

Agency Response and Preparation to an Active Shooter Incident:  
Considerations for Law Enforcement Administration

Law Enforcement

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Under the Supervision of Dr. Susan Hilal

**Abstract**

*Statement of the Problem*

Active shooter incidents are becoming more frequent, and are escalating in severity. Schools, malls, and churches have been targeted and predicting the location of a future incident is almost impossible. While around 800 employees are killed each year at work, almost 1.7 million employees are injured because of workplace assault (National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health [NIOSH], 2006, p. 5). Since the Columbine tragedy, police agencies have developed new techniques and strategies to respond to active shooters. Accelerated timetables and high stress situations make resolving an active shooter situation more difficult for law enforcement.

Law enforcement agencies are restricted by inadequate equipment, personnel budgets, and limited intelligence prior to an incident. While the likelihood of an active shooter incident happening in any given area is low, the level of trauma, community shock, and overwhelming

strain on emergency response agencies could bring an agency to a standstill. With proper tools, effective policies, cooperative training, and line-level officer leadership, an agency will be more prepared for a potential active shooter. The intention of this seminar paper is to provide policy makers with literature to draw from as they create or refine active shooter response policies.

### ***Methods of Approach***

This seminar paper summarizes basic information relating to active shooters and core items that agencies should focus on before an incident occurs. “Active shooter” is defined and proper preparation for an active shooter scenario is discussed. Also, this paper categorizes agency responses through the use of leadership, training, and technology. After identifying positive agency responses, existing criminal justice literature is discussed. From the discussion of the three focus areas, recommendations for successful implementation of agency improvement to current policies or standard operating procedures are given. Furthermore, the connection between agency implementation and the use of a joint task force is established.

### ***Findings***

An increase in the preparation, education, and joint training with other agencies will improve response efforts of law enforcement to an active shooter event. This training, knowledge, and equipment give officers more skills to respond to an active shooter and coordinate additional resources. While implementing better leadership and training efforts, enacting better agency policy and implementing a Joint Active Shooter Task Force supported by area agencies will increase the potential for survival if an event would occur.

## Table of Contents

	Page
Approval Page	i
Title Page	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	iv
Table of Contents	vi
Section	
I: Introduction: The Need for Preparation	1
A. Assumptions	1
B. Active shooter defined	2
C. Purpose	3
D. Significance	5
E. Methods	5
II: Literature Review	7
A. Leadership	7
a. On-scene incident commander	9
b. Incident command system	12
c. Development of line-level officers	14
B. Training	17
a. High stress training	18

b. Active shooter training	20
c. Multi-jurisdictional combined training	23
d. Off duty Concealed Carry	26
e. Community Involvement	28
C. Agency Preparation and Outfitting	31
a. Pre-established Staging Locations	31
b. Implementing New Technology	33
c. Equipping Officers with Proper Tools	34
III: Recommendations	39
A. Agency Policy Considerations	39
B. Joint Active Shooter Task Force	42
IV: Conclusion	48
V: References	49

## **Section I: Introduction: The Need for Preparation**

As shots ring out at a local public facility, responding officers envision their worst nightmare. Although this situation is not a common one, this is not the time to wonder if each officer's training is enough. Response efforts are directly linked to preparation, training, knowledge, and effective front-line leadership. The Fort Gibson Police Department, in Oklahoma, had no advanced training or rehearsal for this type of incident. On-scene officers found themselves approaching the local chief awaiting orders and looking to him to supervise and control the scene. In this incident, law enforcement officers struggled for direction after a 13 year-old boy fired fifteen 9mm shots wounding five students. As the incident developed, the school became saturated with parents and media and with no pre-established incident command or command-and-control training, the officers involved became overwhelmed (Heck, 2001).

### *Assumptions*

It is assumed that not all police agencies will respond in the same way to an active shooter situation. Additionally, active shooter incidents are unpredictable and an appropriate response must be immediate and flexible. Agency tactics of involving quality leadership, training, and technology are applicable to all departments, but will need to be modified to meet specific department needs. For example, training for all line level officers in a rural Wisconsin department is as important for a large metropolitan agency, but the logistics of the training and implementation will be unique.

As a student or citizen in a community, it is assumed that law enforcement officers are experts in tactical response to a hostile situation. Any planning, preparation, and reaction is expected to be trained for an instantaneous and rapid result to protect society. After the

Columbine High School Shooting incident, however, police tactics were immediately questioned and have resulted in continually evolving tactics and response efforts. Before the shooting incident, the traditional mindset was to set up a perimeter, contain the damage, and let SWAT or other experienced and equipped members confront the threat. This change in police strategies now trains officers to proactively enter a hostile building and deal with the threat immediately. Commonly referred to as the “active shooter protocol” officers are not only trained, but expected to enter a building and stop any threat no matter the circumstance (Cullen, 2009). The overall preparation accomplished by an agency and its officers differs from one agency to another. As listed above, Fort Gibson officers were not adequately prepared and the problems of the incident evolved because of that. Leadership tactics in conjunction with the Incident Command System, along with proper training and improved agency policies are just a start in the preparation process.

### *Active Shooter Defined*

Although predicting when and how each incident will occur is impossible, it is each officer’s responsibility to be trained and prepared. There are numerous definitions of active shooters, from multiple agencies. Most of the definitions agree that an active shooter is-

One or more subjects who participate in a random or systematic shooting spree, demonstrating their intent to continuously harm others. The overriding objective appears to be that of inflicting serious bodily injury/death rather than other criminal conduct.

These situations are dynamic and evolve rapidly, demanding immediate deployment of law enforcement resources to stop the shooting and mitigate harm to innocent victims.

(Crisis Management Protocol for Ball State University, 2009, p.1)

While an active shooter event is generally uncommon, the availability to weapons and the potential to bring a weapon to a school or other public place is still a high concern. In a National Conference in Phoenix, AZ, more than seventy-eight percent of the 758 school resource officers surveyed reported that they had taken a weapon away from a student within the prior year. They also advised that gang activity had increased thirty-seven percent in their schools. But perhaps the most concerning statistic is that seventy-four percent of these officers felt that the schools they work in are not prepared properly to respond to a terrorist attack and sixty-six percent advised that they do not practice the emergency plans they have (NSSC Review of School Safety Research, 2006). At the Virginia Tech Shooting Incident, for example, proper training and tactics were practiced before hand, yet the entire shooting spree took only 11 minutes, and officers were unable to make entry to the building because the shooter placed locks on the doorway entrances (Giduck & Chi, 2008, p.57). It is understood that an agency can never completely prepare for an incident, however proper training and techniques are invaluable once an incident occurs. Sgt. Kimberly Munley from the Fort Hood Police Department is a good example of this process. By utilizing her active shooter training, she was able to engage and stop Major Nidal M. Hasan, an active shooter, who had killed 13 and wounded 28 others (Jonsson, 2009).

### *Purpose*

Active shooter incidents are taking place more frequently, and are occurring in many different places. Schools, malls, and churches have been targeted and predicting the location of a future incident is almost impossible. While around 800 employees are killed each year at work, almost 1.7 million employees are injured because of workplace assault (National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health [NIOSH], 2006, p. 5). Since the Columbine tragedy, police

agencies have developed new techniques and strategies to respond to active shooters. Accelerated timetables and high stress situations make resolving an active shooter situation more difficult for law enforcement. Even with the expectation of immediate response, law enforcement agencies are restricted by inadequate equipment, personnel budgets, and limited intelligence prior to an incident. While the likelihood of an active shooter incident happening in any given area is low, the level of trauma, community shock, and overwhelming strain on emergency response agencies could bring an agency to a standstill. With new technology, cooperative training, and line-level officer leadership, an agency will be more prepared for a potential active shooter.

The intent of this research is to summarize active shooter information and discuss core preparation tactics that agencies should focus on before an incident occurs. Research gathered from empirical sources in leadership, training, proper policy formation, and the use of a task force is included to evaluate trends in police preparation and execution. An emphasis is placed on agency vigilance in active shooter preparation. From the general definition of an “Active shooter” to proper preparation and agency response, the aim is to give agency instructors and administrators an outline to follow while guiding their employees. Existing criminal justice literature is discussed and recommendations for successful implementation or improvement of agency policies or standard operating procedures are given. Furthermore, the connection between agency implementation of leadership, training, and technology and successful resolution of an active shooter scenario is established.

