Even with all of the violent incidents occurring in today’s world, your chances of being involved in an active shooter situation are slim; unfortunately, armed intruders and active shooter situations are occurring with greater frequency every year.

Statistics indicate that a little more than 60% of active shooter situations are over within five (5) minutes – the shooter leaves the area, the shooter takes their own life (about 40%), or law enforcement/a prepared citizen neutralizes the situation. Knowing exactly what to do during those few minutes may mean the difference between life and death for you, a coworker and many others in your building.

Simply stated, an active shooter seeks three factors:
- Easy ‘targets of opportunity’
- Little or no barricades or restrictions that will limit their movement
- Little or no supervision or confrontation that will restrict or end their actions

Whether your company uses A.L.I.C.E, Run-Hide-Fight, Lockdown, Evacuation, or other employee crisis action protocols, it is critical to comprehend how to place as many ‘roadblocks’ as possible between yourself and the intruder/shooter to increase your chances of surviving an active shooter event.
Honestly ask yourself, is everyone in your company prepared to deal with an armed intruder or an active shooter? Take the time to share these proven lifesaving ideas with everyone:

**Be prepared to ‘act not react.’** People die when they mistakenly believe they must confirm the crisis is real. If you hear a sound that you perceive to be a gunshot, it is a gunshot until proven otherwise. It’s acceptable to individually initiate your lockdown or run-hide-fight protocols – if it’s proven to be a non-crisis, that’s okay.

**Create mental ‘action scripts.’** An ‘action script’ is a mental rehearsal plan of ‘what if’ scenarios regarding your immediate response to variety of crises – ‘if this happens I will do that.’

**Lockdown & Barricading Concerns**

**Practice ‘rapid response’ lockdown.** Identify the process and actions that you will take to lockdown and/or barricade your occupied space.

**Make your barricade response ‘gross motor skill based.’** Remove any body actions that are ‘fine motor skill based’ – for example, placing keys in the door keyhole and turning, any precise movements or tasks with your fingers such as tying rope or computer cable to the door knob. These actions will be slow and at times impossible to perform. Simplify by using pre-tied items, carabiners, or pre-lock doors so all you have to do is shut the door.

**Identify objects that will be used to barricade your location.** This means pre-plan your lockdown and barricade actions and identify the exact objects that will be utilized.

**Plan the barricade objects in order – even number the order in which they are to be used when barricading.** Always use objects of substantial size and weight when barricading. Don’t just pile chairs in front of the door, they will not stop an intruder and will limit or obstruct your ability to respond and get out of the room if the door is breached. If barricaded properly, a door breach should be a rare occurrence.

**Once barricaded or in lockdown, avoid standing directly in front of the door in case the shooter fires through the door.** This area is known as the ‘fatal funnel.’

**Make it appear as if no one is in the room.** Turn off lights, silence all cell phones, keep quiet, and don’t cast shadows under the door.

**Identify a secondary exit (door, window, breach a wall) that you can get out if needed.**

**Assume the ‘Defend Your Room’ position if you cannot get out.** Position yourself against the wall, 2-3 feet from the knob side of the door. Have a ‘pre-planned, improvised weapon’ and be ready to use it. It’s time for ‘action vs. reaction’ – you attack first – action always beats reaction.

**Day to Day Awareness**

**Day to day awareness is your best personal and professional protection mechanism.** No matter where you are or what you are doing, develop a thorough understanding of your surroundings. Know how to safely evacuate the area; know how to barricade your area/room; and as a last resort understand how and when to fight the intruder.

It is important to always be observant. Use all of your senses, being attentive to your surroundings at all times. ‘Intuitive concern’ means trusting your instincts and intuition. We get in trouble when ignoring what our gut is telling us. When you sense an unexplained concern or uneasiness about someone or something, look deeper at the situation or person and identify if there is danger or pending attack.
Understand your surroundings every time you enter a building. Look around – try to find at least two (2) exit routes out of each area/room and the building itself. Take the time to enter and leave the building using different routes. This familiarity with the building layout will be beneficial during a real evacuation.

Always ‘Say Something.’ Learn to report all suspicious activities, people, or vehicles to law enforcement. It is law enforcement’s job to determine if the activity is something other than it appears to be. The safest companies are those that expand this concept and follow ‘Hear or See Something, Say or Do Something.’ If you hear something (in person) or see comments, statements or questions on social media that cause concern, bring that concern to a supervisor and/or the authorities. This also means if you see or hear signs of imminent danger - gunshots, yelling, screaming, or reports of an intruder - don’t go to verify what is happening, ACT!!!!! - by initiating your pre-planned ‘action script.’

Maintain your brightly colored crisis plan in the same location in every area/room.

