

# Active Shooter – Should You Be Armed?

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January 15, 2014

An active shooter is an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined, populated, and publically accessible, area with no distinctive time period between the shootings. In most cases there is no pattern or method to the active shooter's selection of victims. Active shooter situations are unpredictable and evolve very quickly.

Studies conducted by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) found that the average active shooter incident lasts just 12 minutes, with 37% of active shooter incidents lasting less than five minutes. The average time for law enforcement to respond to an active shooter incident was 18 minutes. Forty-three percent of the time an active shooter incident was over before the arrival of law enforcement. When law enforcement arrived while the shooter was still active, he often stopped his attack – turning his attention toward the responding law enforcement officers.

What the available research clearly showed was that during an active shooter incident, the people with the ability to react to and stop an active shooter are the shooter's potential victims, the people on scene when the active shooter incident begins. Once an active shooter is confronted with an armed response the active shooting incident usually ends. The active shooter may be shot by the armed responder, take his own life (commit suicide), or focus his attack on the armed responder, but in each case that active shooter is no longer randomly murdering the people around him.

The effect of an armed response was seen in December 2013, during an active shooter incident at Arapahoe High School in Centennial, CO. As the shooting began, James Englert, a sheriff's deputy assigned as the school resource officer, ran toward the sound of the gun fire and confronted the shooter. Once confronted by Deputy Englert the shooter stopped targeting the students around him in the school and took his own life. The time from beginning to end of this active shooter incident was just 80 seconds, because a good guy with a gun was present to stop the bad guy with a gun.

In December 2012, Nick Meli confronted an active shooter in the Clackamas Town Center, near Portland, OR. Meli drew his concealed handgun and aimed it at the active shooter, but was unable to get a clear shot off for fear of hitting innocent people running behind the shooter. Meli reported that after the active shooter saw him with his pistol ready to shoot, there was only one more shot fired when the active shooter committed suicide, ending his own life. As with the active shooter incident in Centennial, CO once the active shooter was met with an armed response the incident ended with the criminal killing himself.

In January 2014, an active shooter entered a club in Portland, OR and began shooting customers. The active shooter first shot the club's security guard, and then shot two other people in the club. Before the active shooter could shoot anyone else an armed private citizen in the club drew his concealed

handgun and shot the attacker, ending the incident. This active shooter incident ended without further death or injury because again a good guy with a gun was present to stop the bad guy with a gun.

Colorado State Rep. Carole Murray stated: "Most of the mass killings that we talk about have been affected in gun free zones. So when you have a gun free zone, it's like saying, come and get me." John Wills (2013) writing for *Officer.Com* stated: "the venues selected by the bad guys are often 'soft targets... gun-free zones,' where it's likely the shooter will encounter minimal or no resistance." Nick Dial (2013) commenting in *Law Enforcement Today* stated: "The largest disconnect from reality currently responsible for more school shooting victims than any other is the so-called 'gun free zone.' The 'gun free zone' continues to be pushed as a mainstay for schools. In reality, it does nothing to protect the individual. Instead, such zones bar law-abiding citizens from their fundamental right of defense." A 2009 *Washington Times* editorial pointed out that even our military installations are gun free zones, putting our Service Members at risk from active shooters.

*Time after time, public murder sprees occur in "gun-free zones" - public places where citizens are not legally able to carry guns. The list is long, including massacres at Virginia Tech and Columbine High School along with many less deadly attacks. Last week's [November 5, 2009] slaughter at Fort Hood Army base in Texas was no different... terrorists would face more return fire if they attacked a Texas Wal-Mart than the gunman faced at Fort Hood, home of the heavily armed and feared 1st Cavalry Division... [Military personnel are prohibited from carrying a personal firearm on base, even if they possess a state concealed weapons permit.]*

*Most people understand that guns deter criminals. Research also shows that the presence of more guns limits the damage mass murderers can unleash. A major factor in determining how many people are harmed by these killers is the time that elapses between the launch of an attack and when someone - soldier, civilian or law enforcement - arrives on the scene with a gun to end the attack. All the public shootings in the United States in which more than three people have been killed have occurred in places where concealed handguns have been banned.*

*Thirteen dead bodies in a Texas morgue are the ultimate fruit of gun-control illogic - in which guns are so feared that government regulation even tries to keep them out of the hands of trained soldiers. (Washington Times 2009)*

While available data did not indicate that a gun free zone was a primary factor for active shooters selecting their targets (nor was there data to indicate that active shooters did not consider gun free zones when selecting their targets), the fact remains that most active shooter events have occurred in facilities where possession of firearms was prohibited. Gun free zones do nothing whatsoever to prevent violent criminals from attacking you, nor do they in anyway protect you against an active shooter. A criminal bent on murder is not going to be deterred because his target is in a gun free zone. Gun free zones do however ensure that law-abiding individuals will be unarmed and thus defenseless when confronted by an armed violent criminal.

Law enforcement response to an active shooter incident will always be delayed to some extent. No matter how quickly the police arrive, there will be some delay from the time they receive the call until they arrive on scene. During this time the active shooter is free to continue his shooting spree, unless

stopped by an armed person at the incident scene. The Sonora, CA Police Department (2013) stated: "Because active shooter incidents are often over within 5-15 minutes, before Law Enforcement arrives on scene, individuals must be prepared both mentally and physically to deal with an active shooter situation."

If you find yourself in an active shooter situation, your best chance for survival is to flee the area if you can do so without being observed by the shooter. If you are unable to make it to an exit without coming into the shooter's field of fire, you may be able to temporarily hide from the shooter and thereby avoid being shot, but you must be prepared to move and escape the area as soon as the shooter's attention is focused elsewhere. However, when you come face-to-face with an armed violent criminal intent on killing you, your only real option for survival is to be armed yourself and trained to use your firearm to defend yourself and those around you.

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