

**PIERCE COUNTY  
HAZARD IDENTIFICATION & RISK ASSESSMENT  
ACTIVE THREAT / ATTACK TACTICS**

**Table of Contents**

<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Definition .....	2
Types .....	2
<b>Profile</b> .....	<b>2</b>
Location and Extent .....	2
Occurrences .....	7
Recurrence Rate .....	8
<b>Impacts</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Resource Directory</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Endnotes</b> .....	<b>12</b>

# Identification and Description

## Definition

The Department of Homeland Security defines an active shooter as “an individual or multiple individuals actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and/or populated area”. These areas include where people shop, learn, work and exercise free speech.<sup>1</sup> Attacks can be perpetrated by many different actors with different motivations, but all use violent and destructive tactics to cause harm to people and/or property. Some actors include terrorists (domestic and international), violent extremists, and targeted violent offenders.

## Types

Examples of tactics are mass shootings, bombings, arson, murder, kidnapping, hijacking, or skyjacking. Not all attacks are politically motivated, some are based on personal grievances. Most attacks happen in public gathering places or institutions, of which Tacoma has many. The threat of attacks has grown with the interconnectedness of the internet and social media. In today’s security conscious, post-9/11 environment, the main threat appears to be attacks using small-scale tactics such as shootings or vehicle ramming.

No official sources were found that categorize active shooter events by type of incident or method. The New York City Police Department’s Compendium of Active Shooter Incidents divides them by location: Office Building, Open Commercial, Factories and Warehouses, Schools and Other.<sup>2</sup>

From a planning perspective in Pierce County, these events can be categorized into three general categories: workplace, school and public venue. In addition to location, the differentiating consideration is the potential triggering event or conditions leading up to the incident. These can be very personal in nature and specific to the individual and set of circumstances at the time.