Look around the room for potential weapons. Every building/room contains many objects that can be used as weapons to distract or even disable an armed intruder or shooter.

Know how to implement your personal ‘Ripple of Safety.’ During a lockdown or evacuation, know how to:

- Get yourself safe as quickly as possible
- Notify others so they can get safe and begin their own ‘ripple of safety’
- Activate your company’s emergency notification system
- Call ‘911’

Initially your biggest obstacle will be DENIAL – get by denial and ACT!

Run – Hide – Fight Concerns

Remember, you can survive an active shooter incident. The best response plans are those that allow you to switch and move between response alternatives as the context of the incident evolves and changes.

‘Move with Purpose’ – playing dead or freezing will most likely get you killed – action will provide a chance and may save your life – so learn to ‘move with purpose.’ The context of your situation will dictate your purpose. An armed intruder or active shooter situation will evolve rapidly and new details may be limited; you must also be able to adjust as the situation changes.

If you are in another area of the building when an initial attack occurs, your response alternatives will differ from those individuals who are in the immediate area of shooter. Active shooter situations are dynamic and evolve quickly. If the shooting starts down the hall from your location, your options are to lockdown/barricade (if you are in a lockable space) or create distance if you have no lockable space or there is a clear path to an exit.

The shooting down the hall could very quickly migrate to your space which dramatically changes what life saving alternatives work best. The closer you are to the shooter, the less response alternatives you will have. If you are near the shooter and your exit is blocked and there are no secondary exits (windows, doors, etc.) you probably have two choices - do nothing and die or go on the offensive and give yourself a chance to live.

If you are in close vicinity to the shooter, utilize a distraction. Throw anything at his/her face to create ‘openings of opportunity’ for you to create distance between yourself and the shooter, lockdown/barricade, leave the area through a secondary exit, or if no other option exists – engage the shooter.
Run

Simply stated, you run to get out of the area quickly and safely creating distance between yourself and the shooter. Always run away from the sound of gunfire.

If you are in a hallway or open space with the shooter, create more distance between you and the shooter by placing large heavy items called ‘cover’—items that will stop bullets—steel, concrete, large heavy planters filled with dirt, etc. At times all you may have is ‘concealment’—beneficial, but it only protects you from the shooter’s view and will not stop bullets. Concealment objects include drywall, bushes, hollow core doors, most furniture, etc. Understand once the shooter knows you are on the other side of the concealment item you could be shot directly through that item.

When running from a shooter, create distance and 90 degree angles between you and the shooter. This can be accomplished by moving into opposing hallways, rooms, alcoves, doorways, etc.

Once you have evacuated the immediate area, scatter from others and run as far away as you can. Once you are safe, call ‘911.’

Be prepared to provide exact details to the ‘911’ operator. When you call ‘911’ don’t assume the person you are speaking to knows your exact location; some ‘911’ calls go to a county wide dispatch center. Inform the operator of the city and your exact location, “I’m at ABC Company, 123 Main Street, Wausau Wisconsin and there is an active shooter in the building.” If possible give description of shooter’s appearance, weapon types, location, direction of travel in building, location of known injured, etc.

Hide

If you hear gunshots (or what you perceive to be gunshots) and can’t get out of the building, it’s time to lockdown and barricade. Simply hiding under a table or desk with no barricade between you and the shooter will not protect you. When no other alternative is available—you can’t create distance, lockdown barricade, or get out of a secondary exit—find a distraction object to throw at the shooter and create a plan in case the shooter finds you.

Plan to throw objects at the shooter’s face and eyes—when they flinch it’s time to act—initiate your plan which could be to create more distance, get to a lockable space, create 90 degree angles or engage/attack the shooter.

Immediately lock and barricade the door. Use large, heavy, moveable objects to barricade the door. Tables, desks, filing cabinets, chairs and other objects can be used to block entry in to the room. These objects should also be used to block the door window so the shooter cannot easily see in to the room.

Turn off the lights and silence all cell phones. The noise or the illumination emitted from a cell phone may tip off the shooter of your location.

Always spread out throughout the room. Don’t huddle together and create easy targets for the shooter.

Keep calm and quiet in the room. Make it appear that ‘no one is home.’

Once your lockdown and barricading is complete, look for a secondary exit to get out of your location if necessary. Break a window and evacuate if you are able.
Never stand in the ‘fatal funnel.’ Past history indicates that shooters do not spend a great deal of time trying to breach a door unless they have a specific target in mind. Shooters understand they are ‘on the clock’ knowing that law enforcement will be responding soon. They may attempt for 4-6 seconds to enter the room. If unsuccessful in their efforts, they may fire a few rounds through the door, hoping to strike someone inside. It’s then time to move on and look for ‘easier targets of opportunity.’ Instruct everyone to never stand in front of the door...avoid the ‘fatal funnel.’

