

Are You Prepared for an Active Shooter Incident?

Do you think the innocent victims at Virginia Tech, Umpqua Community College; Sandy Hook in Newtown, CT; the Washington Navy Yard; Charleston, SC, and Orlando expected to encounter a shooter?

An active shooter is a person armed with a deadly weapon(s), and who systematically, actively, and presently employs the weapons against multiple available victims, even upon the arrival of law enforcement. Active assailants may use other weapons, such as vehicles, explosives and knives.

The following themes may help keep you safe:

1. Expect the unexpected. Today's friend/colleague could be tomorrow's shooter. Look at people critically. Look for behavioral changes; suspicious packages; inappropriate dress (e.g., a long coat on a summer day could conceal a rifle); seeming depression; absenteeism; loss of interest in school, friends, and favored activities; increased use of alcohol or drugs; giving away treasured items; espoused understanding or justification for violent behavior; etc.
2. If you see something that makes you uncomfortable or arouses your suspicion, report your concerns immediately to law enforcement, even if you are not sure it's a crime. On campus, NOVA College Police Dispatch is at **703-764-5000**. The police rely on information from the entire NOVA community to keep our campuses safe, and we investigate/respond to all reports. The LiveSafe mobile safety app, available at no cost to the NOVA community, is a great way to provide unobtrusively emergency information to the police. Download LiveSafe at <http://www.nvcc.edu/police/livesafe.html>.
3. Police may not arrive at the scene for several minutes. During this time, you are responsible for ensuring your own safety. NOVA Police can help you develop a plan for each location you frequent.
4. Time is critical. Be prepared to act decisively and commit to survive.
5. In the event of an active shooter on campus, you have 3 options (not mutually exclusive or in order), summarized in a video at the NOVA Police website <http://www.nvcc.edu/police/training.html>.
 - **Run.** Evacuate the area immediately; *this may be your best chance of survival!* Even if the shooter is approaching you, you are more likely to survive by running away, since a moving target is difficult to hit and most shooters are not trained marksmen, especially under stress. If you are injured, you will receive medical attention sooner if you can evacuate the building.
 - **Hide.** If you cannot evacuate, remain quiet, lock/barricade the doors, and turn off lights, pagers, and silence cell phones. Take cover/hide behind articles out of view from windows. Ideally, the items you use to hide will protect you from gunfire. Spread out; *do not huddle together*.
 - **Fight.** If confronting the shooter and your life is in imminent danger, go on the offensive. Yell, improvise weapons, throw articles, attack (with others, if available), and secure the shooter in a sustained attack to neutralize the shooter until help arrives. Putting the shooter on the defensive will minimize casualties to potential victims.
6. Police will respond aggressively.
 - Don't get in the way or contribute to an already confusing situation. The immediate goal of police is to end the threat. Police will not stop to help the wounded or assist evacuees.
 - Don't allow yourself to be considered a suspect. Keep your hands visible above your head and make no quick/unpredictable movements. Leave handbags and backpacks, which police may assume contain a bomb or weapon, in the classroom.
7. Consider key factors in developing your survival strategy: yourself, your location, and the threat.
8. Do not leave campus until released by police. Arriving police and medical responders, as well as departing ambulances with patients, will need uncongested ingress and egress. Do not clog the roads!

NOVA Police offer detailed active incident response training to classes, faculty and staff meetings, convocations, clubs, etc. and provide extensive information on developing a personal survival strategy as well as *how* to run, hide and fight most effectively. If you are interested in receiving this 75-minute training, contact the Police Department's Outreach Commander, Lt. John Weinstein at jweinstein@nvcc.edu or 571-422-9928.