## *Significance*

This research is significant because it provides resources, guidance, and implementation suggestions to prepare agencies in training and technology. Additionally, being able to embrace the Incident Command System and instill fundamental leadership skills in all officers will allow for the ability to deploy additional resources and save valuable time. The incorporation of training efforts to include active shooter trends, combined training with multiple agencies, community cooperation, and training under stress will present officers with additional skills to use at their disposal. Also, the use of new tools and technology will give officers the ability to respond and deploy backup faster and with more precision.

## *Methods*

Identifying responding agencies and establishing cooperative work efforts before an incident occurs will provide the best outcome for the agency, school districts, and other public locations that may be targeted. The goal is to establish a foundation for effective and proactive policies regarding active shooter response in an agency and incorporate arraigned mutual aid agreements to prepare for such an event. Off-duty interaction, inspiring and supporting leadership at all levels, and the use of proper tools, are considerations that may mean the difference between life and death for an innocent person.

The intention is to increase preparation, education, and joint training with other agencies and to improve response efforts of law enforcement to an active shooter event. This training, knowledge, and equipment give officers more skills to respond to an active shooter and the ability to coordinate additional resources. Additionally, implementing better leadership and training efforts, enacting better agency policy, and creating a Joint Active Shooter Task Force

supported by area agencies, will increase the potential for survival if an event would occur. Furthermore, by providing policy makers with literature to draw from as they create or refine agency active shooter response policies, administrators can investigate response techniques and other concerns ahead of time.

Recently, churches, schools, colleges, malls, and workplaces have become active shooter targets. Because of differences among agencies, response times, life experience, and backup availability it is difficult to establish a single active shooter response plan for all law enforcement agencies. However, with each active shooter incident it becomes more apparent that officers must be trained properly (and frequently refreshed), have a working knowledge of the incident command system, and must practice effective and competent on-scene leadership.

## **Section II: Literature Review**

The following literature review is divided into four main sections with a primary focus and framework aimed at implementation in the State of Wisconsin. These sections consist of leadership, training, and implementation of technology and tools. The leadership section will explain the importance of the Incident Command System (ICS), the use of an on-scene commander, and the importance of leadership skills in all officers. The training portion will cover many aspects of training tactics, mutual aid response and preparation, and community awareness. Lastly, the final section is about the equipping of each agency and officer with proper tools and protection in order to increase the likelihood of success.

### Leadership

Instilling quality leadership in junior-level officers is a fundamental part of law enforcement. A successful incident response depends on strong, competent, and qualified leaders to provide guidance to junior officers while maintaining a coherent and experienced front to the public. In chaotic situations, skilled and knowledgeable officers set the stage for gaining control. Ideally, leadership is inspired from the chief and command staff, and is implemented by the newest officer on the department.

Quality leadership is a balancing act. Leaders must trust that officers will make correct and effective decisions while implementing previously trained techniques. Supervisors may fall into the rut of micro-managing subordinates; this technique creates a dependence upon superiors and ultimately leads newer officers to question the split-second choices they need to make. Alternately, maintaining the proper command-and-control needed in the Incident Command

System (ICS) is also required. A fine balance between command-and-control and intense scrutiny must be achieved.

Implementing leadership to all line-level officers is an important part of producing a well-rounded agency that is prepared to respond to any crisis. Schaefer (2008) states that effective police leadership is “a crucial determinant of police organizational efficiency...every officer is a leader” (p.13). As a result of Schaefer’s leadership survey of FBI national academy attendees, leadership was identified as a process of setting a proper example to other officers. This process is dependent upon fair, service oriented and professional standards, and expectations set throughout the community. Most of the officers surveyed stated that actions and initiatives to serve the community along with protecting the welfare, well-being, and interests of the employees is the base of successful leadership (Schaefer, 2008).

As crime evolves, law enforcement agencies and their leaders must do the same. This is especially important in an active shooter situation. The requirement of securing and maintaining public support and providing high-quality personnel with integrity and leadership skills are a few of the basics of police success. In order to be successful in this process, law enforcement must select and train police recruits that are prepared for the career and willing to promote ethical leadership to others. Since agency leadership needs to be implemented with line-level officers, “Supervisors should expect that subordinates can and will make appropriate decisions and assume responsibilities for their actions...a leadership culture must permeate the entire organization” (Meese & Ortmeier, 2004, pp. 15-16).

Although being an effective leader in the community is dependent upon many factors, the characteristics needed during crisis could be very different. Because of this, agencies must

ensure that all officers are well trained, experienced, competent, are able to understand the requirements for an on-scene commander, and have a working knowledge in the incident command system.

### *On-Scene Incident Commander*

Responding to a large-scale incident requires a lot of coordination, planning, and on-scene control. The fluidity of an active-shooter incident, however, is different from other types of events. The necessity of stopping the threat becomes a priority, versus the traditional mindset of setting up a perimeter and calling reinforcements. This requirement to stop the threat, adds to the difficult nature of dealing with the suspect(s) while coordinating many other resources that will be needed.

The incident commander has management responsibility over the incident, develops the incident objectives, and approves an incident action plan. Although the incident commander is in charge of the overall incident as it develops, the initial on-scene commander needs to establish the preliminary response until a formal change of command is completed. This initial commander may be almost anyone on the department and because of this, it is vital that each officer is equally cross-trained in basic leadership concepts (FEMA Incident Command System 200, 2009).

Unlike other events, initial responding officers need to deal with the primary threat, while a secondary officer establishes the role of on-scene commander. Many supervisors are traditionally required to take up the role of supervising an incident. This evolving environment, however, makes the coordination of additional resources for an off-scene supervisor almost

impossible. While it is expected that an agency supervisor will begin monitoring the incident and supporting on-scene personnel, it is impractical to assume that they can make educated decisions without having a firsthand experience of what is occurring in real-time. Because of this, every line-level officer needs to have knowledge and background in establishing and controlling tactics. It is expected that arriving officers will establish an entry team, delegate an on-scene commander and continually adapt to the changing environment (Fairburn, 2007).

Law enforcement agencies are looking for “frontline employees who can lead citizens during chaotic situations, facilitate and direct problems-solving activities and make neighborhoods safer” (Schafer, 2008, p.13) This mentality is important for both guiding citizens and directing additional resources to ensure that responding officers maintain the upper hand in the chaotic situation.

This role of an on-scene commander is vital to assume tactical responsibility for an active shooter incident. El Paso County, Colorado specifically outlines in their policy the role of this position. They explain that one of the initial deputies to arrive on-scene will assume this responsibility. This is to ensure that clear communications are established with other responding officers, dispatchers, and outside agencies. Their policy indicates that the commanding deputy to arrive on scene will initiate the incident command system and determine the role of additional responding units. This incident command process, is a process that law enforcement is familiar with due its structure, however the extent needed for this type of command-and-control must be trained and practiced by line-level officers (El Paso County Sheriff's Office Policy and Procedure Manual, 2004).

By allowing the responding officers to deal with the threat, while maintaining a coordinated command structure, appropriate resources may be safely directed and the incident can be properly controlled. Once the on-scene commander is determined, he or she should identify that they are the incident commander via radio. This allows for a coordinated and consolidated effort to those responding. This officer should maintain the on-scene commander position until properly relieved by a higher ranking or more experienced member of the agency (Incident Command System Policy Minneapolis Police, 2005). Additionally, some departments request that the original on-scene commander maintain a role in the command post in order to ensure continuity throughout the incident (El Paso County Sheriff's Office Policy and Procedure Manual, 2004).

By assuming on-scene command of an incident, the officer in charge needs to “take-a-step back” and evaluate the overall need of the incident. This is vital in providing guidance in the first few minutes of an incident in order to properly direct support, conduct a problem assessment to keep officers safe, and control the environment as much as possible. It is critical to have a calm person directing police activity in a life-threatening crisis. In this role, the on-scene commander must balance the need for requesting additional officers versus the flood of too many officers to control. Pre-established policies outlining control of the radio frequency, back-up channels, and direct channels to officers inside a building must be determined. This control of radio traffic allows the on-scene commander to evaluate what is happening in a building (on-scene) and control radio requests or transmissions from any personnel not directly involved (Fairburn, 2007).

