# How should you prepare for an active shooter event?

Over the past decade, active shooter incidents have occurred where we shop, where we learn, and where we work. From the 2007 gunman attack on a Salt Lake City, Utah shopping mall, to the heartbreaking tragedy of Sandy Hook Elementary, to the loss of life at the Navy Yard in Washington, D.C., no facet of society has been left untouched by the horrific circumstances associated with an active shooter.

Unlike severe weather or health-related threats, mass shootings are typically unpredictable and evolve very quickly. Incidents often begin and end within minutes, making response extremely challenging. Employee preparedness and rapid communication are keys to minimizing the impact of these tragic events.

To help business continuity professionals prepare for this frightening scenario, Send Word Now offers the following guidance. Much of the advice is taken directly from Emergency Management Institute's IS-907 online course on active shooter training, an excellent resource for managers and employees.

## Is it possible to identify at-risk employees for violent behavior?

Generally, existing or former employees do not become violent without warning. Certain characteristics and signs are displayed prior to the event, though they may not always be obvious (or taken seriously).

Indicators of potential violence include:

- Depression or withdrawal
- Repeated violation of company policies
- Explosive outbursts of anger or rage without provocation
- Behavior that suggests paranoia (e.g., "everybody is against me")
- Escalation of domestic problems into the workplace
- Talk of severe financial problems
- Talk of previous incidents of violence

Employees should report to management any incident where they become frightened by a co-worker's behavior, or suspicious violence may occur.

## If employees are faced with a gunman in the workplace, what steps should they take?

Every employee should take the most reasonable measures available to protect their life. In order of priority, workers should:

**Run.** If there is an accessible escape path, they should attempt to rapidly exit the premises.

**Hide.** If evacuation is not possible, they should find a place to hide where the active shooter is less likely to find them. This hiding place would ideally be protected by a barrier such as a locked door and have more than one path of escape.

**Fight.** As a last resort, and only when their life is in imminent danger, they should attempt to disrupt and/or incapacitate the active shooter.

## What should employees do when evacuating?

Employees should have a specific escape plan in mind prior to any emergency. They should leave belongings behind and evacuate even if others refuse to follow. They should also warn others not to enter an area where the active shooter might be, helping others escape if possible.

Upon exiting the building, they should keep their hands visible and follow all police instructions. Evacuees should not ask arriving law officers to assist with injured victims, as their immediate responsibility is to contain or neutralize the shooter.

## How should emergency notification be used in an active shooter scenario?

With its flexibility and intelligence, an emergency notification system can be a highly valuable tool for responding to an active shooter crisis. General evacuation alerts, such as fire alarms or strobes, may actually place people in the path of the shooter. Multimodal alerts containing incident-specific instructions are preferred. Consider these factors when deploying emergency notification:

**Utilize silent alarm functions.** Though phone calls are effective for many types of emergencies, their use should be carefully considered for active shooter situations. Ringing phones may identify employees' hiding locations and increase the odds of being targeted. Utilize Send Word Now's Desktop Alerting feature, along with email and SMS alerts for minimally intrusive notifications.

**Use Get Word Back.** Accounting for employees during and after an event is a prime concern for managers. Include in the alert a Get Word Back question to assess recipients' current whereabouts or status.

**Use recorded voice for family notifications.** In coordination with law enforcement, notify loved ones using the recorded voice functionality (instead of text-to-speech or other text-oriented methods). The message should ideally originate from a high-level company officer, delivered with empathy, calm, and assurance.

**Use inbound message boards.** In addition to outbound notifications, a dial-in number for alert retrieval can be an indispensable communications tool. Whether a Recipient Message Board (accessed by Send Word Now users to retrieve alerts) or a Shared Message Board (accessed by anyone to hear general announcements), make sure any crisis outreach plan includes an inbound component.

Active shooter events are terrifying and devastating. Developing a specific preparedness plan, implementing a rapid communications approach, and educating employees could help your organization's workers survive a tragic situation.

## Key Feature Highlights

### Mobile App for Smartphones
Send Word Now's mobile apps for iPhone®, Android® and BlackBerry® smartphones place all the capabilities of our standard Alerting Service right in your hand

### SWN Direct Mobile App for Recipients
A groundbreaking mobile app for urgent corporate communications and collaboration. Utilizes Internet Protocol (IP) networking end-to-end for the rapid, secure delivery of voice, text and files seamlessly to recipient mobile devices anywhere in the world

### Get Word Back
Two-way communication allows message recipients to respond to alerts they receive and have responses tallied in a report

### Integrated Incident Management Service (IMS)
Send Word Now's streamlined incident management framework allows users to easily manage and share events, incidents and tasks

### AlertTracer®
Provides a detailed audit trail for better accountability and more productive after-action reporting

### On-Demand Conference Bridging
Instantly connect up to 200 participants on a conference call without the hassle of confusing passcodes and dial-in numbers

## About **Send Word Now**

Headquartered in New York City, Send Word Now is the leading worldwide provider of critical communications solutions. The company's easy-to-use web-based and mobile solutions are deployed by businesses, government agencies, universities and non-profit organizations to ensure fast, effective communication when it is needed the most.

Send Word Now's enterprise-class notification system is capable of transmitting tens of thousands of voice and text messages in minutes, while providing a full audit trail for after-action reporting and follow-up. Our conferencing and workflow solutions keep employees informed and connected to the people and information they need.

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