

Wisconsin Crime Prevention Practitioners Association

ACTIVE THREAT MITIGATION

WORKING TOGETHER

TO KEEP WISCONSIN SAFE



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Protecting Soft Targets

There have been way too many active threat incidents happening in the United States and throughout the world lately. Oftentimes these incidents in the past have happened at schools, college campuses and places of employment. Now we are seeing other locations being targeted such as parks, concert venues, movie theaters and so on.

There have been numerous studies on these events to glean as much information to answer the questions of *who, what, how and why*. One thing that we have learned is that these events are pre-planned for the most part and that these suspects are looking to inflict as much carnage as possible.

In about 50% of these active shooter incidents in the United States the shooter chose the target because of the number of people. We also are seeing these attackers strike places that are called "soft targets". A soft target is a place that does not have a robust security plan or system in place. Take a look at some of the most recent events. Aurora (CO) – movie theater; Charleston (SC) – a church; Orlando – a nightclub; San Bernardino – a conference center; Paris - coffee shop, restaurant, music hall and a soccer stadium; and Manchester – concert venue.

These events are not happening at places like the Eiffel Tower, Statue of Liberty, Lambeau Field, and even airports and schools to a degree as those places are becoming increasingly difficult to get into without some sort of screening or vetting process. Those are the 'hard' targets for acts of violence and terrorism, which in turn is pushing these suspects to those targets that we just talked about in the above paragraph. Controlling access to a facility is a key component in physical security; however that becomes increasingly difficult for places that are open to the public.

So how do we protect the malls, theaters, restaurants and so on? We certainly cannot put all of these places on 'lockdown'! A lot of this protection falls on us, the citizen. By now most of us are familiar with the Homeland Security slogan – *See Something, Say Something* that came out shortly after 9/11; well that slogan has only become more important and imperative over the years!





Our goal is to prevent something from happening and if we can **detect the threat**, the greater the likelihood we have in stopping it. We need to be vigilant in looking for stuff that is out of place – be it a person lingering around; an unattended bag/item in an unlikely spot; threatening or concerning comments or statements by co-workers, acquaintances, family; and anything that strikes you as odd. If we notice these things out of the norm, let someone know! It may turn out to nothing or it just may be that little tip that stops something bad from happening.

These added sets of eyes and ears are part of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). CPTED is a multi disciplinary approach to **detering criminal behavior** through strategies that will influence a person’s decision to commit a crime or act of violence. These strategies can, and often do, deter a person – thus sending them on their way and making this property a less likely target.

Lastly, there are times that these suspects will avoid the detection or ignore the deterrence and act out on their aggressions. It is then that we need to make sure that we are prepared and know our options for reacting. The *Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training Program* or *ALERRT* provides active shooter training for officers all over the country and recommends three easy to remember responses – **Avoid, Deny, and Defend**. These responses are not necessarily to be followed in order and really depend on the situation.

AVOID | DENY | DEFEND

- **Avoid** - Ideally we would like you to avoid the situation and get out. That might mean breaking a window to escape.
- **Deny** - If you are not able to avoid safely, then you need to deny the intruder entry. This means locking yourself in a room, maybe barricading the door.
- **Defend** - Lastly, if you are faced with the intruder you will have to defend yourself. This could be with deadly force if you have a concealed carry license and are armed or it could through some unconventional weapons such as a large, heavy object. You need to keep in mind that this is a fight for your life and you are in 110%! Remember that you are not helpless and you can and will survive this!

Many law enforcement agencies throughout the United States have officers trained in crime prevention, threat assessments and civilian response to the active threat situation and will gladly provide a threat assessment and/or training for businesses, schools, and community groups.

It is always best to prepare and plan for an event than be caught in one and try to figure it out as it unfolds!