

Resolve to be Ready!

Breaking News! Active Shooter!

Fortunately, the odds that you personally will be a victim of a mass shooting are low.

BY BRUCE MENZIES

It's happened far too many times lately, and we've been fortunate it hasn't happened more in the Ozarks. I'm talking about the words no one wants to hear: "Breaking News! Active Shooter!"

So, you're at the senior center, library, or even a Branson attraction and encounter the unthinkable—an active shooter. Do you know what to do? What you know may save your life and those with you.

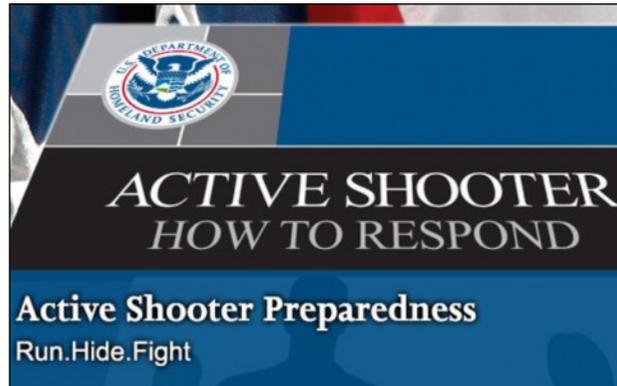
On November 5, 2017, in Sutherland Springs, Texas, the unthinkable did happen—an active shooter entered the First Baptist Church and began shooting. Twenty-six people were killed and another twenty injured. A local resident was quoted as saying, "I never thought it would happen here, this is something that happens in a big city."

Obviously, shootings can happen anywhere, and any time. It's imperative that we know how to react. In researching information for this article one essential instruction stands out: "You must be an active participant in your own survival."

Consider these facts learned in the 2007 Virginia Tech shooting: In Room 206, students hid beneath their desks, the gunman killed ten students as he walked up and down the rows of desks. In Room 204, however, two students were killed as most jumped out of the second-floor window. Those who jumped escaped with their lives. In Room 205, students barricaded the classroom door with tables and chairs. Despite the shooter's attempt to enter the room, he never entered and everyone inside survived. Again, "You must be an active participant in your own survival."

Vigilance and observation

There was a reason that old western gunfighters sat with their backs to the wall. It wasn't for their distaste of the wallpaper—it was so they could watch the people and their actions. You don't need to be clairvoyant to observe strange behavior of people, especially when they look out of place. When they come in, scan the crowd, then leave, only to return again shortly, it could be innocent, but then, maybe not. Like those entering your space, visibly shaken, perspiring, wide eyes and dilated pupils: these are signs of an adrenaline rush which could signal imminent action on their



part. If their actions suggest abnormal behavior, then listen to your intuition—like anyone bent on survival.

Using your senses

When arriving at a location, pause for a moment and allow your senses to absorb all that's normal—the sights, the sounds, the smells, etc. Once you've established a "baseline" of normalcy, it's easier to identify all that is not normal and possibly dangerous. For instance, at a gun range, gunshots are normal—at the outlet mall, they are not. At a ball game, yelling is normal—at a restaurant, it is not.

When in public and you hear "popping" noises, don't just assume it's firecrackers. Some of the concert goers in the Las Vegas shooting said, "The last thing I was thinking about was a mass shooting."

Get out of the kill zone

One expert has suggested if you simply "get down and stay down" you create a stationary human target. Instead, flee the kill zone immediately toward your preplanned exit points and find cover, terrain or structures that can stop bullets. Targets moving through the kill zone are harder to hit, and targets that have evacuated the zone altogether are much harder to hit.



As a last resort

Most expert opinions I read all agree on this too: Fight as an absolute last resort.

If the "flight or fight" option is not on the table and the only option is "fight" then commit your actions and act as aggressively as possible against the shooter. Recruit others to help injure the shooter.

You can make an emergency weapon from fire extinguishers, scissors, pens, or even a cup of hot coffee. You may need to incapacitate him with speed, surprise, and violence of action. Remember, "You must be an active participant in your own survival."

When help arrives

Keep in mind, that law enforcement's first task is to end the incident and they will be armed with rifles, shotguns, and handguns. Don't be surprised if officers shout commands and push individuals to the ground for their own safety. Be sure to follow law enforcement instructions and evacuate in the direction they come from (unless otherwise instructed). Even though you may feel you need a hug, do not hug the officers, rather keep your hands visible to the officials and empty.

Practice situational awareness

It only takes a few moments to take quick mental inventory of the building, escape exits, doors, and places you could possibly hide. Then sit back, relax, and enjoy yourself. More information at ready.gov. ■