Because of the increased stress, large-scale environment, and great number of people, it is important to establish an inner and outer perimeter and identify a location of the command post.

This post location allows for control for deployment, receiving, and redeployment of additional resources. Due to the fact that an active shooter incident is a very dynamic and dangerous state, it is appropriate to have pre-established policies that govern automatic mutual-aid agreements. These agreements however must ensure that the Incident Command process is followed and that responding officers respond to and deploy in accordance with the on-scene commander's need. Additionally, an inner and outer perimeter should be established to control the "hot zone" and prevent additional resources/victims from adding to the dilemma (FEMA Incident Command System 700, 2009).

There are many factors that an on-scene commander must consider while deploying, receiving, and controlling resources that arrive on-scene. This control is best maintained by having adequate and continued hands-on training using the incident command system. Through the use of the Incident Command System (ICS) and the National Incident Management System (NIMS), joint command and control can be established in a large-scale incident.

### *Incident Command System*

Effective use of the incident command system is fundamental in controlling multiple jurisdictions and outside agencies in a crisis incident. The Incident Command System (ICS), according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, is a standardized, on-scene, all-hazard incident management concept. It allows officers to adopt an integrated organizational structure to match problems and demands of an incident(s) without restrictions of jurisdictional boundaries. It is intended to be an evolving entity that can grow or shrink depending on the needs of the people involved (FEMA Incident Command System 200, 2009).

Although ICS was first introduced in the 1970's to control out-of-control fires in California, the ICS philosophy has grown to include almost any type of incident that emergency management may face. Some examples include natural and man-made disasters, disease outbreaks, hazardous materials, criminal or terrorist incidents, and even special security events. Because of the severity of many of these incidents, one agency would probably not be able to adequately handle and control what is needed internally. ICS allows for local, State, Tribal, and Federal agencies to partner together under the same management team (FEMA Incident Command System 100, 2009).

With the increased threats presented on September 11, 2001, President Bush also called for a National Incident Management System (NIMS) to identify steps for improved coordination between Federal, State, local, and private sector agencies. This was proposed as an effort to prepare agencies for a unified and appropriate response during a critical situation (FEMA Incident Command System 100, 2009).

Under the ICS system, the vital roles of an Incident Commander and Deputy Incident Commander are established. These positions allow for the responsibility of the incident to be delegated by the appropriate jurisdictional authority. In an active shooter situation, the Incident Commander is usually a representative of the respective jurisdiction in control, however because of the evolving dynamics, other agencies must be considered into command/control philosophy and the deployment of other agency assets.

As an incident increases in size and complexity, additional positions are also created to accomplish required tasks. These positions become a part of the command staff of the incident and are a liaison to the incident commander. Positions such as the public information officer,

safety officer, and liaison officer are included in this command staff. Although these positions are typically developed much later in an incident, it is important to understand the capabilities available as the incident evolves. The public information officer, for example, is responsible for interaction with the public, media, and/or other agencies. This helps to control the amount of information being released without overburdening those involved in the command or line-level of the incident. Similarly, the safety officer monitors safety and briefs the incident commander of other potential hazards, while the liaison officer serves as a point of contact for representatives of other agencies involved (FEMA Incident Command System 200, 2009). As Dorn (2007) suggests the Virginia Tech tragedy reinforces the need for formal training in NIMS. “Campus leaders must remember that if they choose to personally handle media after a major crisis, the load will be so heavy as to neutralize their ability to provide leadership to their organization...a competent second in command should be the incident commander.” (p. 1).

Although the evolution of an incident is dynamic and very encompassing, it is essential that each officer understands the needs of the controlling agency and aids in the deployment and response to an incident. A sound understanding of the ICS system and NIMS will aid the agency and officer in not only high-stress incidents, but also day-to-day operations.

#### *Development of Competent, Experienced, and Well-Trained Line-Level Officers*

Unlike the traditional mindset in law enforcement of leaders and followers, newer strategies are developing and encouraging front-line officers to receive leadership mentoring. This leadership mentoring allows line officers to receive training, knowledge, and to understand organizational goals in order to succeed in a situation where they must “take control.” Although an officer does not deal with an active-shooter on a daily basis, he/she must have the tools and

training in order to succeed. Part of this includes the ability to understand and execute the organizational needs with little or no supervision.

More (1998) evaluates this process in relation to Community-Orientated and Problem-Orientated Policing. The ideas of leadership and management in a traditional mindset of this type of law enforcement are usually based on “response-time policing.” This type of response is usually hierarchical, which has found to limit community policing initiatives and their need to be flexible and based on operational discretion. More calls for organizational leaders to adapt a Total Quality Management (TQM) system, which encourages listening to others, coaching employees, and fostering individual officer’s personal development. By doing this, the agency is develops new employees in the organizational philosophy (1998). The TQM system was originally designed as a business strategy to improve production quality of goods and services. This philosophy has adapted from its formation at the end of World War II to be used with modern policing philosophies where the public is considered the customer. While many professions have adopted this strategy, the overall intent is to provide quality customer products and improved organizational objectives through continuous improvement, employee-customer relationships, and visionary leadership (Mehrotra, 2009). Most organizations implementing this process also base the quality of success on eight main areas. These areas include ethics, integrity, trust, training, teamwork, leadership, recognition, and communication. Perhaps the most important people in this management system are the middle managers and first-line supervisors (Padhi, 2009). While the middle managers are able to create the overall atmosphere and encourage guiding, instructing, and directing, the first-line supervisors are able to influence the overall attitudes and behavior of the line personnel. The goal is to allow decisions that were traditionally made at command level positions to be fostered and become part of the role as line-

level officers (More, 1998). While there is a fine line between fostering line officers and command-and-control, an agency that is able to properly co-mingle both strategies will be able to have proper control while promoting experienced decision making without micro-managing.

Promoting leadership skills is something that has been traditionally reserved for higher-level supervisors within an agency. Meese and Ortmeier argue that these leadership skills need to be recognized and developed in line-level officers. With education and training, line-level officers are able to promote effective judgment on the streets, improve performance, and offer valuable insights to administrators about real-time problems. Furthermore, their ability to use the leadership skills in team activities and to motivate other employees can be very valuable to crime rates and safety in the community (2004). Similarly, many leaders in police organizations are moving toward line-level officers spearheading community-based policing obstacles. In conjunction with this community-based policing responsibility, many agencies are attempting to develop leadership trends to inspire officers to lead the agency in the future. Part of this process has been including line officers in leadership development programs and getting their opinions in planning, critical thinking, and other brain storming sessions (Morreale & Ortmeier, 2004).

Another option for leadership implementation is the idea of power sharing. Although it involves many of the previous ideas noted, it is an option that is primarily driven by the administration (mainly the Chief) of an organization. Encouraging self-leadership in employees however is a conscious and continual effort of administration and line officers. This type of leadership is dependent on delegation of authority, trust, and careful management of organizational goals. Under power sharing leadership, suggestion involvement, job involvement, and high involvement are all considerations that each member of an agency must consider (Wuestewald & Steinheider, 2006).

Moore (2006) identifies many of the issues listed above in an article about Managing Disaster. Moore explains that handling large-scale events and emergencies requires joint training among agencies before an event occurs. This training will help smooth any problems that develop and serve as a basis for future operations. One of the issues discussed is the use of an on-scene Commander. Traditionally, the first officer to arrive on-scene is the person to have command, until another supervisor, officer, or chief arrives to assume command. Although, the most experienced officer should take command, the initial response is vital to controlling the incident. Cross training amongst administrators in fire and police command is suggested to allow for a comprehensive understanding of capabilities. Specifically, it is recommended that ICS and NIMS training are given to line-level officers. This training is important to start at the lowest level and develop with agency guidance. Fire Chief Rick McIntyre from the Jacksonville N.C. Fire Department stated during a 2005 Mock disaster incident: “You need to back the whole train up to basic law enforcement training. How a department orients its new officers is key. Start building incident commanders at the beginning.” (Moore, 2006, p. 8)

It is important to remember that any leadership idea is something that needs to be practiced and is impossible to simply implement on scene. Each proposal is dependent upon regular training, comprehensive understanding of agency goals and leadership techniques, and proactive efforts on behalf of all employees to ensure a successful teamwork environment.

