



# HOW TO CONDUCT AN ACTIVE SHOOTER DRILL

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A guide to plan, conduct, and evaluate an active shooter drill at your church



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## WHY WOULD SOMEONE ATTACK A CHURCH?

An active shooter may have a particular grievance against a specific church or for what that church represents. It's possible that he/she may desire to make a statement with the goal to cause as much carnage as possible. Whatever the motive, we should be prepared to protect those under our care.

In an emergency situation, our first response may be to deny that the situation is happening. When in denial, we fail to react in a way most effective for preventing loss. Holding an active shooter drill educates your church members on how to react proactively instead of being paralyzed by fear and denial. They can then respond in a way most likely to prevent loss and to protect others.

Other benefits of holding active shooter drills include:

- Your church will have an up-to-date, realistic response plan prepared for future acts of violence.
- Your church will have a working relationship with local first responders.
- Your church will be known for caring and protecting its members and visitors.

If you have never conducted an emergency drill, don't expect everything to go perfectly the first time. The more you plan ahead of time, the better things will go.

## HERE IS YOUR PLANNING CHECKLIST:

- Review your written Emergency Plan and update the acts of violence portion.
- Discuss your plans and receive approval for the drill with your pastor, church board and safety committee. They may have ways to improve your active shooter drill.
- Create a crisis response team. This team might include several people with law enforcement or military and medical training. Designate duties for your crisis team members which include:
  - Directing congregants what to do during the active shooter situation.
  - Assisting limited mobility congregants and children to hide or escape.
  - Distracting and disarming the active shooter.
  - Calling 911 and directing first responders when they arrive.
- Perform a risk assessment of your facility using the church inspection form to be sure your church building is prepared for the drill.
- Designate one of your church leaders to meet with the police and review their strategy for responding to a shooting in your building. You can also give them the date you choose to conduct the drill.
- Assign individuals to observe the drill and report back any problems they see.



# CONDUCTING THE DRILL

**NOTE:** ARM recommends not having an active shooter actor, but simulate with the congregation the steps to take if an active shooter were present.

*Announce to your congregation a week or two before the drill of your intent to conduct an active shooter drill. Tell them when the drill will take place and what is expected of them. This is especially important if this will be the first active shooter drill at your church.*

## EDUCATE YOUR CONGREGATION

- 1** Alert local law enforcement and medical teams that your church will be holding a non-emergency drill.
- 2** Check in with your designated crisis response team on the day of the drill. Be sure everyone knows what to do and is prepared to handle their portion of the drill.
- 3** At the appointed time, have a designated person from the crisis response team walk to the front and announce to the congregation that the active shooter drill is now in progress.
- 4** Explain to the congregation how the church will respond in a real active shooter situation, including:
  - Directing the congregation what to do.
  - Distracting and disarming the active shooter.
  - Calling and reporting the situation to local authorities.
- 5** Reinforce to your congregants that your church's number one goal in an active shooter situation will be to protect the congregants.
- 6** Introduce your congregation to the designated crisis team members who will guide them in the event of a real situation. Have them share with congregants what to do in a real active shooter situation, including the **Run, Hide, Fight** method.
- 7** Simulate with congregants what to do should an active shooter enter the sanctuary, include ducking down to hide behind pews and following the designated crisis team members on how to evacuate the sanctuary and building.
- 8** Allow congregants to re-enter the building.

# AFTER THE DRILL



- Ask for feedback from the congregation and those who assisted with the drill.
- Identify problems and weaknesses.
- Make notes of what went well and what didn't. Maintaining records and other notes will provide you with the benefit of information gleaned from past events.
- After reviewing all notes, revise your emergency response plan as needed. Don't forget to set the date of your next drill!

It is best to schedule three or four drills the first year. After the congregation is comfortable with the procedure, you might include an annual or biannual drill. Remember to vary the time of the drills. Schedule them before, during, and after Sabbath School, the announcement period and the worship service. You may plan one for a midweek service at night. Emergency situations can happen at anytime so be prepared.

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