Planning and Conducting Realistic Active Shooter Training and Exercises

The University of Georgia
Office of Emergency Preparedness
University of Georgia Profile

- Athens, Georgia – 120,000
- 35,000 students/10,000 F/S
- 389 buildings on 759 acres
- Nearly 40,000 acres statewide
- Sanford Stadium – 94,000+
- UGA PD – 90 sworn police officers, EOD Team, 4 bomb-sniffing k-9s, full SRT, etc.
- Hosted several Olympic events in 1996
- First state chartered University in the nation - 1785
Summary of Presentation Topics

- Why Important?
- Objectives
- Location Choice
- Participating Agencies
- Location Choice
- Logistical Considerations
- Publicity/Media
- Safety Officers
- Schedules
- Controllers/Evaluators
- Citizen Volunteers
- Equipment/Special Effects
- Debriefing
- Outcomes
• Active shooter situations are becoming more frequent
• Requires a different response
• Prepares responders for a real incident
• Promotes building familiarity
• Tactical refresher and good for new officers
• Collaboration of agencies
• Identifies problems/resource issues
Plan, Prepare, React – Active Shooter Response Options for Institutes of Higher Education – Revised in 2013

www.planpreparereact.uga.edu
Identify Your Objectives

Identify the objectives you wish to accomplish. Examples might include:

- Tactical formations (single officer, two-person, three-person, etc.)
- Responding with officers from a different agency
- Officers entering different doors of facility – coordination
- Communication among responders and 911
- Coordination with EMS or Fire
- Familiarization with high profile buildings
- Use of special equipment (lights, long rifles, shields)
- Judgmental use of force
- Off-duty officer coordination
Participating Agencies

- Other law enforcement agencies in your area
  - State, federal, military, local, school, etc.
- EMS, Fire, EMA (observers if not participating)
- Stakeholders (building personnel, educators, your bosses)
Some things to consider:

- Can you damage the building?
- Do officers start at cars or building entrance?
- Can you clear out the building/area of non-participants?
- Are there rooms/areas that are unusable?
- Area available to debrief/discuss responses?
- Vary locations to meet your training objectives
Other Logistical Considerations

- Disable fire alarm temporarily – smoke machine may activate
- May need ability to turn off lights
- Include noise distraction – fire alarm simulators
- Date and time considerations (holiday/evening/weekend)
- Verify participation of building occupants
- Parking considerations
- Clean up well after the training
Be sure to inform the University community and city/county.
Inform people in the building several times.
Be flexible for people who need to use the building.
Use as a source of positive publicity.
• Positive press for promoting preparedness
• Great photo opportunities
• Be sure to video/photograph for departmental use
• Video for debriefing purposes
• Designate media areas with supervision
Perimeter Signage/Notifications

- Place signs on nearby roadways
- Use crime scene tape and posters on building entry points, stairwells, and elevators (cordon off training area of play)
- Campus-wide notifications for rumor control
Easily identifiable as the police – Firearms Instructors, etc. (safety officers are armed at all times)

Search and remove all weapons and extra magazines from everyone
- Paper bag, stapler & sharpie
- Use representatives from all agencies involved for trust purposes

Training area is well-marked

Anyone can stop the training/exercise

Conduct a safety briefing for each group
Appropriate Schedule – Officers and Volunteers

- You will need to schedule and rotate both responding officers, role players and bad guys
  - Create time slots and make agencies fill in names – do not just call in off the road
  - Schedule volunteers for time slots

- Training runs at least 8 hours each day

- Provide drinks/food or pot luck

- Have a break room for volunteers
Training Schedule Template

- Safety Briefing for Officers (2-4 mins.)
- Basic Scenario 1 Begins (8-10 mins.)
- Debrief Scenario 1 (10 mins.)
- Advanced Scenario 2 Begins (8-10 mins.)
- Debrief Scenario 2 (10 mins.)
- Next group – Safety Briefing
Provide Specific Instructions

• Include specific instructions for evaluators, victim volunteers, bad guys, safety officers, and role players (provide prior to the exercise)

• Briefing of role players prior to training
  – Do not kick open doors
  – Ignore people wearing vests
  – Stop exercise at any time for safety reasons
  – Officers may receive vague and contradictory information from dispatch as if real event
  – Start training with gun shots all role players can hear
Controllers & Evaluators

- **Controllers** make sure everything is working
- Start and stop scenario - make adjustments and tell victims how to behave
- **Evaluators** provide constructive feedback for improvement
- Use experienced evaluators with SRT/tactical knowledge
- Use multiple evaluators from different agencies
Citizen Volunteers

- Primarily used as victims
- Obtained from:
  - CERT
  - Civilian employees of local government agencies
  - Community partners (military, hospitals, volunteer orgs.)

- Safety briefing – no freelancing
- Wear appropriate safety gear
- Send an advance email to all volunteers – wear old, heavy clothes
Bad Guys

- Should understand the objectives of the training
- Use experienced police officers/firearms instructors/SWAT/narcotics
- Wear thick clothes and vest
- Can use two shooters, but 96% of active shooter incidents involve only one male attacker – don’t over complicate
Training Equipment

- Simunitions – handgun and rifles
- Blank gun (bad guy)
- Face and neck shields - all
- Ear protection - all
- Vests for Identification
- Signage – inside/outside
- Portable fire alarms
- Flashing landing lights
- IED for distraction
- Smoke machines
- Books, shoes, back packs, etc.
Equipment - Portable Fire Alarm
Create a Chaotic Environment

- Create stress by adding “chaos”
  - Flashing lights
  - Smoke in advanced scenarios
  - Clothes, books, shoes, desks, etc.
  - Use of multiple volunteers
  - Moulage to simulate injuries
  - Victims run toward officers/provide suspect information when asked
Filming the Training

Officer body-worn cameras or GoPro cameras work well
Sample Video
Debriefing

- Two different sessions
- Use Go Pro video with data projector (if possible)
- Have a comfortable area/room
- Tactics – Use agency SRT commanders (or outside agencies)
- Ask for feedback on the overall scenario, etc.
What Are the Training Outcomes?

• Creates a consistency of response

• Makes sure responding officers are familiar with active shooter tactics

• Allows feedback from multiple agencies on best response tactics/better feedback to officer

• Better familiarization of building layouts (on and off campus)
Team Building

- Allowing officers to work together in training conditions fosters relationships outside of training

- Work to build communication networks among officers and supervisors from responding agencies

- Integration in training will lead to closer working relationships among agencies within your community (promotes leadership)