

Active shooter attacks: be prepared



Active Shooter (AS) and Marauding Terrorist Firearms Attacks (MTFAs)

The threat of AS/MTFAs is now part of our daily lives. There are many different types of perpetrators and attacks; they can and do happen anywhere, at any time and in just about any country.



Developing a response plan for such events is vital in order to have the best chance of survival.

This is because it is natural to feel fear and anxiety, and even disbelief. You may be confused and indecisive, but prompt action is imperative. Understanding the situation and being prepared to act on your instincts can build your confidence and help to keep you safe.

Developing situational awareness

The first element of being prepared is developing situational awareness – becoming more aware of your surroundings and identifying potential threats. This is about developing a mindset rather than a specific set of skills and anyone can do it if they have the resolve to do so.

As a starting point, you must recognize that threats do exist. If you are in denial about the potential for a threat, your chance of recognizing an emerging threat quickly enough – and avoiding it – will be very small.

You must also take responsibility for your own security. The 'authorities' cannot be everywhere and stop every AS or MTF, so people need to protect themselves.



Situational awareness also includes trusting your 'gut' or instinct. Often a person's subconscious can notice subtle signs of danger that the conscious mind has difficulty identifying. For example, have you ever had a feeling of danger without being able to put your finger on why? Ignoring such feelings can lead to serious trouble.

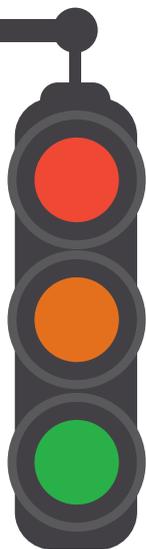
Practicing situational awareness requires discipline and a conscious effort to pay attention to your surroundings and instincts, even when you are busy and distracted. It's easy for even obvious danger or hostility to go unnoticed if you are distracted, so individuals need to learn to be observant while doing other things.

Understanding where you are most vulnerable

It is important to understand the locations in which you are potentially most vulnerable. This is not just important for avoiding armed attacks, but also other types of crime, such as muggings.

No one can remain highly alert at all times – that would create a state of paranoia. Therefore, you need to distinguish between the different levels of risk in the different places you go to.

Using a 'traffic lighting' system – where places are assigned one of three levels of risk – can be helpful for identifying when you need to be at your most vigilant, and when you can be more relaxed.



Red areas are places that have been attacked in the past and/or which you are unfamiliar with, such as stations, airports and other transport hubs, and shopping malls. Be very aware of everything around you and look for potential threats.

Amber areas are places that you are reasonably familiar with, such as places that you socialize at occasionally. Be slightly more relaxed, but remain alert and notice anything unusual.

Green areas are places that you are very familiar with, such as your own neighborhood or restaurants/shopping areas that you use frequently. One reason why these are lower risk is that you will know instinctively where to run/take cover.

Consider the different places that you frequent in your daily life and apply the traffic light system to them.

Avoiding distractions

In today's modern world, we are constantly distracted. Technology in particular is a huge distraction and we are often totally unaware of our immediate surroundings, which can make us vulnerable to a wide range of threats.

When you are in a 'red' location in particular, the following steps can help to keep you safe:

- Never be distracted, either by personal media or activities around you.
- Wear clothing that allows you to move quickly if you have to.
- Do not wear headphones or ear buds.
- Do not read or play games on portable devices.
- Do not stay there for an extended period if there is a safer place to move to.



Identifying threat indicators

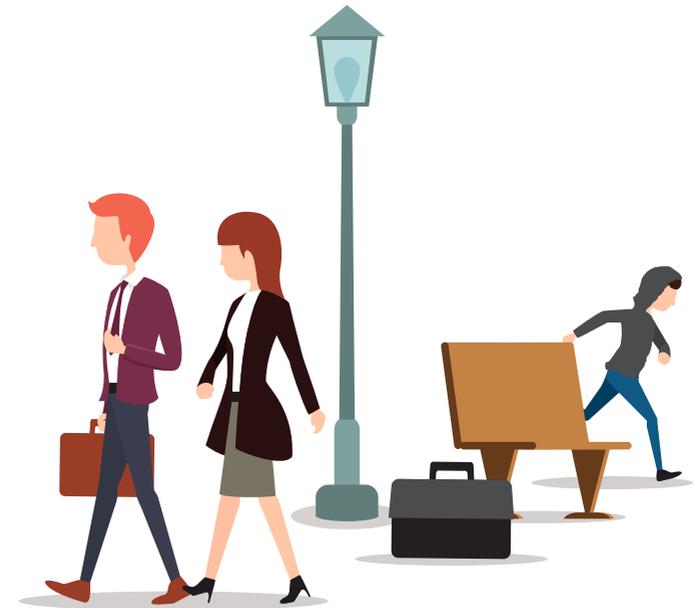
Threat indicators are events or activities that could indicate an armed attack/AS event is being planned or about to take place. They give you a better picture of what is happening around you and can prompt preventative actions.

Threat indicators often go unnoticed unless you are actively aware of what to look for.

High levels of security

Security is present in every part of our daily lives and is often unnoticed and discreet. However, identifying the level of security in a given location – particularly a red location – can be a useful indicator of the level of threat.

Security measures such as control of access, physical barriers, searches and armed guards should promote confidence and peace of mind – but should also indicate that you should be more alert and prepared to act as a threat has clearly been identified.



Suspicious behavior

Any activity or behavior that is unusual is a threat indicator.

For example:

- Individuals observing, photographing/sketching or taking notes of any security measures or staff procedures
- Unattended luggage or packages left in crowded public areas
- Clearly agitated, aggressive or chanting strangers
- Vehicles parked in restricted areas
- Any vehicle driving erratically or in a pedestrian area

Suspicious or unusual activities should be reported to security staff without delay. If there is no opportunity to report a situation or activity, move to a safe location and call the police to report the incident.

Visualizing potential threats and responses

Whatever situation you are in, it is useful to visualize what could happen – and what your response would be. When you are visualizing scenarios, you are constantly evolving a plan of action – which means that you are more likely to react appropriately should a real crisis occur.

Think about:

- What could happen – and what you would do in that situation
- How you could get out
- Where you could hide/possible safe havens
- Who could help you
- Who you could call
- What else could protect you



During an attack

Should an attack occur, your actions will be critical to you surviving the incident.

The following actions can help to keep you safe:

- Recognize the danger and don't wait – move.
- Locate the nearest emergency exit and leave immediately.
- If you cannot run, take cover somewhere that will protect you from any gunfire, and observe what is going on around you.
- Try to keep the attackers at a distance.
- If you can, create obstacles between you and the attackers – for example, lock or barricade doors, draw curtains/blinds, switch off elevators and lights.
- Adopt a boxer's stance in a physical confrontation to keep your balance and stay upright.
- Use bundled clothing, luggage or chairs as protection against knife attacks.
- Keep at least one yard away from a knife attacker at all times.
- Communicate with the emergency services when safe to do so.
- Look for protective obstacles in the street if there is a vehicle ram attack, such as fire hydrants, light posts or parked cars.
- Immediately move away from any loud bang, sound of gunfire or other confrontation.
- Leave immediately if an alarm sounds or you are told to evacuate.



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