



Harvard University Police Department

Active Shooter Safety Guidelines



Why are we here today?

- In wake of several high profile active shooter incidents, both on and off campuses, over the last several years many students, faculty, and staff have requested information from the HUPD about what to do in the event that a situation arises on Harvard's campus.
- Though extremely rare, we understand that these incidents invoke a lot of fear and are anxiety provoking.



“Your mind comes to be dominated by the horrific consequences of low probability events.”

- Jim Comey, Deputy Attorney General



Active Shooter Defined

Definition

- An “active shooter” is an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined space or other populated area. In most cases there is no pattern or method to their selection of victims.

Objective

- An active shooter’s objective is that of mass murder, rather than committing traditional criminal acts, such as robbery or hostage-taking.



School Shootings, 1992-2012

- 67 incidents (51 elementary/middle/high schools and 16 college/universities)
 - 159 fatalities
 - 229 injured
- 80% of attackers were either current or former students.
- In 33% of the incidents one or more people knew some aspect of the attacker's intent.



FBI Study of Active Shooter Incidents

- Between 2000 – 2013 there have been 160 active shooter incidents (11.4 annual average)
- 24% of the incidents occurred in an educational environment.
- Of the 39 incidents at an educational environment, 27 were in schools and 12 were at a college or university.
- 69% of the incidents ended in 5 minutes or less.
- 60% ended before the police arrived.
- 56% ended on the shooter's initiative (suicide, stopped shooting, fled the scene.)
- 28% of the incidents involved law enforcement and the shooter exchanging gunfire.



Active Shooter Incidents

- Rare
- Serious
- University campuses are very safe places
- Hard to predict
- Common sense precautions



University Response

The University and HUPD have taken many steps in an effort to prevent or reduce the harm caused by an active shooter incident.

- Establishment of a text-based emergency messaging system.
- HUPD officers participate in realistic active shooter training
- Joint active shooter training with Boston, Cambridge, and MIT Police Departments.
- Formalizing of a threat assessment process through the formation of the Behavioral Assessment and Consultation Team
- Uncompromising approach to dealing with domestic violence/stalking cases



“Left of Bang”

“Being aware of your surroundings means that you notice what is normal for the area you are in and also look for people who are behaving in a way that is outside of that baseline. While what is normal will change from one area to the next, that is what you are looking for when you hear people say "see something, say something." You are looking for people who are behaving in a way that is not normal in that particular location.

But when you see something that doesn't make sense, don't let yourself rationalize away that feeling you have. You noticed the person for a reason, that is an instinct that you can always trust.”

- Patrick Van Horne, co-author of "Left of Bang”



Behavioral Assessment and Consultation Team

- BACT serves as a violence prevention resource for the University. The central question to be answered by any BACT assessment is whether an individual poses a threat to the safety of the community.
- When a student, faculty, or staff brings forward a concern to the BACT there are three questions to be answered initially:
 1. Why are you are concerned about this person?
 2. Have there been acts of violence, threats, or any specific behavior that you lead you to believe the person is a danger to others?
 3. Does the identified student, faculty, staff, or visitor present an imminent danger to the community?
- Community members who become aware of potential situations that might pose a threat to the safety of the community or have concerns about a person's alarming or disruptive behavior are encouraged to share that information with BACT Team.
- Community members can share their concern directly with the BACT staff person, Steven G. Catalano at 617-495-9225 or via email at steven_catalano@hupd.harvard.edu.



Why it is Important to Know How to Respond

- Because most incidents are over within minutes, students, faculty, and staff must be prepared to deal with the situation until first responders arrive.
- As these situations evolve quickly, quick decisions could mean the difference between life and death. If you are in harm's way, you will need to decide rapidly what the safest course of action is based on the scenario that is unfolding before you.
- What you do matters. And what you do can save your own life and the lives of others.



How to Respond

In an active shooter situation, you should quickly determine the most reasonable way to protect your own life. You should:

- 1. Run:** If there is an accessible escape path, attempt to evacuate the premises.
- 2. Hide:** If evacuation is not possible, find a place to hide where the active shooter is less likely to find you.
- 3. Fight:** As a last resort, and only when your life is in imminent danger, attempt to disrupt and/or incapacitate the active shooter.



Run

If there is an accessible escape path, attempt to evacuate the premises. Be sure to:

- Warn individuals not to enter an area where the active shooter may be.
- Have an escape route and plan in mind.
- Evacuate regardless of whether others agree to follow.
- Leave your belongings behind.
- Help others escape, if possible.
- Prevent individuals from entering an area where the active shooter may be.
- Keep your hands visible.
- Follow the instructions of any police officers.
- Do not attempt to move wounded people.
- Call the HUPD or 911 when it is safe to do so.



Calling the Police

- When safe to do so please call the HUPD or 911. Be prepared to provide the call taker with as much information as possible, including:
 - Location of the active shooter
 - Number of shooters
 - Physical description of shooters
 - Number and type of weapons held by shooters
 - Number of potential victims at the location
- Store the HUPD urgent line (617-495-1212 for Cambridge/617-432-1212 for Longwood) in your cell phone.



Hide

- If safe evacuation is not possible, find a place to hide where the active shooter is less likely to find you.
- Your hiding place should:
 - Be out of the active shooter's view.
 - Provide protection if shots are fired in your direction (i.e., an office or room with a closed and locked door).
 - Not trap you or restrict your options for movement.
- To prevent an active shooter from entering your hiding place:
 - Lock the door.
 - Blockade the door with heavy furniture.
 - Close, cover, and move away from windows.



Keeping Yourself Safe While Hiding

- If the active shooter is nearby:
 - Lock the door.
 - Silence your cell phone and/or pager. (Even the vibration setting can give away a hiding position.)
 - Hide behind large items (e.g., cabinets, desks).
 - Remain quiet.
- Consider the difference between cover and concealment. Cover will protect from gunfire and concealment will merely hide you from the view of the shooter. Choose the best space that is available quickly.



Fight

- Active resistance is a last resort and should only be used if potential victims are trapped in a room with an active shooter, there are already victims, and all other personal survival recommendations are no longer an option.
- Persons should:
 - Act as aggressively as possible against him/her.
 - Throw items and improvise weapons.
 - Yell.
 - Commit to your actions.



What to Expect When Law Enforcement Arrives

- Their objective is to eliminate threat as soon as possible.
- They will first make environment safe and then help injured people.
- Expect to see different uniforms and/or plainclothes officers as units might be deployed from different departments (HUPD, CPD, Boston, etc.)
- Some officers will possibly be wearing/using tactical equipment like, vests, rifles and helmets.
- Officer will take command of situation by shouting orders and/or physically directing individuals to a safe place or the ground.



What to Do When Law Enforcement Arrives

When law enforcement officials arrive, it is important that you:

- Remain calm and follow instructions.
- Put down any items and immediately raise your hands while spreading your fingers.
- Avoid making any sudden movements.
- Keep your hands visible at all times.
- Avoid pointing, screaming, or yelling.
- Do not ask officers for help while you are being evacuated from the scene. Rescue personnel will be in a safe area to provide assistance.



Summary

- Believe what you see and hear.
- Trust your gut instinct.
- Understand that your actions matter.
- Commit to your actions.
- Continually think about your next move.



Action Steps

- Store the HUPD urgent line in your cell phone.
- Always take note of the two nearest exits.
- Utilize the services of the BACT. Visit www.hupd.harvard.edu/bact-team for more information.
- For further questions email steven_catalano@hupd.harvard.edu.