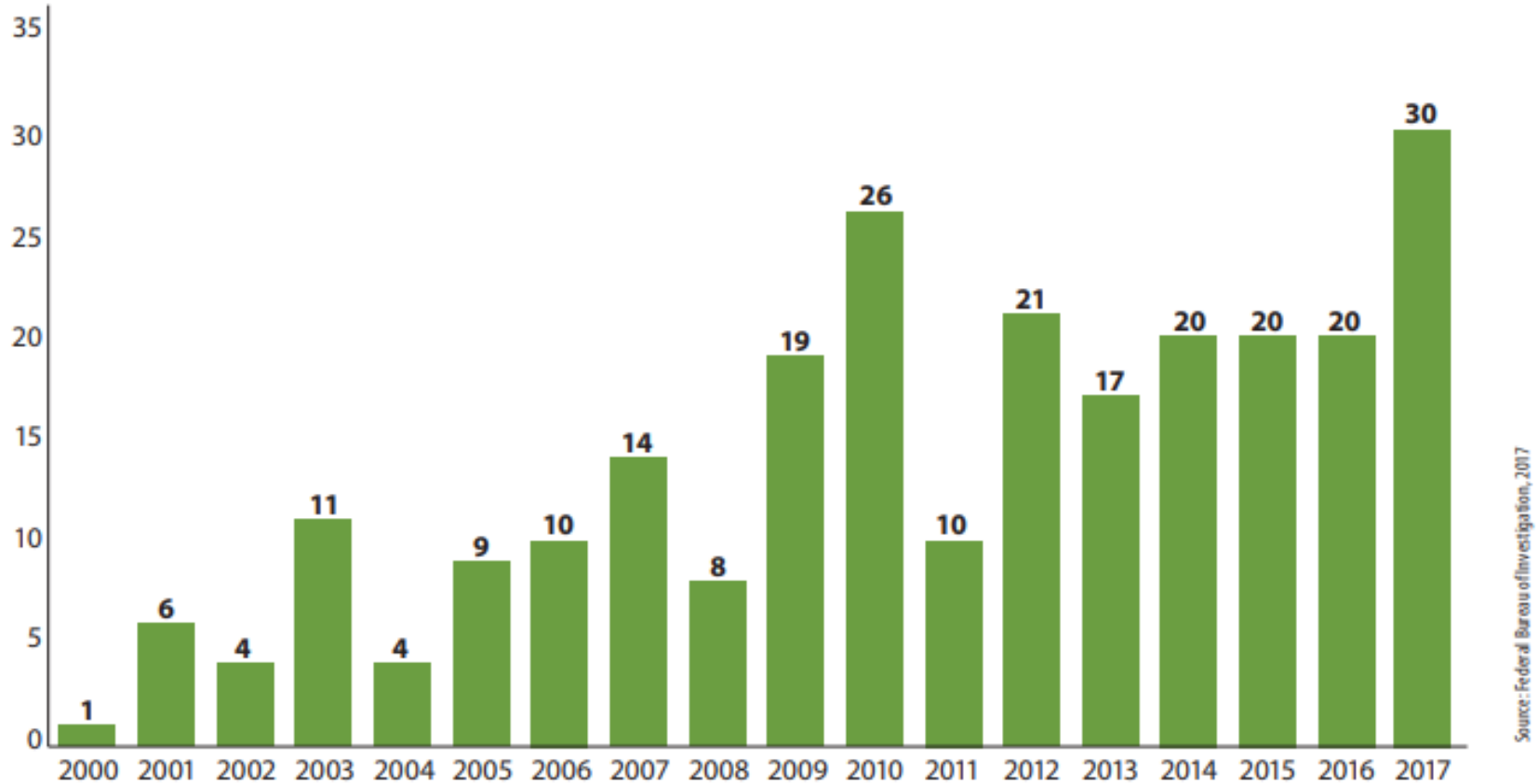
## Profile

### Location and Extent

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has many resources on active shooter statistics. From 2000-2017 there were 250 active shooter incidents (Figure AT-1 Incidents per Year and Figure AT-2 Casualty Breakdown by Year). In 2013 when the FBI released their first study results there were only 160 active shooter incidents. A few images highlight the increase in frequency and casualty counts.<sup>3</sup>

Figure AT-1 250 Active Shooter Incidents in the U.S. from 2000-2017: Incidents per Year

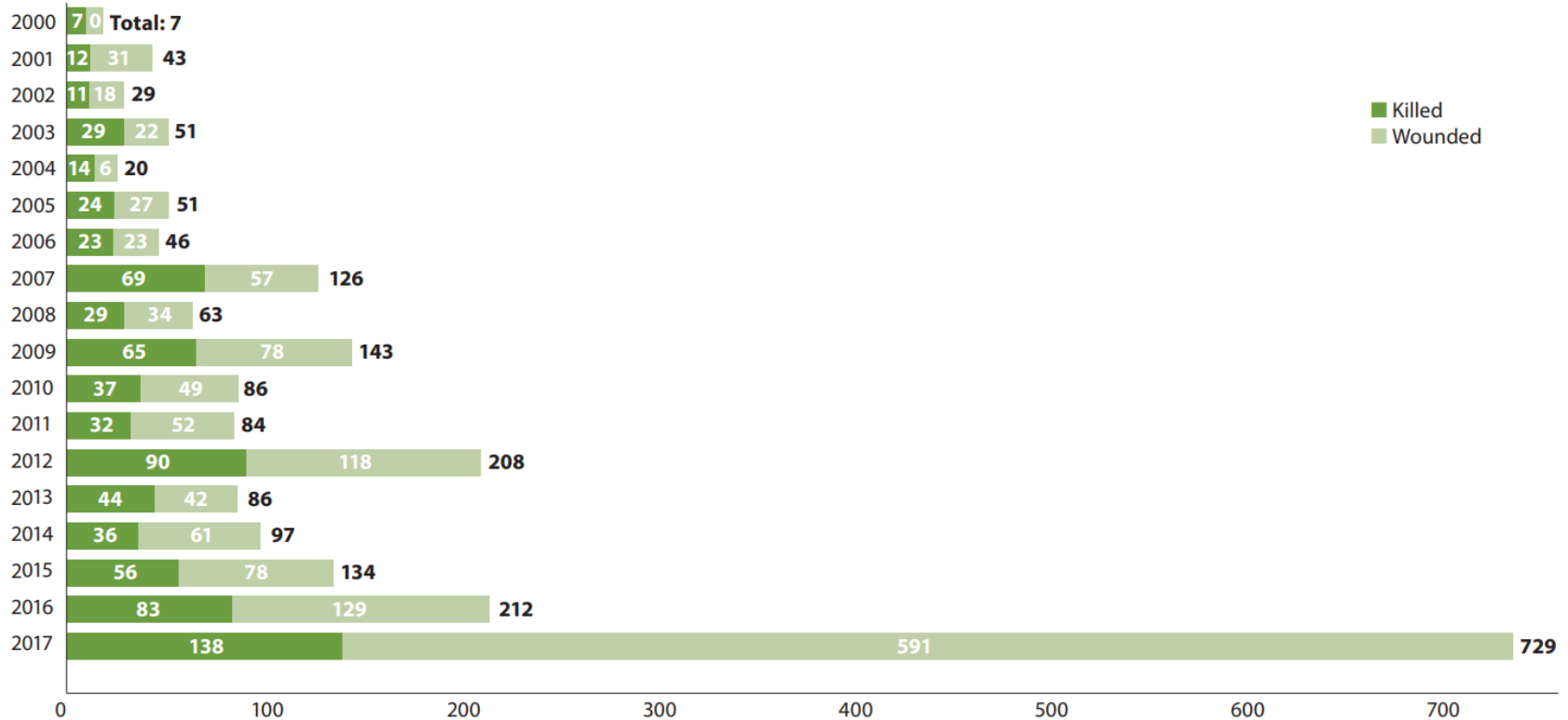
### Quick Look: 250 Active Shooter Incidents in the United States From 2000 - 2017 Incidents Per Year