### Training

Properly preparing officers for active shooting incidents is the foundation for success when immediate response is needed. Training officers to react properly in high stress situations,

identifying Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), increasing community awareness, and joint training amongst immediate response jurisdictions are all ways to increase the likelihood of saving lives. Even encouraging officers to train and react appropriately while off-duty may play a crucial role in immediate response and overall lifesaving. As an administrator or trainer in an agency, it is expected that in-depth training in high stress scenarios, active shooter response, off-duty conduct, multi-jurisdictional cooperation, and community involvement, are addressed and trained appropriately.

### *High Stress Training*

Although there are many philosophies about training officers, many resort to the old adage “train as you fight.” The days of simply shooting a qualification course at a range or sitting exclusively in a classroom for training is starting to disappear. Many instructors are now finding the benefits of incorporating scenario-based training with line-level officers. In order to prepare for an active shooter incident, however, this mindset is especially important.

Complacency in training does not prepare an officer for high-risk and high-stress situations.

Moderate stress in training is now showing that officers become better shooters and the introduction of stress in training will reduce the amount of excitement in a stressful incident. While implementing too much stress can hinder performance in training, adding heightened stress can train officers in the basics of breathing, trigger control, and thinking clearly. Knowing how to battle the effects of stress in an active shooter incident is valuable when trying to place accurate and vital shots. Being able to control the affects of the stress and overcome their influence on an officer may be the difference between life and death. Similarly, it is important for officers to train scenarios that are not standard or normal. Incorporating high levels of comprehension, decision-making, and split-second reactions should be focused. Although many

suggestions for shooting drills are recommended, the idea of incorporating stress and supporting proper reaction and recovery to the stress is the intent. (Bertomen, 2007). Steve Walton, a Canadian Police Officer, explains the importance of this high-stress training. When he was involved in his line-of-duty shooting in May 1981, he automatically resorted to his training. Although the situation was resolved in the best way possible, both him and the suspect surviving, the training he had set him up for failure. Up to that point in his training, close quarter combat shooting was conducted at five feet with the officers always firing one round, re-holstering, and waiting for instructions from the range instructor. This pre-established pattern, however, was what Walton actually did immediately after shooting a suspect who came at him with a knife. Walton fired one round, luckily stopping the suspect, re-holstered and waited for the range instructor. Only after Walton's partner arrived on-scene did he realize that the subject still needed to be taken into custody and the suspect still posed a threat. After Walton's experience, he emphasizes to take training seriously and "Train the way you want to fight because you will fight the way you train" (Walton, 2005, pp. 30-31).

Individual hands-on training is also a very important part of quality training for officers and recruits. In the FBI Academy Firearms Course for example, recruits are provided an initial rigorous firearms course incorporating many aspects of shooting. Recruits who do not pass this portion of the course are transferred into a "fast-track" shooting program, which partners an instructor to a recruit for two full weeks. This hands-on shooting allows instructors to mentor, evaluate, and correct discrepancies to increase success. This important training solidifies the need for quality shot placement and decision-making. While the FBI Academy is willing to provide extensive remedial training, they also address the increased liability and need to employ only quality employees who can make effective decisions. Because of this, if the recruit does not

pass the remedial training, they are let go from the Academy. Although it is not necessarily feasible to fire an officer for lack of training, this mindset is an important reminder to instructors about the liability they assume and the significance of not letting an officer “slip through the cracks.” Instructors and administrators need to be given flexibility to identify, address, and train struggling officers as needed (Barbian, 2002).

### *Active Shooter Training*

Many recent training courses are emphasizing the importance of working with teams in an active shooter incident. While the number of the people in the team is dependent upon the number of officers available, there are still some factors that must be considered. Despite the fact that agencies train their employees in many different tactics, each agency must weigh the benefits and consequences when deciding to use different types of equipment, formations, or locations for deployment.

While administrators and instructors need to evaluate what works best for their officers, it is important to remember to use the strengths and prior knowledge that each officer already possesses. The ideas of using cover, concealment, and working in a team environment are engrained in each officer from day one at the academy and any plan implemented should incorporate this mindset. Owens suggests that one way to use these strengths is by teaching officers to work in pairs instead of in a close diamond-type formation. While the diamond-formation is beneficial for a SWAT or tactical team, line-level officers usually are not equipped and are not trained in this manner. Throughout the training courses conducted by Owens, he regularly sees the same problems occurring when officers are taken out of their “comfort zone.” Officers are looking for cover and concealment, an active shooter has a better target to focus on

when responding officers are bunched together, and officers are able to clear rooms with another person while still maintaining a valuable ground position in the hallway. While each agency must decide what type of formation and tactics work best for them, it is important to remember that using tactics officers are familiar with is already a method that is easier to train and implement (Owens, 2007).

While dealing with the threat of an active shooter is the priority, an officer must have tools that he/she can rely on to survive in the event something goes wrong. The answer to this is teaching each officer to understand and use combat medicine. While combat medicine tactics do not generally follow the same principles used for standard first-aid treatment, it is a proven method used by the military for immediate treatment and increased likelihood of survival. Although the implementation of combat medicine requires difficult and challenging decisions, it is crucial for controlling chaos and saving lives. In this approach, there are five (5) primary ways of implementation. These ways are: 1) Provide fire superiority and call for help, 2) Minimize threats and prevent further casualties, 3) Triage out the unsalvageable, 4) Treat life-threatening injuries using cover/concealment, and 5) Evacuate the victims to more advanced medical care. Although each of these steps seem logical and automatic, it is imperative that officers practice and completely understand the difficult choices that must be made (Wipfler, 2005).

Perhaps the most difficult and hardest to train is the mentality to triage out people who cannot be saved. The idea of prioritizing life, especially if someone is close to you is hard to comprehend. This difficult decision must be trained in order to react instinctively. In order to implement combat medicine, Wipfler (2005), suggests a few approaches for immediate treatment after dealing with a hostile threat. Since uncontrolled bleeding from extremities is the No 1

cause, almost 80 percent, of preventable trauma deaths, the traditional first-aid treatment of ABC (airway, breathing, and circulation) has been modified to CAB (circulation, airway, and breathing). Especially for an arterial bleed, it is critical to use a tourniquet as a first step and not a final effort after compression has failed. Although a tourniquet can be administered using nylon or clothing, it is recommended to carry pre-fabricated tourniquets to deploy quickly and remain intact. Similarly, Israeli combat bandages or a military-style combat dressing should also be carried. After the bleeding is stopped, then the airway and breathing must be addressed since the body can usually sustain itself for approximately 2-3 minutes without breathing. Luckily, with advancements in medicine, tourniquets may be applied for several hours without causing serious damage. Most importantly, however is to train, understand, and implement combat medicine rapidly and efficiently to save fellow officers and victims (pp. 52-55). The knowledge of a tactical team medic at the Virginia Tech shooting is a good example of the importance of this knowledge and equipment. When LT. Glass, Officer Combs, and Officer Reese found Kevin Sterne in the building who had been shot twice in the leg, they used knowledge they had and applied a tourniquet using an electrical cord they found. They then moved Sterne into the hallway where Sterne was treated by a tactical team medic who applied an “Israeli” combat dressing which saved Sterne’s life (Giduck & Chi, 2008, p.69).

