

Responding to an Active Shooter

What is an active shooter?

An active shooter is a person who appears to be actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a populated area — typically employing the use of firearms. In some cases active shooters use other weapons and/or improvised explosive devices (IED) to cause additional victimization and act as an impediment to law enforcement and emergency services responders. There may be no pattern or method to their selection of victims.

These situations are dynamic and evolve rapidly, demanding immediate deployment of law enforcement resources to stop the shooting and mitigate harm to innocent victims.

Hostage or barricaded subject situations often take place over a longer period of time and usually there is no ongoing injury or loss of life. These situations are often managed through the deployment of specialized units, as time allows. Both hostage and barricaded subject situations can rapidly shift to Active Shooter situations and vice versa.

What do I do in an active shooter situation?

Run

If a safe path is available, run. Always try and escape or evacuate even if others insist on staying. Encourage others to leave with you but don't let the indecision of others slow down your own effort to escape. Once you are out of the line of fire, try to prevent others from walking into the danger zone and call 9-1-1

Hide

If you can't get out safely, find a place to hide. When hiding, turn out lights, remember to lock doors and silence your ringer and vibration mode on your cell phone

Fight

As a last resort, working together or alone, act with aggression, use improvised weapons to disarm the shooter. Commit to taking the shooter down.

[Run. Hide. Fight. Surviving an Active Shooter Event \(click here for video\)](#)

What to expect from responding police officers?

Police officers responding to an active shooter are trained to proceed immediately to the area in which shots were last heard; their purpose is to stop the shooting as quickly as possible. They may be dressed in regular patrol uniforms, or they may be wearing external bulletproof vests, Kevlar helmets, and other tactical equipment. The officers may be armed with rifles, shotguns, or handguns, and might be using pepper spray or tear gas to control the situation.

Remain calm, do as the officers tell you, and do not be afraid of them. Put down any bags or packages you may be carrying and keep your hands visible at all times; if you know where the shooter is, tell the officers.

The first officers to arrive will not stop to aid injured people; rescue teams composed of other officers and emergency medical personnel will follow the first officers into secured areas to treat and remove injured persons. Keep in mind that even once you have escaped to a safer location, the entire area is still a crime scene; police will usually not let anyone leave until the situation is fully under control and all witnesses have been identified and questioned. Until you are released, remain at whatever assembly point authorities designate.

The ISU Police Department trains for these types of threats. Also, in our prepared presentation we can recommend safety standards that will improve your chances of survival in an active shooter event.

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