The above bar chart contains the numbers of active shooter incidents in the United States, broken down by year, from 2000 to 2017. Those yearly numbers are: 2000, one incident; 2001, six incidents; 2002, four incidents; 2003, 11 incidents; 2004, four incidents; 2005, nine incidents; 2006, 10 incidents; 2007, 14 incidents; 2008, eight incidents; 2009, 19 incidents; 2010, 26 incidents; 2011, 10 incidents; 2012, 21 incidents; 2013, 17 incidents; 2014, 20 incidents; 2015, 20 incidents; 2016, 20 incidents; and 2017, 30 incidents. The total number of active shooter incidents during the time frame was 250.

**Figure AT-2 250 Active Shooter Incidents in the U.S. from 2000-2017: Casualty Breakdown per Year**

**Quick Look: 250 Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Between 2000 - 2017  
Casualty Breakdown Per Year**



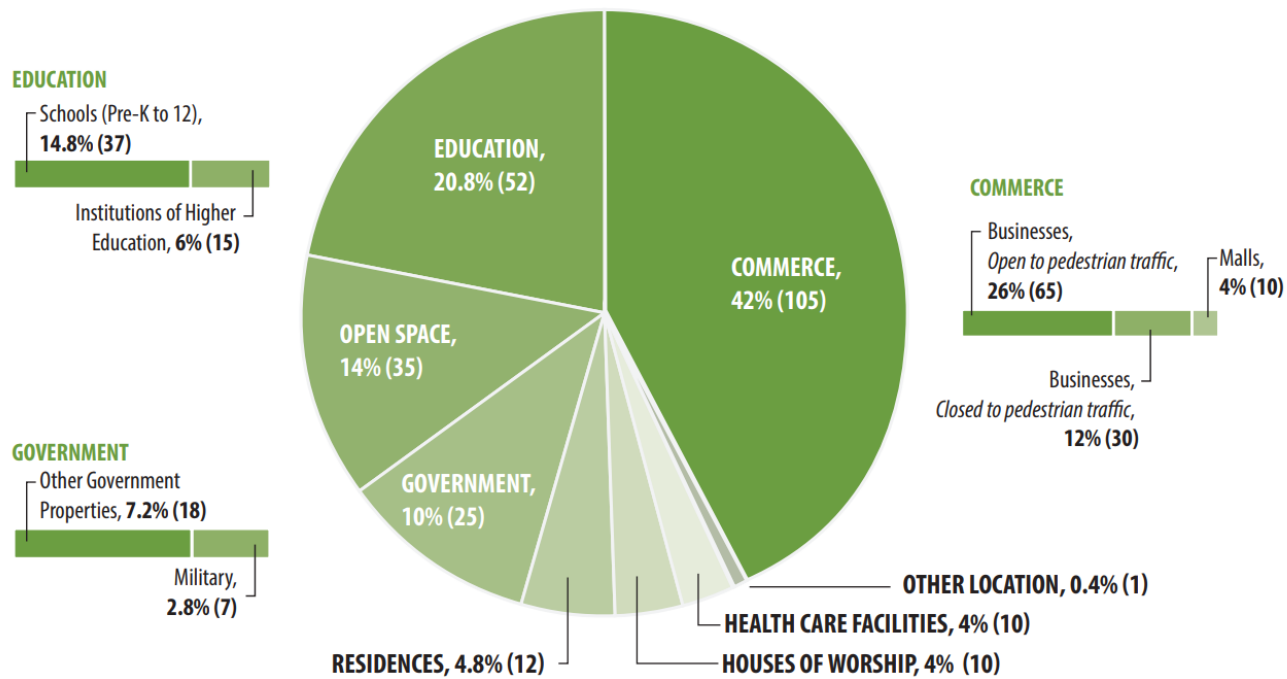
Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2017