Training for active shooter events incorporates large amounts of joint cooperation and preparedness. While administrators and instructors from each agency must evaluate what works best for them, some basic familiarization of possible target locations might give law enforcement a vital edge. Through the use of School Resource Officers (SRO), agencies like Jonesboro Police in Arkansas and Greenfield Police in Wisconsin, are continually gathering information about their local schools. While many agencies throughout the United States give their officers

basic information about the schools, Jonesboro and Greenfield Police are going a step further. Emergency information like building layouts, key access, emergency contacts, routes of escape, and maintenance schedules are gathered and given to their officers. Officers are required to walk through each of the schools for familiarization, even if they are primarily assigned a night shift and become familiar with the atmosphere. Instructors have also developed a type of scavenger hunt is used to train officers which ensures that important locations are identified within the building. While schools are often thought of in an active shooter incident, other locations like malls, banks, grocery stores, and other places with large amounts of people should also be researched (Garrett, 2007). Furthermore, officers from other agencies should be welcomed to participate in this type of familiarization training. Since an active shooter incident will more-than-likely encompass numerous agencies, developing standards across the board will ensure continuity. Similarly, all officers involved will be able to identify key points, identify potential hot zones, and learn where staging areas will be created. Access to maps, key routes, and other agency tactics will play a significant role during an active shooting confrontation.

### *Multi-Jurisdictional Combined Training*

While many aspects of training are important, the involvement and use of other agencies is especially significant. Since an active shooter incident will more-than-likely encompass numerous agencies, developing standards across the board will ensure continuity. Similarly, all officers involved will be able to identify key points, identify potential hot zones, and learn where staging areas will be created. Access to maps, key routes, and other agency tactics will play a significant role during an active shooting confrontation.

Although the Virginia Tech shooting had a poor outcome, both the Virginia Tech and Blacksburg Police Department had the ideal setting for a joint training environment and response. Both agencies, especially their tactical teams, had worked so close together that they rarely trained without the other agency present. On the day of the shooting, Cho shot and killed his first two victims in their dorm rooms before moving to another part of campus to continue the killing spree. Upon notification of the first shooting, both agencies activated their tactical teams and had both teams on-campus when the second shooting occurred. In the event that Cho's shooting spree at Norris Hall would have happened first, the amount of time and officers available to engage Cho would have been significantly less. Because of the dorm room shooting, however, both tactical teams were assembled and immediately responded (Giduck & Chi, 2008, p.144).

*Wisconsin State Statute* (2009) 66.0314(b) and 175.46 (2) defines and authorizes the use of mutual aid for Wisconsin law enforcement agencies with an adjacent state or with an adjacent county. It further states that "upon the request of any law enforcement agency, including county law enforcement agencies as provided in s. 59.28(2), the law enforcement personnel of any other law enforcement agency may assist the requesting agency within the latter's jurisdiction." While the statutes authorize officers to act under this scope of authority and assist other law enforcement officers, it is not intended and does not outline the roles of the responding agency or proper procedures to follow. Some University of Wisconsin colleges such as UW-Whitewater, UW-Stout, and UW-Milwaukee have pre-established outlines guiding the role of officers and the use of automatic response to their campuses. UW-Whitewater, for example, has established the Jefferson County Mutual Assistance Response Plan (JMARP), which outlines automatic response criteria to assist campus officers. UW-Milwaukee also has a similar program called

Suburban Mutual Assistance Response Teams (S.M.A.R.T.) in order to provide extra sworn personnel, equipment, and to have an organized response by area agencies. While these programs are very beneficial and are a great format to follow in these areas, many other campuses throughout the state do not have such pre-established agreements. Many of the four-year University of Wisconsin departments do not have defined mutual aid agreements and several of the chiefs surveyed, by the President's Commission in the wake of the Virginia Tech incident, believe that Wisconsin Statutes covering mutual aid response are sufficient. While no formal agreements are established, all UW agencies stated that they have informally requested assistance from local agencies (President's Commission on University Security, 2007).

Joint training in conjunction with an Explosive Ordinance Disposal unit could also prepare an officer for a potential Improvised Explosive Device (IED) detonation. The use of an IED at an abortion clinic on January 16, 1997, by Eric Robert Rudolph, later leads to a secondary explosion aimed at law enforcement and rescue personnel responding (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2009). Typically, an IED is composed of three main components consisting of the main charge, initiating system, and casing. While the main charge is primarily the explosive in the IED and the initiating system is mostly the switch, initiator, and power source, often the casing will cause any fragmentation. While there are many methods to initiate the detonation, a popular method has become using a cellular telephone or other timed device. This is especially dangerous for emergency responders and law enforcement since detonations may be configured to target those trying to render aid. While it is not appropriate for an officer to handle any type of IED without proper training, being able to identify a possible IED, take preventative action and cordon off the area could save countless lives (Improvised Explosive Device Defeat, 2005). Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, for example, used numerous IEDs on their attack of Columbine

High School on April 20, 1999. Harris and Klebold had IEDs placed outside the school as diversions for responding officers, but perhaps the most shocking of the IEDs crafted came in two duffle bags that Harris and Dylan brought into school. These two duffle bags were placed among other backpacks in the school lunch area and contained 20-pound propane bombs set to explode during the school lunch. Each bomb was set to explode at 11:17 A.M., a time when the largest amount of students would be in the cafeteria area. If these bombs would have exploded, a majority of the students in this portion of the school would have been killed (CNN Columbine High School Shootings, 2000).

### *Off-duty Concealed Carry*

Training for an incident off-duty is just as important as training for one on-duty. Even if an officer does not carry his/her firearm, he/she will need to justify why they did or did not act if a crisis event would occur. Bertomen, suggests that drawing a weapon and engaging a threat off-duty is very different from being in uniform. Factors that must be considered are what tools are available, not having a bullet-resistant garment available, and properly identifying yourself to the public and other responding officers. Even the ability to draw a weapon may be hindered by clothing or an un-trained holster (2006).

There are many opinions whether an officer should carry a firearm while off-duty. Some officers have the outlook that when they are off-duty they do not want anything to do with work related activities. Other officers carry concealed for protection or because they feel they may need to react instantly. In the city of New York, eighteen (18) percent of officer shootings happened to off-duty officers resulting in 28 of the total 156 shootings. Of these 28 incidents,

two incidents documented in the report involved the officers shooting attackers after a victim was gunned down in front of them. A third incident documented, occurred when an off-duty police officer was sitting at a traffic light and two armed subjects attempted to hijack his vehicle after robbing a bank (Hurley, 2006).

The issue of support from the officer's agency also has variations. While some agencies require that an officer carry off-duty when able, other agencies disagree. Although an agency can recommend or discourage officers from carrying, many states' laws allow an officer to carry concealed. Smith suggests that no matter what standpoint the officer or agency has, there is little dispute that law enforcement is a 24/7 occupation. Local residents often know where the police officer lives and it is not unusual to recognize someone who you dealt with on-duty while at the grocery store or when spending time with family. Considering that fourteen (14) percent of police officer murders occur off duty, many officers are carrying concealed more frequently (2006).

Mroz recommends that an officer must consider how to carry a weapon and evaluate what weapon is appropriate for them. Balancing between the need to deploy a weapon quickly and not appearing on-duty can be difficult to accomplish (2007). Since an officer is not wearing their duty belt, the standard tools available are different. Because of this, preparation is key and items like spare ammunition, handcuffs, police identification, and a cell phone are vital. Factors like the officer's mindset, training, tactics, skills, and clothing are all considerations that must be weighed (Boyle, 2007).

Ogden Master Police Officer Kenneth Hammond, was required to take enforcement action off-duty. On February 19, 2007, while out with his pregnant wife for dinner, active

shooter 18 year-old Sulejman Talovic entered Trolley Square Mall in Salt Lake City, Utah. As Hammond walked into the mall, he heard a loud popping sound and saw numerous people badly injured lying on the floor. As he looked down on the scene, he saw a man walk out of the store with a shotgun and immediately Hammond drew his weapon. Hammond moved from the upper level to the main floor and began engaging the suspect, while drawing the suspect's fire. Hammond restricted further movement of Talovic and held him at bay until Sergeant Oblad and other officers from the Salt Lake City Police Department arrived. The incident was resolved shortly thereafter when SWAT entered the building and engaged Talovic, killing him. While Hammond was not required to carry off-duty, the decision to carry his weapon and the use of sound tactics saved lives by drawing the suspect's fire and pinning Talovic to one area of the mall (Fretz, 2007).

