the goal of enhancing public safety is a priority for YRP.

## ***What's Important Now? W.I.N.***

This simple concept will assist you in making critical decisions that could save your life in an active attacker incident. Asking yourself, "What's Important Now?" can help you and others in choosing the right choice of action. During an active attacker situation, consider all three responses outlined in *Run, Hide, Defend*.

The *RHD* principles can be applied regardless of your location.

## ***Should all businesses and organizations adopt RHD?***

*RHD* provides concepts for businesses and organizations to consider including in their emergency planning. Policies may vary across organizations. Institutions such as school or hospitals may have plans already in place, which support their individual requirements. York Regional Police encourages businesses and organizations to consider *RHD* in their emergency planning.



## ***Where can the public find more information on RHD?***

Additional information and support documents like posters and pamphlets are posted at yrp.ca. For those who do not reside in York Region, other sources for similar materials may include your local law enforcement agency or Public Safety Canada.

## ***What support will YRP provide organizations that choose to adopt RHD?***

Organizations determine how they will incorporate the *RHD* strategy into their emergency planning. Members of the YRP Emergency Management Unit are available for consultation. Questions can be forwarded to [runhidedefend@yrp.ca](mailto:runhidedefend@yrp.ca). Subject matter experts will respond to these inquiries promptly.

## ***When the fire alarm is activated for a fire, we train our staff to sweep the room and guide clients out the closest exit. Should we do this during an active attacker incident?***

Every situation is different. Referring back to the concept of WIN (What's Important Now) will help staff make the right decision in a violent and dynamic situation.

The expectation of staff to assist in the evacuation of others may not be realistic, given the threat to their own lives. As the video points out, you are responsible for yourself first. Only if you are reasonably able to help others, should you do so.

Panic will unfortunately drive many people's behavior during an active attacker incident, so it should be expected that individuals may not act logically while under this extreme stress. Despite your best efforts, they may not comply with your instructions or policies/procedures. It should be noted that a fire alarm maybe activated by both the attacker and/or others in the building. Referring back to WIN will help you assess the area for threats before taking the correct action.

# GO BAGS

Police advise organizations and businesses that creating Go Bags – containing important information about their facility and staff – can improve police response and access to the facility in an emergency.

Go Bags should be located outside the facility, but close enough to access quickly. Ensure police are aware of their location and how to access them. Some of the items to consider for the Go Bags include:

## LABELLED MAPS

- Internal and external up-to-date maps of facilities
- Room numbers and phone extensions
- Points of entrance/exit from the building and property
- Primary/secondary evacuation locations
- Location of all Go Bags
- Security camera locations and monitoring room

## STAFF CONTACT LIST

- Name and title/position
- Primary and secondary phone numbers
- Alternative contact i.e. email, cell phone

## KEY/CARD ACCESS

- Multiple labelled keys and access cards to all doors.
- Access and use of any internal communication systems.

## EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

- *Run Hide Defend* materials
- Lockdown procedures
- Hold and Secure procedures
- Evacuation procedures

## ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT TO CONSIDER

- Reflective vests
- Cell phone(s)
- Bottled water
- Food
- Flashlights
- Batteries
- Whistles
- Phone chargers
- Megaphones
- Traffic cones
- First Aid Kits
- Rain jackets