The above stacked bar chart includes statistics on the number of killed or wounded casualties, broken down by year, after active shooting incidents in the United States between 2000 and 2017. Those numbers are: 2000, seven killed; 2001, 12 killed and 31 wounded; 2002, 11 killed and 18 wounded; 2003, 29 killed and 22 wounded; 2004, 14 killed and six wounded; 2005, 24 killed and 27 wounded; 2006, 23 killed and 23 wounded; 2007, 69 killed and 57 wounded; 2008, 29 killed and 34 wounded; 2009, 65 killed and 78 wounded; 2010, 37 killed and 49 wounded; 2011, 32 killed and 52 wounded; 2012, 90 killed and 118 wounded; 2013, 44 killed and 42 wounded; 2014, 36 killed and 61 wounded; 2015, 56 killed and 78 wounded; 2016, 83 killed and 129 wounded; and 2017, 138 killed and 591 wounded. During the time frame, the total number killed was 799 and the total number wounded was 1,418.

The FBI identified 11 separate incident location categories when seeking to identify the primary locations where the public was most at risk during an incident (Figure AT-3 Location Categories). These location categories include commercial areas (divided into malls, businesses open to pedestrian traffic, and businesses closed to pedestrian traffic), educational environments (divided into schools [pre-kindergarten through 12th grade] and IHEs), open spaces, government properties (divided into military and other government properties), residences, houses of worship, and health care facilities.

Figure AT-3 250 Active Shooter Incidents in the U.S. from 2000-2017: Location Categories

**Quick Look:** 250 Active Shooter Incidents in the United States From 2000 to 2017  
**Location Categories**



Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2017

The above pie chart shows a statistical breakdown of the location categories where the 250 active shooter incidents took place in the U.S. from 2000 to 2017. Those location categories include: areas of commerce, 105 incidents or 42 percent; educational environments, 52 incidents or 21 percent; government property, 25 incidents or 10 percent; open spaces, 35 incidents or 14 percent; residences, 12 incidents or 5 percent; houses of worship, ten incidents or 4 percent; and health care facilities, ten incidents or 4 percent.

In 2018 there were 27 incidents that resulted in 213 casualties (85 people killed and 128 people wounded, excluding the shooters). The highest number of casualties (17 killed and 17 wounded) occurred at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. The second highest number of casualties (12 killed and 16 wounded) occurred at the Borderline Bar and Grill in Thousand Oaks, California.<sup>4</sup>

Since 2000, most active shooter events involved locations that could be considered “soft targets.” These were venues where groups of people congregated, access was relatively easy and there was little to no security presence. Workplace or academic settings were common locations in which attacks occurred.<sup>5</sup> Some attacks appear to have been spur of the moment or the product of a sudden emotional event. Others were methodically planned over a period of time, presumably for revenge, notoriety or to make a statement to society in general. In the latter cases, attackers appeared to be in full control of their emotions and made deliberate decisions about how to carry out their attacks. Target locations were specifically selected, method of attack was carefully calculated, the timing was selected based on the highest potential for casualties and there is even evidence that some of these attackers even planned how the event would end.<sup>6</sup>

Whether the attack is deliberately planned or an immediate reaction to an emotional event, potential indicators that the risk level has increased are difficult to spot and unreliable. Recent events have shown that they can occur at malls, concerts, department stores, schools, work places, public gatherings and any other location that can be easily accessed. Furthermore, there is typically no discernible pattern or set of criteria as to how the attacker selects their victims. The goal of the assailant is to kill as many people as quickly as possible before the attack ends. This puts the attacker in the position of advantage as they determine the time, location and method of the attack, forcing victims, bystanders and responders to react to their actions.