### *Community Involvement*

Incorporating training for local community leaders is key for improving interaction between law enforcement and the communities they serve. While the primary focus on school safety and security has gotten better, there are still many areas that could be improved. Recently, Campus Safety Magazine conducted a survey of 435 people to evaluate their school's progress since the Columbine incident. Of those surveyed seventy-seven percent of respondents felt schools information sharing with law enforcement had improved. Forty-one percent, however, felt that training for non-sworn faculty is needed to improve safety and security. Additionally, thirty-one percent felt that the officers at their school needed more training and the school needed to install or upgrade access control (Campus Safety Magazine, 2009, pp.10-14). In a

survey of Mall security directors, on the other hand, seventy-three percent stated they had policy protocols in place for emergency response. While this is a significant number to have written protocols, only thirty percent reported rehearsing the emergency protocols established. Additionally, only fifteen of the state officials sampled reported joint training exercises with police (Davis, 2008, p.15).

In an effort to educate citizens about law enforcement response at an active shooter event, The Department of Homeland Security has created a general response guide with basic information about what to expect as the incident progresses. This guide suggests doing five main things to be prepared for such a situation. These five practices include:

1) Be aware of your environment and any possible dangers. 2) Take note of the two nearest exits in any facility you visit. 3) If you are in an office, stay there and secure the door. 4) If in a hallway, get to a room and secure the door. 5) As a last resort, attempt to take the active shooter down. This is primarily for situations when they are at close range and fleeing is not an option. As always, calling 911 and getting help is also crucial. This guide also discusses items to include in an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) and what law enforcement will do upon arriving at the scene. This guide is not intended to have people continually live in fear, but rather to have options available if they find themselves in this predicament (United States Department of Homeland Security, 2008).

Law enforcement can do its share to improve community involvement and activities, however many aspects of safety and security are dependent upon organizations preparing properly. While teaching the basics of active shooter response is important, many schools are struggling with funding, keeping safety a priority, and having a single person make important

decisions of organizational safety. Of faculty in grades K-12 surveyed, sixty-nine percent said funding for security is an issue, additionally, forty-eight percent of faculty felt that their school administration is naive concerning safety (Gray, 2009). While efforts of inter-agency coordination is continually stressed among federal, state, and local law enforcement with terrorist acts, this same coordination should be used between law enforcement and the communities they serve. Simply taking time to “sit down and work out emergency preparedness plans, on paper, needs to be done now,” it is up to public officials and schools to develop these plans cooperatively (Mertens, 2007, p.77).

Most schools are developing lock-down type policies to control who enters and exits a room if there is a potential threat in the school. While the actual lock-down procedure is often a basic training skill for teachers, similar to a fire drill, the actual implementation during a crisis is very different. Communication among schools and law enforcement is a large hurdle. Redundancy in notification systems allows higher chances of effective lock-downs and more time to secure rooms and students. Suggestions about involving students in a practice lock-down is also encouraged, however school staff must ensure that specific techniques about an actual lock-down not be used until an emergency would occur (Dorn, 2008). Unlike a standard fire drill, the “all-clear” is not something that can be simply broadcasted over a loud speaker. The U.S. Department of Education recently featured a school district implementing a visual indicator to evacuate locked down rooms. In this method, teachers in the room slide color-coded cards under the door of the room to give law enforcement an indication of the status in the room. While this is not a foolproof method, it gives the officers who are clearing the room immediate identification to the room’s status while advancing towards a hostile threat. In this example, a blue card is slid under the door as an indication that the room is currently secured. In the event

the room is not secured, however, either a different color card or no card is presented. While this card is seemingly meaningless to someone else walking in the hallway, it gives a low-tech option to check the status of students. On the same note, once the officers have deemed it clear to evacuate the room, a pre-established color card giving the “all-clear” is slid under the door by law enforcement. At this same moment, identification is provided by the evacuating officer to validate the door may be opened (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

### Agency Preparation and Outfitting

A major goal of law enforcement is the reduction and control of crime and hostile acts in a community. While personnel, budgets, and training all influence the effectiveness of each department’s success, most agencies try to develop new and productive ways to increase safety. The use of pre-established staging locations, new technology and state of the art tools are likely to give law enforcement agencies an important edge in their response to and preparation for an active shooter event.

### *Pre-established Staging Locations*

After the initial shooting at West Ambler Johnston hall, The Virginia Tech Police Department deployed officers to the scene. Within minutes, the VTPD and Blacksburg PD gathered and deployed their SWAT (ERT) teams in response to the incident. Because of their history of conducting regular training events and jointly sharing resources, the officers responded with a solid foundation of cooperation and shared knowledge. As the incident evolved and proper command and control was established, additional manpower was used to secure the scene,

establish a perimeter, and clear other areas. While these activities occurred, previous training experience in conjunction with the established incident command on-scene, gave emergency medical services (EMS) an established location to stage for response. This response allowed numerous area ambulance services to arrive on-scene and evacuate people as needed (Mass Shootings at Virginia Tech, 2007). Even though the end result in the Virginia Tech incident, was a tragedy, the previous training and preparation leading up to the main shooting at Norris Hall, was essential in providing a timely response to the threat and treating victims.

Staging for events, through training and cooperative planning, is good for agencies, staging equipment before an incident occurs is important for officer preparedness too. As an asset to any emergency response, many agencies are now requiring SWAT officers to take their equipment with them while working a normal shift. This tactic helps to rapidly deploy vital tools that would normally not be available for countless minutes. Trends in active shooter incidents show that long-guns are a popular weapon of choice and pose a large threat to law enforcement. In order to combat this, departments are deploying rifles in squads of line-level officers. This allows the first few officers on-scene to have weapons that can compare to those they are facing. Because new rifles for every squad and officer are expensive, many agencies try to place the rifles logically for deployment. Other agencies allow officers to purchase personal weapons, according to agency criteria to use on duty. This option limits what type of weapons the officer may buy, but it allows an officer to customize and sight in their weapon as they see fit. Some agencies are also electing to equip supervisor vehicles with extra helmets, tactical vests, and additional weaponry for deployment (Garrett, 2007). While this does not provide the officer immediately with the tools they need, it is another option for rapidly deploying equipment that is not normally able to be on-scene during the first few crucial minutes.

## *Implementing New Technology*

Lack of communication at an incident has the potential to bring multiple agencies to their knees. The EMS communication system in the Virginia Tech incident, for example, used amongst responding units was split into four different frequencies. Additionally, confusion over if EMS had established their ICS system and what frequency they were on, added more disorder to the already complex incident (Mass Shootings as Virginia Tech, 2007). According to the U.S. Department of Justice featured in a report by the U.S. Department of Education (2007), many jurisdictions are under the impression that an 800 MHz radio system solves communication problems. This is not true as radio programming, different brands, and other compatibility issues can still prevent multiple agencies from communicating. During an emergency management incident, law enforcement, fire departments, EMS, SWAT, schools, and other organizations need to communicate appropriately and effectively. “Multiagency interoperability communication is key to efficient communication...” (p. 10).

While communication by radio is still the primary method of interfacing with other agencies, many agencies are now looking toward computer technology to assist them. In Broward County, for example, the inability to properly communicate with and dispatch over 22 municipalities while maintaining real-time location of assets was a persistent problem. Because of this, new software developed by Motorola, allows the Sheriff’s department to dispatch and send the closest unit to a crisis. The Sheriff’s department has cut response time dramatically because of its ability to send units that are close regardless of jurisdictional boundaries. Additionally, this system was able to link nine different computer-aided-dispatch systems and allow inter-agency cooperation when dealing with an incident (Law and Order, 2004). This inter-agency interface is especially important when dealing with an active shooter. Being able to

broadcast to and send units that will respond fastest are most likely to have the best chance of stopping the threat. Furthermore, coordinating fire and EMS services to respond based on availability and proximity gives those that are injured an increased chance of survival and faster transport to an area hospital.

Evaluating a scene and getting real-time data about a building layout is a unique tool that could be especially important if an active shooter incident would turn into a hostage situation. A new computer program entitled Rapid Responder is doing this. In cooperation with area businesses and schools, the program allows officers to see floor plans of a building with accurate pictures of rooms. An officer with this prior knowledge has a level playing field when facing an active gunman. Simply being able to identify hot zones, hiding spots, and areas of increased threats could mean the difference between life and death. Furthermore, if an officer is able to identify where an active shooter is located, additional officers can be deployed to cordon off hostile areas. Using this program, or a similar one, allows officers to deploy rapidly and control aspects of the scene like utility shutoffs. The program is also versatile enough to be downloaded onto squad laptops for easy accessibility by those responding (Tech Beat, 2008). Although this program would be difficult to use if an officer was first on-scene, backup officers, SWAT teams, and any emergency units supporting the event response would benefit.

