



DETROIT POLICE DEPARTMENT
SHIELD
A PUBLIC-PRIVATE SECURITY PARTNERSHIP
INCREASING SAFETY AND SECURITY THROUGH INFORMATION SHARING



Open Source Assessment
Not for Public Release

Active Shooter Events in Educational Facilities

February 19, 2018

There are a number of words or phrases used to categorize the various types of violence we encounter or learn about from news sources – homegrown domestic terrorism, workplace violence, lone wolf terrorism, domestic violence; the list goes on and on. Active shooter events at schools can potentially fit any or all of these descriptions. The definition of terror is an intense fear or anxiety, and implies an extreme fear in the presence of danger or evil. A terrorist is a person who uses unlawful violence and intimidation, especially against civilians, in the pursuit of political aims. While school shooters may not have a political aim these events are striking fear and anxiety in many people.

DPD Shield believes it is important to remember two messages from our active shooter presentations –

We Are Not Helpless and What We Do Matters

Identifying the differences and similarities among various types of violence and terrorism has the potential to recommend training or advice to protect us from violence that may impact the safety and security of our community. For example, it is a commonly held belief that lone-actor terrorism events present acute challenges for law enforcement in the detection and disruption of these activities and events. It makes sense that when people are acting alone, without communicating with other would be terrorists or with a command and control mechanism in a “terror cell”, they are more likely to go undetected. While there is some validity to this, it is not absolute and this assumption is being challenged by recent studies. It seems that these lone-actor terrorists are communicating more than we realize, in both word and deed, and therefore presenting the possibility of disrupting their activities. Nearly all school shootings are lone-actor terror events at their core and we should expect these events are being communicated about as well.

An examination of 120 lone-actor terror events across Europe between 2000 and 2014 found there is some “leakage” of intentions. Leakage “denotes situations where the perpetrator has given indication of their extreme views or intention to act to a third party”. This leakage may be intentional or unwitting, but it happens. The study indicates nearly half of these lone actors exhibited leakage – in words or actions – to family or friends and/or on line in forums of extremists groups or postings on their own social media pages. Much like the lone-actor terrorist, we believe the active shooter in our schools, in our workplaces, and in our homes are not as invisible as is usually assumed and their intention to commit a violent act is often announced.

We need to be aware, to listen and be available to report information we may come across that indicates some violent behavior may be imminent.

IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING – 313-596-2250

Attitude, behavioral and activity changes can provide warnings of extreme views or even of an intention to commit violent acts. Be particularly mindful of:

- Changes in performance or conduct, such as attendance problems, decreased productivity, inconsistent work patterns, concentration problems, poor health or hygiene;
- Difficult relationships with coworkers or classmates, finding fault with others, verbal threats;
- Power obsession, a deep interest in firearms, military, law enforcement, or underground militia groups;
- Access to firearms and threats of violence;
- Unstable family life, social isolation, a loner, exhibits poor self-esteem;
- Controlling behaviors, acting superior to others, belligerence, unreasonable demands;
- Persistent anger or rage, magnifying minor injustices, violent or vindictive statements or outbursts;
- Substance abuse, odd behaviors or attitudes that makes others uncomfortable;
- Victim mentality, clinical paranoia, continually blaming others.

These indicators are often evident to those around the perpetrator, whether in the physical or virtual world. Friends, family, work colleagues and school mates are more likely to be exposed to these crucial indicators; and these are the persons who have to feel safe enough in their relationship with supervisors, principals, management, clergy and/or law enforcement to bring these matters forward.

Strong links between the Detroit Police Department and the communities we serve are vital and is the very reason for the existence of the DPD Shield program, for example. These efforts are designed to strengthen our public/private partnerships and information sharing among our partners. These partnerships are key to the deterrence, detection and disruption of the active shooting and/or terror activity discussed here.

The phrase at the bottom of the page – “If You See Something, Say Something” – is directed to all our partners. Again, it is co-workers, school mates, friends and relatives who are more likely to see something, hear something, or notice something that could hold the key to disrupting a terrible tragedy.

The message on the front page bears repeating –

We Are Not Helpless and What We Do Matters

The Detroit Police Department, through DPD Shield, continues to provide training – Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events – throughout the City, and beyond, and will gladly come to your facility and provide the one hour FREE presentation. Call or email and arrange a date/time for the presentation.

<https://www.hrpa.ca/HRPACapters/grandvalley/programs/Pages/Webinar-Violence-in-the-Workplace.aspx>

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/robert-siciliano/workplace-violence-12-sig_b_5110184.html

<https://rusi.org/publication/occasional-papers/lone-actor-terrorism-final-report>

IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING – 313-596-2250