Due to the unpredictable and uncontrollable nature of these events, countermeasures characteristically involve the immediate actions of people at the attack site and quick deployment of law enforcement officers. Active threat events are frequently short lived and over before law enforcement can arrive on scene. Because of this, individuals must be mentally and physically prepared to deal with the situation as it is happening.<sup>7</sup> Survivor initiated mitigation actions are as important toward ending an active shooter event as law enforcement response. These actions span the full spectrum of the Avoid, Deny and Defend methodology.<sup>8</sup>

Analysis of known events indicates that few attackers had previous negative contact with law enforcement, however most had recently experienced something significant in their lives. Dramatic events, such as the loss of a job, severe financial hardship, loss of a relationship, a personal humiliating event, or other significant events have been known to act as a trigger. Some of these were tied to a one-time occurrence (i.e. an employee was unexpectedly fired or laid off) while others occurred over a period of time (i.e. bullying in school, struggling academic performance, history of negative interaction between a supervisor and employee etc.). These incidents frequently had a “last straw” event that was the tipping point for the attacker(s). It is important to understand that attacks do not necessarily happen immediately after a “last straw” event. This event may mark the beginning of the planning process. The duration of that process is individual to the potential attacker. Some further analysis indicates that mental illness may be a contributing factor in many of these cases, but no definitive causal relationship is specifically established at this time.<sup>9</sup> It is important to note that the fact that a person has suffered a hardship

or has experienced a series of life impacting events is not, in and of itself, a reliable indicator of potential risk. A more comprehensive review of the individual is generally required. As this is realistically only possible in a narrow band of potential cases, the ability to truly predict an event like this is minimal.<sup>10</sup>

Guns were the most commonly used weapon and in many cases the attacker had multiple weapons.<sup>11</sup> Although rare, there were incidents in which the attacker brought an explosive device of some kind, potentially in an effort to kill more people or as a means to engage first responders. While we call it active shooter, attackers can use other weapons as seen in the December 2012 attack in China when an attacker entered a classroom and began stabbing children. In this case, a firearm was probably not available, but that did not deter the attacker. Incidents such as these demonstrate the potential resolve of an attacker once he has decided on a violent act. A second similar incident occurred in April of 2013 when Dylan Quick ran through the hallways of a building on the Lone Star Community College campus using a razor knife to slash and attack fellow students. By the time he was stopped, he injured fourteen people, two of which were taken to local hospitals in critical condition.<sup>12</sup>

## Occurrences

There have been five planned or conducted events in Pierce County since 2001 that were formally categorized as “active shooter”. Another five occurred within the state, mostly in Western Washington (Table AT-1 Occurrences in the Puget Sound).

It must be noted that this assessment does not account for potential reporting bias in how events were categorized and/or officially reported by law enforcement agencies.<sup>13</sup>

**Table AT-1 Occurrences in the Puget Sound<sup>14</sup>**

DATE	Community	Location
11/1999	Seattle	Northlake Shipyard
5/2001	Tacoma	Pacific Lutheran University
11/2005	Tacoma	Tacoma Mall
4/2006	Puyallup	Rogers High School
7/2006	Seattle	Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle
11/2009	Lakewood	Forza Coffee Shop
2/2010	Tacoma	Birney Elementary School
7/2011	Auburn	Muckleshoot Casino
5/2012	Seattle	Café Racer Coffee Shop
4/2013	Federal Way	Pinewood Village Apartments
6/2014	Seattle	Seattle Pacific University
10/2014	Marysville	Marysville-Pilchuck High School
9/2016	Burlington	Cascade Mall
12/2017	Graham	Graham-Kapowsin High School
6/2018	Seattle	Highway 509 Near Seattle-Tacoma International Airport

## Recurrence Rate

There is no pattern as to frequency or recurrence of attacks in Pierce County or Washington State. The last known active threat event in Pierce County occurred in 2019. On a national scale, compared to all violent crimes committed, active shooter events are the most common.<sup>15</sup> That said, the unpredictable nature of these events, the mental and emotional triggers that can cause them and the current social and economic influences within the general society make it prudent to assume that there will be an occurrence in the future within Pierce County.

## Impacts

### Health and Safety of Persons in the Affected Area at the Time of the Incident

The goal of most attackers is to kill and injure as many people as possible in as short a time as possible. Sometimes this begins by targeting a specific individual(s) and then escalates. In other events, there is no specific target in mind. Based on the analysis of previous events in Washington State, people in the workplace and school settings are most likely to experience an active shooter event. That does not rule out or reduce the potential that people in public places such as malls, churches or community events can find themselves in an active threat situation. Four of the ten events in Washington State occurred in public venues (see chart above).