### *Equipping Officers with Proper Tools*

Budget is always a problem when talking about equipping officers and providing rapid response. Even though budget is a problem, being able to effectively decide how money is spent can provide officers valuable gear for active shooter incidents and other incidents with an

increased threat. While there is always a large gamut of new items to purchase, a few products would be especially beneficial in an active shooter environment. Tools such as ballistic shields, shooter identification kits, and system called Shot Spotter give officers a valuable edge in combating terror in a community.

Perhaps two of the best defenses in combating an active shooter are preparation and equipment. While many colleges and agencies throughout the United States are prepared and armed appropriately, there are a few colleges, such as UW-River Falls and UW-Stevens Point that are not adequately trained or prepared for an active shooter incident. Since these two Universities are dependent upon local jurisdictions for police coverage, their independent ability to stop an active shooter is not existent. Both River Falls and Stevens Point, along with other Universities throughout the United States, rely on security guards for campus protection. A moderate amount of controversy has delayed other UW campuses from having their officers armed in the past. After the Virginia Tech Incident, the President's Commission on University Security (2007) recommended that "all UW institutions provide certified police officers responsible for law enforcement functions with necessary lethal, as well as less-lethal and non-lethal, arming options" (p. 24). The process of hiring and equipping certified law enforcement officers is a crucial step towards preparedness and intervention in a campus environment.

For agencies that have sworn and armed personnel, possibly the best defense against an active shooter is the use cover and concealment methods. Arguably, one of the best methods to maintain effective cover is to bring "cover" with you. Although the use of a ballistic shield provides many obvious benefits to include personal and team protection, the costs associated with a shield along with its bulk can hinder an officer wanting to carry it in their squad. Some ballistic shields, while they provide more protection, are very heavy pieces of equipment and

require extensive training, handling, and muscle strength to use. Some agencies have resorted to a ballistic blanket for more versatile protection with easier deployment (Bertomen, 2007). While this blanket is very similar to a bullet resistant vest that an officer would wear, it offers a large surface area to cover against smaller caliber rounds. Unfortunately, with the lighter nature of the blanket and easier storage, comes the decreased ability to stop higher power weapons. Perhaps one of the most promising ballistic blankets currently on the market is a product entitled the ballistic transformer or otherwise known as the Multi-Functional Armor Blanket (MFAB). Originally manufactured to line the cage inside of a squad, this ballistic blanket can be removed from the cruiser and deployed whenever and wherever it is needed. This specific blanket is a two-foot by four-foot sheet of ballistic protection that is rated at a IIIA threat level. The flexibility of the material allows for easy storage, quick deployment, and immediate protection during an incident. Additionally, this blanket also meets the military's fragmentation standards for bomb blankets. Since this is not an all-encompassing tool, officers need to take additional considerations if large IEDs are used or if the shooter possesses a high-powered rifle (Basich, 2009).

Separating victims from shooters can be difficult especially if the active shooter tries to leave the incident together with those being evacuated. This is particularly relevant if there are multiple subjects involved and the shooter's identity remains in question. Being able to quickly distinguish potential involvement could prevent a shooter from leaving the scene. One potential way to distinguish this is to scan a person for the presence of gunpowder residue. An instant shooter identification kit would be able to accomplish this task within about 45 to 60 seconds. Unlike previous testing abilities, a new portable field test kit is available for testing suspects at a scene. Simply swabbing a person's hands, clothes, belt, or shoes allows officers to scan multiple

subjects within a few minutes and obtain instantaneous results. With a 90% accuracy rating, the swab changes color to show the positive test result if contact was made with a gunpowder residue. Further tests with similar technology are also being tested on explosive residues to indicate contact with both explosives and gunpowder residue (Nielsen, 2004). Although this is not a foolproof method, it is another instant tool for law enforcement to use if the shooter attempts to leave the scene.

Perhaps one of the most promising advances in instant shooter technology is a system called Shot Spotter. This system, already deployed in Beloit, WI and Mountain View, CA, has an increased response time for officers and improved community safety. When a gunshot or other similar explosion is fired within a two-mile radius, shot spotter is able to sense it, and pinpoint it to within feet of its origin. Through the use of acoustic sensors, the sound of the gunshot is triangulated and alerts are sent immediately to the dispatch center. Similar technology has been used in Iraq and Afghanistan to identify distance and direction to a hostile threat. With the versatility of being able to have a permanent mount on a building or a mobile mount on a vehicle, the system can be adapted to benefit the users. For a school or mall setting, this system gives law enforcement an immediate indication of gunfire and officers are able to respond to the area rapidly. Besides initially identifying the location hostile, this system further allows officers to potentially track a threat as he/she progresses across a campus or mall area. The advancements in this technology also have the ability to distinguish a car backfire and a firework from a possible gunshot. While the sound should still be verified, it allows for officers to prioritize calls based on the type of sound heard (Shot Spotter, 2009).

While there are many different tools and technologies becoming available every day, agency instructors and administrators need to keep thinking of different ways to keep their

officers safe. Being properly equipped for an active shooter is almost impossible, yet maintaining preparedness and a sound knowledge base gives an officer the best chance of survival for themselves and innocent victims. Proactive thinking, implementation, and training to avoid complacency will keep officers as safe as reasonably possible.

### **Section III. Recommendations**

Law enforcement is expected to take immediate tactical response when responding to an active shooter. While there are many different ways for an agency to execute their response, agencies should remember that preparation is key. Through the implementation of specific and organized agency policy and joint training with area agencies, administrators and instructors have the best likelihood to instill leadership skills, train and properly equip officers.

#### *Agency Policy Considerations*

Through the use of agency policies, line-level officers should be supported by the implementation of the Incident Command System, the establishment of mutual aid agreements, and guidance for on-scene action. The intent of a policy is to state how an agency meets goals and accomplishes its mission while providing consistence throughout (Carpenter, 2000). While agency policy is often a general format providing broad guidance for personnel activities, certain elements must be included in this guidance. For example, the city of Minneapolis, Minnesota has many policies covering their execution of a mutual aid call in their area. Their policy specifically outlines who can approve a mutual aid request and what information is needed before assets will be granted. The policy also outlines liability and costs associated with any request once it is granted (City of Minneapolis, 2009). While many details are provided in regards to mutual aid, their policy fails to cover special circumstances needed for immediate response to an active shooter. This immediate response, although rare, requires immediate consideration and is hindered by the need for approval from one of the four people outlined in

the policy. This policy also fails to cover outside agencies that may respond to the Minneapolis jurisdiction and how city officers will work cooperatively with them.

Mitchell, South Dakota Police Division Policy, specifically recognizes that other agencies will work concurrently within their jurisdiction. Mitchell officers, according to policy, are allowed to assist these agencies and to resolve any conflict in a professional matter. In the event officers need to assist outside agencies, an inter-agency and mutual aid agreement is outlined allowing their officers to work with county, state, and federal agencies. The agency further assumes responsibility for communications, logistics, and manpower needed to support law enforcement functions (Mitchell Police Division, 2009).

Each of the policies above covers basic measures of mutual aid and the role of officers involved. The Lamoille County Police mutual aid agreement, however, goes one-step beyond this normal scope by specifically outlining the actions expected under the ICS system. When Lamoille County officers are used under the mutual aid pact, their policy states that the requesting agency will establish an Incident Command System and the Incident Commander will establish staging areas accordingly. At an emergency scene, Lamoille County policy states that orders will be followed under the direction of the Incident Commander and all use of force decisions shall be based on the originating department's policies and procedures (Lamoille County Police Agencies, 2009). By specifically outlining the use of the ICS system in major events, the agency immediately identifies the role of the on-scene commander and it allows officers to adopt an integrated organizational structure to match problems and demands of an incident(s) without restrictions of jurisdictional boundaries (FEMA Incident Command System 100, 2009). Although, the most experienced officer should take command, the initial response is

vital to controlling the incident and because of this ICS and NIMS training need to be given to line-level officers (Moore, 2006).

