

Active Shooter Training

Members of our security committee attended a recent ALPA-sponsored Active Shooter Training event. The day started with a classroom study conducted by a psychologist on the history and effects of violence and the dynamics of violence in association with an active shooter. We were then exposed to 10 different scenarios conducted by 5 highly trained individuals with backgrounds in law enforcement, military and medical fields—all of which have studied historical active shooter events. Instructors also served as safety observers to facilitate the debrief of each scenario. The trainers carried semi-automatic rifles with blanks. The scenarios took place in various office, hotel and airport settings that were part of a very large weapons training complex. We signed medical waivers agreeing to no ear protection (which greatly added to the scenario's realism). The fighting aspect and hand-to-hand interaction was very limited, mainly to avoid any injuries. Trained Federal Flight Deck Officers (FFDO) were armed for a number of the scenarios with laser-tipped handguns and in the culmination final event, they had handguns with UTMs, low-velocity plastic bullets. The trainers wore helmets and body armor-like suits for protection during this event.

Lessons Learned

There is no reasoning with an active shooter. He has committed himself to the acts of homicide and suicide.

Time compression reaction and confusion often occurs:

- There was a time delay for the brain to register seeing a weapon and reacting to it (i.e. deer in the headlights stare). This was especially evident in several scenarios and we knew we were going to be attacked.
- There was a time period where the threat did not appear to be a threat—walking and talking calmly and normally.

Many have not heard live rounds dispensed without ear protection; it'll make anyone jump.

The ability to attack the attacker and strip him of his weapon is much, much more difficult than we realized. Granted, the instructors were highly trained, but it's a very difficult proposition to attempt and survive.

Throughout the exercise we kept wondering how we would react if our wives or kids were sitting next to us; however, none of the scenarios addressed this. We were instructed in the key aspects of "Run, Hide, Fight." We discussed how to avoid the threat and to hide and barricade, as active shooters have not historically tried to enter or break into locked and/or barricaded rooms. Lastly, if required, we would fight if able.

There were occurrences where friendlies were begging to gain access to a barricaded room. During a debrief, one member displayed a tremendous amount of guilt for not having opened a door—even though it was just training. This is definitely something to think about.

The response time of law enforcement and/or SWAT can be minutes in an active shooter situation where seconds count. We were faced with armed threats and responding armed friendlies (police). There was a lot of confusion and friendlies were engaged inappropriately in a number of instances.

Probably the most important lesson learned was that you must have a plan and mindset that you have practiced in your own head or you are merely a sitting duck. Am I capable of violently defending my life or others' lives? Where can I run or hide? What is available to use as a weapon to defend myself if I cannot run or hide? During the panic of an active shooter event, you must engage your brain to get past the initial shock (i.e. survival mode, AKA stem power or lizard brain; the deer in the headlights shock). Often, 2 simple steps can engage your brain to "think and act." This can be as simple as taking a deep breath and moving one step off the "X" (the spot where you are when panic set in). Spend some time thinking about how to react. Remember, it is unlikely to happen to you, but, it will happen to somebody. Be prepared!

[DHS Run Hide Fight video](#)