Injured people have the potential of dying from their injuries before medical response can arrive. Until law enforcement has successfully secured the scene, medical personnel will not enter the affected area. Law enforcement's initial focus will be to stop the threat and secure the area. At least initially, injured people may be on their own to render aid and evacuate the area within their capabilities.

Those who are injured may face a long and painful recovery as well as significant medical expenses that can lead to financial hardship. In some cases, people will not fully recover from their physical injuries dramatically affecting their quality of life and potentially their ability to work.

There will likely be significant potential for psychological effects for people who witnessed the incident. Post-traumatic stress syndrome is a concern in the weeks, months and possibly years following the incident. This will significantly affect individual quality of life, ability to work and may add to the financial hardship as well.

### Health and Safety of First Responders

Responding law enforcement should expect to be in the line of fire as soon as they arrive on scene. To date, most active threat events were resolved very quickly; either before or upon the arrival of law enforcement.<sup>16</sup> The two biggest risks to responding personnel are a heavily armed attacker that is willing to stand and fight and/or an attacker that has introduced an explosive device to target responders. Secondary devices at likely staging areas or assembly areas should



be a concern for responders. This tactic has significant potential to dramatically impact evacuees and responders and slow the response/recovery.

Responding medical personnel are further at risk if there is more than one attacker or if the attacker has not been contained. Multiple threat events presumably involve at least some planning on the part of the attackers, who may want to engage responding fire and medical personnel to increase the number of dead and/or wounded. Depending on where the attack happens, securing the location can be a lengthy process, which increases the chances that seriously injured people can die from their wounds. This may place the burden of initial triage and medical care on law enforcement.

The psychological impact to responders cannot be over looked. These are very intense events that can result in a high number of casualties. Being in the line of fire or responding to the carnage can have a significant emotional impact. The public expects responders to carry on and be there if another event happens. Post-traumatic stress syndrome can affect responders' ability to perform their jobs in the future. The initial recovery of the scene will happen quickly. The recovery of the people may take much longer.

## Continuity of Operations

Depending on where the attack occurs and how extensive it is, continuity of operations may be an issue. An attack that occurs in a workplace, will not only affect the available personnel to continue operating, but may prevent the facility from being operational for some time while recovery and investigations take place. The facilities with public access may find delivering normal services difficult as people are afraid to re-enter the facility. This may necessitate establishing an alternate location with potentially reduced staffing and capability until normal operations can be reestablished or improving virtual access to services.

## Delivery of Services

If an attack occurs at a service delivery facility, there may be a temporary interruption of those services during the recovery and investigations. Personnel, facilities and equipment may not be available or capable of providing necessary services for some time, depending on how long it takes for the agency and its employees to recover from the incident. Agencies and their supported populations should plan for reduced or interrupted service capabilities following an active threat event.

## Property, Facilities and Infrastructure

Property, facility and infrastructure damage has not been a main concern for active shooters in the past. Overall damage was localized to the incident site and typically not extensive. In the event that the attacker introduces an explosive device, the amount of damage will likely increase, but should still remain generally localized to the event site.

## Environment

The environmental impact of an active shooter event will likely be negligible, unless an explosive device is introduced. The nature of the device, size, composition and what was damaged will determine the extent of environmental impact. In general terms, it is not likely that a single active threat event will result in significant environmental impact.

## Economic and Financial Condition

The economic impact of an active threat event would likely be localized and tied directly to the nature of the attack. The event that occurred at the Tacoma Mall in 2005 may have had a short-term economic impact on the stores at that location, but its effect did not extend beyond that. The likelihood of a larger economic impact as a result of a single active threat event is remote.

The financial impact will likely be most significant to jurisdictions in which the event occurred. These will predominantly come in the form of personnel costs (i.e. overtime, loss of productivity, extended leaves of absence, medical costs, legal costs...) due to response and recovery requirements.

## Public Confidence in the Jurisdiction's Governance

Public confidence will be most shaped by the effectiveness and efficiency of the initial response, then by how effectively local and county agencies transition through the recovery phase of the incident. Public information and how it is managed will be of paramount importance to shape public confidence. A single active threat incident is not likely to reduce overall public confidence in the jurisdiction's governance if the incident is managed effectively and efficiently.