**Fight**

Engage the shooter if running and hiding are not options.

*Find anything to use as a weapon* – a stapler, the fire extinguisher, your lap top computer, your forearm/elbow, etc...

*Attack the ‘Trauma Susceptible Targets.’* This includes the eyes, all sides of the neck, the clavicle, the solar plexus, the groin, ankles, and knees. Identify your target and ‘drive through’ with your weapon.

*If possible, attack with numbers.* If you have no other options, attack the shooter ‘Gang-Fu’ style. If even one person attacks the shooter, validate their decision and HELP THEM!

**Team Tactics (Gang-Fu)**

If you are using team tactics to attack the shooter, the first person attempts to control the weapon/arm to get the weapon pointed in a safe direction. The second person attacks ‘Trauma Susceptible Targets’ with a planned or improvised weapon or their forearm/elbow. Repeatedly strike through the target until the shooter is completely disabled.

*When the weapon is disengaged from the shooter, remove it as far away from the shooter as possible.* Do NOT have weapon in your hands as you exit the building or when law enforcement enter the building. Remember, law enforcement does not know who or where the shooter is located; having a weapon in your hands could lead to deadly consequences.

*When law enforcement enters the area, listen and strictly follow their commands.* Always maintain your hands above your head unless you are containing the gunman. Always allow law enforcement to take command of the situation.
About M3

M3 Insurance offers insight, advice and strategies to help clients manage risk, purchase insurance and provide employee benefits. We are committed to being experts in both the products we represent and the industries we serve. Our people advance M3’s competitive advantage in the marketplace, and our focus on community builds better places live and work. M3 is consistently ranked a top 100 broker in America.

About the Authors/Presenters

Captain Mike Bolender is a 25-year veteran with the Oak Creek Police Department (OCPD) commanding their patrol division, emergency communications and use-of-force training.

As one of OCPD’s SWAT team leaders, his first shooter incident occurred in 2004 at a hotel where the shooter killed several innocent people and barricaded himself in a room with a hostage. After this incident, Mike began studying current active shooter response protocols, identifying many key gaps in shooter response training.

Then in 2012 Mike was involved in his second active shooter situation at the Sikh Temple (Gurdwara) in which Captain Bolender was tasked with being the incident commander overseeing law enforcement operations and response to the shooting.

Previously Mike spent fifteen years on Oak Creek’s Emergency Response Unit (SWAT Team), ten of which as a team leader. Additionally, he has been a use of force instructor for 23 years and oversees the Oak Creek Police Department Training Cadre. Mike received his Masters Degree from Marquette University in Administration of Justice along with a certificate in Leadership.

After his involvement in two active shooter situations, Mike saw firsthand the tragic effects (and shortcomings) of current active shooter response protocols taught to most. With this motivation Mike decided to create a program to provide would be “victims” with specific lifesaving preventative measures, critical information, tactics, and ‘first care’ medical training so communities might “never again” have to deal with the horrific outcomes of an active shooter.

Mike and his team created a three-pronged approach to active shooter events which is unique from any other program. The Peaceful Warrior Program can be incorporated with any current active shooter protocols or be utilized on its own. It is specifically designed to ‘fill the gaps’ that individuals who have experienced an actual shooter event have found to exist. Two of the active shooter programs Mike and his team have created are "Active Shooter Preparedness and Response" and "First Care." Mike can be contacted at www.pwtraininggroup.com or by email at pwtraininggroup@gmail.com.

Ted Hayes consults with businesses, school districts, and municipalities throughout Wisconsin to develop safety programs and risk management strategies. For over 29 years, Ted has served as a security and safety consultant to clients in Wisconsin and throughout the United States. In 2003, Hayes and Waukesha County (WI) Sheriff Bill Kruziki authored the book, "Not In MY Company! A Pro-Active Guide to Company Violence Prevention" and in November, 2014, Ted authored his second book, "If it's Predictable, It's Preventable – More than 2,000 Ways to Improve the Safety and Security in Your School."

During the fall of 1998, Hayes was a featured presenter at the Wisconsin School Safety Summit hosted by Attorney General James Doyle. Additionally, Ted has been a featured speaker for the:

- National Sheriffs Association
- National Association of Pupil Transportation
- Kansas Dare Officers Association
- Law Enforcement Training Network
- Wisconsin Attorney Generals Conference
- Wisconsin Company Counselors Association
- Wisconsin Association of School Boards
- Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials

In 2014, Hayes was chosen to the ‘hot 100’ list by Insurance Business in America.

Ted currently serves on the board of directors of the Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials (WASBO) and is a member of the WASBO Safety and Risk Management Committee. He also continues to author articles on school safety, security, and violence prevention. Ted can be contacted at ted.hayes@m3ins.com.