# Resource Directory

## Regional

- **Washington State Fusion Center**  
<http://www.wsfc.wa.gov/>
- **Local Police Departments**

## National

- **DHS Active Shooter Preparedness**  
<http://www.dhs.gov.activeshooter>
- **DHS Active Shooter, How to Respond, October 2008**  
[http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/active\\_shooter\\_booklet.pdf](http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/active_shooter_booklet.pdf)
- **New York City Police Department, Active Shooter Recommendations and Analysis for Risk Mitigation, 2012 Edition**  
[www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/downloads/pdf/counterterrorism/ActiveShooter2012Edition](http://www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/downloads/pdf/counterterrorism/ActiveShooter2012Edition)
- **Federal Bureau of Investigation Active Shooter Resources**  
<https://www.fbi.gov/about/partnerships/office-of-partner-engagement/active-shooter-resources>
- **Defeat School Shooters Before the First Shot!, James Gaffney**  
<http://lawenforcementtoday.com/tag/five-stages-of-the-active-shooter/>
- **The CIP Report, Center for Infrastructure Protection and Homeland Security, Volume 11 Number 9, March 2013**  
[http://cip.gmu.edu/images/The\\_CIP\\_Report/CIPHS\\_TheCIPReport\\_March2013\\_ActiveShooter.pdg](http://cip.gmu.edu/images/The_CIP_Report/CIPHS_TheCIPReport_March2013_ActiveShooter.pdg)

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> IS-907- Active Shooter: What Can You Do? (Online Video Training), Department of Homeland Security, Viewed on March 26, 2013. <http://emilms/fema.gov/IS907/index.htm>
- <sup>2</sup> Raymond W. Kelly, Police Commissioner, Active Shooter Recommendations and Analysis for Risk Mitigation, New York City Police Department, 2012 Edition, page 7, [www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/downloads/pdf/counterterrorism/ActiveShooter2012Edition.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/downloads/pdf/counterterrorism/ActiveShooter2012Edition.pdf)
- <sup>3</sup> FBI, Quick Look: 250 Active Shooter Incidents in the United States from 2000 to 2017, accessed Aug. 22, 2019 at <https://www.fbi.gov/about/partnerships/office-of-partner-engagement/active-shooter-incidents-graphics>
- <sup>4</sup> FBI Active Shooter Incidents in the United States in 2018, accessed Aug. 8, 2019 at <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/active-shooter-incidents-in-the-us-2018-041019.pdf/view>
- <sup>5</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation Joint Intelligence Bulletin Recent Active Shooter Incidents Highlight Need for Continued Vigilance, 27 December 2012, <http://publicintelligence.net/dhs-fbi-bulletin-recent-shooters/>, page 2
- <sup>6</sup> James P. Gaffney, Defeat School Shooters Before the First Shot, Law Enforcement Today, <http://lawenforcementtoday.com/tag/five-stages-of-the-active-shooters/>
- <sup>7</sup> Active Shooter: How to Respond, United States Department of Homeland Security training brief, October 2008, <http://www.dshs.gov/activeshooter>
- <sup>8</sup> Chuck Ergenbright, Defeating the Active Shooter: Applying Facility Upgrades in Order to Mitigate the Effects of Active Shooters in High Occupancy Facilities “A Meaningful Change”, Center for Infrastructure Protection and Homeland Security CIP Report Volume 11 Number 9, March 2013, page 3
- <sup>9</sup> FBI Joint Intelligence Bulletin, page 2
- <sup>10</sup> Mark Coulson, PHD, Prevention Rather Than ‘Cure’: Identifying the Active Shooter-in-Waiting, Center for Infrastructure Protection and Homeland Security, CIP Report Volume 11 Number 9, March 2013, page 4
- <sup>11</sup> J. Pete Blair and M. Hunter Martaindale, Texas State University, Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training, United States Active Shooter Events from 2000-2010: Training and Equipment Implications, page 5
- <sup>12</sup> CBSnews.com, Texas Slasher Suspect Dylan Quick Fantasized About Stabbing People Since Elementary School: Police, [http://cbsnews.com/2012-505263\\_162-57578798.html](http://cbsnews.com/2012-505263_162-57578798.html)
- <sup>13</sup> Raymond W. Kelly, pages 33, 37, 43, 98, 117, 127, 149, 159, 195
- <sup>14</sup> Occurrences obtained by the FBI assessment from 2000-2018
- <sup>15</sup> Mark Coulson, page 4
- <sup>16</sup> J. Pete Blair and M. Hunter Martaindale, page 5