The overall goal of a policy is to create consistency among employees, establish performance standards, identify responsibilities, outline acceptable procedures to follow, and act as a communication tool (Carpenter, 2000). Effective policy creation requires careful planning and consideration. Each policy should include definitions, chain of command, operational guidelines, and considerations of civil liability. Definitions allow officers to understand the scope of the policy, and the agency's intent. Operational guidelines provide direction for officers to follow in the line-of-duty. These guidelines should be consistent with state laws and are not intended to limit the typical discretion of officers. Adding chain of command to a policy, establishes a framework for the organization to follow. Chain of command details should also highlight key players in the policy's implementation. Lastly, the policy should direct officer actions in the scope of the agency's enforcement and, in turn limit the officers' civil liability (Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police, 2007). This allows officers to act under state law and agency policy to guide their enforcement and discretion in both criminal and civil acts.

Effective written policy should also be based on facts and knowledge obtained from a reliable source. Because of this, referencing academic research journals, training plans, other policies and procedures, and even trade magazines can provide effective insight to the policy's intent (Orrick, 2004).

Specific outlines of agency roles, and the roles of the units providing mutual aid, help to identify precise needs. While each of the policies listed earlier cover mutual aid and identifies some of the restrictions, the policies fail to outline the severity of an active shooter incident and

the immediate need for support. This is not as large of a factor for a city with many officers, however many rural communities are dependent upon other agencies for backup. As stated earlier, joint training utilized between the Blacksburg Police and the Virginia Tech Campus Police prior to the incident was commonplace. Personnel, equipment, and other resources were jointly shared and practiced. Because of this joint cooperation and previous working knowledge, tactical teams were already prepared and on-scene when the Norris Hall shootings began (Giduck & Chi, 2008). While the formality of asking for mutual aid is generally needed, the requirement for immediate assistance in an active shooter situation is vital. Because of this, it would be beneficial to include special circumstances in a mutual aid policy to indicate special circumstances of immediate response if a life saving incident is developing. The Wisconsin Law Enforcement Accreditation Group specifically recommends forming written agreements among law enforcement agencies. They recommend reviewing mutual aid agreements to promote efficiency, increase safety, and establish protocols for enforcement action. Additionally, the Presidents Commission on University Security (2007) recommends, “that UW institutions work collaboratively with local law enforcement agencies to establish agreements for assistance and service that clearly define responsibilities” (p. 11). This type of agreement is especially important to some colleges in the University of Wisconsin System such as UW-River Falls and UW-Superior who have security officers rather than sworn officers patrolling their campus.

#### *Joint Active Shooter Task Force*

With the implementation of a joint task force within a set geographic area, agencies are able to organize training, align response procedures, create joint mutual aid policies, and pre-plan response strategies for potential local targets.

While there are multiple benefits to creating a Joint Task Force amongst agencies, one important aspect is the joint implementation and review of current agency policy. It is recommended that a policy committee be formed to critique and evaluate policy, and similarly a Joint Task Force would be able to make recommendations and evaluate needs among many agencies cooperatively (Orrick, 2004). Policies are usually approved by a joint committee. It is important that this committee consider the needs of all agencies within a geographic area. Once decisions are made, policies should be implemented jointly by all affected agencies.

In addition to administrators implementing proactive policy, the formation of a Joint Active-Shooter Task Force has enormous potential. In a single county, an agency is often expected to work with many other entities of law enforcement. While providing intra-agency active-shooter training is important, it is very likely that at a major shooting incident officers from outside jurisdictions will be arriving on-scene. This Joint Active-Shooter Task Force allows for all agencies within a general geographic area to develop tactics, hold joint training sessions, and understand resources that will be available upon arrival. Additionally, the ability to share essential intelligence of potential threats or trends in their community could influence the response of each agency. The School Resources Officers in Jonesboro, Arkansas and Greenfield, Wisconsin, for instance, assist their agencies with in-house training. A school resource officer's knowledge of school layouts would be especially beneficial to this type of task force. Since many agencies are likely to respond to an active shooter, their first-hand training and knowledge is able to give valuable insight to other agencies. These officers are also able to give updates on the dynamics of the school, potential threats, and identify danger zones that responders should be concerned with (Garrett, 2007). Similarly, the incorporation of key community leaders is also important. As stated earlier, as much as seventy-seven percent of respondents surveyed felt that

information sharing with law enforcement needed to be improved upon. Learning the dynamics of the school, mall, or other building may be crucial during an incident and the first hand knowledge that the community can give may provide law enforcement valuable intelligence (Campus Safety Magazine, 2009).

Along with area agencies that will be responding, incorporating Explosive Ordinance Disposal (EOD) Units in this training is valuable. EOD experts have the ability to give officers basic knowledge of hazards, capabilities, and response times during an incident. Part of this joint training needs to cover unified tactical areas and improvised explosive devices (IED) to establish continuity amongst responding agencies. By understanding how an IED works, indicators to watch for, and standoff zones, officers will be able to make instant on-scene decisions when deploying in a hostile environment (Improvised Explosive Device Defeat, 2005). This joint training is especially relevant to prevent further injuries from those in an area, but also in situations like the abortion clinic bombing where emergency personnel were specifically targeted (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2009).

Implementation of a joint task force requires equal, proactive support from all those participating. The U.S. Marshals and Federal Bureau of Investigation have proven that a joint task force can be very productive. In the Joint Regional Fugitive Task Force, consisting of over 600 investigators and 200 participating agencies, the U.S. Marshals focused on wanted suspects. In 2009, this task force was able to apprehend 37,374 violent fugitive felons consisting of 1,769 people wanted for homicide. Also, 13,125 people arrested were wanted for narcotics violations, 2,758 for weapon offenses, and 2,623 for sexual offenses. The tremendous success of this task force lead to a National Award from the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association for group achievement (Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, 2009). The Federal Bureau

of Investigation has also implemented numerous gang task forces throughout large U.S. cities in an effort to crack down on gang related crime. In 11 different cities, task forces focused on certain crime linked gangs and built cases on their actions. In Denver, for example, the Rock Mountain Safe Streets Task force in conjunction with seven different agencies, executed 56 search warrants resulting in 47 indictments and the seizure of 26 firearms and two pipe bombs. A second task force North Las Vegas had similar results after investigating a gang war between the Rolling 60s Crips and the Gearson Park Kingsmen. This case resulted in 41 total arrests, 37 indictments, and a drop in violent crime of about twenty percent (Gang Success Stories, 2009). While an active-shooter task force is primarily focused on preparing for a possible event, the cooperation and intelligence sharing provides significant progress towards the prevention of other crimes. These task force events prove that planning, investigation, along with good intelligence and response can make communities safer.

Working in conjunction with other agencies also allows administrators to identify problems that may arise in the process of working together. Some campuses in the University of Wisconsin system have already taken this initial step. Although the task force is not specifically for active shooters, their proactive steps to establish joint mutual aid policies sets an example for other college and high school systems. The Jefferson County Mutual Aid Response Plan (JMARP) and the Suburban Mutual Aid Response Teams (S.M.A.R.T) are just two examples of task forces being developed in Wisconsin. Although detailed guidance is still needed, their mutual aid and joint cooperation groups allow for extra personnel and equipment to be immediately dispatched within an organized response effort (President's Commission on University Security, 2007).

Communication is a fundamental item in officer safety. Police agencies have identified some of the problems that they are struggling with. UW-Platteville and UW-Milwaukee, for example, have reported communication shortfalls between the University, city and county agencies. This interoperability has left University officers in a position where they are not able to talk directly to road officers and are unable to monitor incidents as they occur. Other UW schools also report that radio communication is not accessible on certain parts of the campus (President's Commission on University Security, 2007). While improving radio communication is primarily a university problem to resolve, being able to establish short-term fixes to bridge the communication gap is critical. A few recommendations after the Columbine High School incident covered some of the communications issues that were discovered. The Columbine Review Commission recommended to the Governor that law enforcement coordinate their communication systems with other agencies that would have the potential to respond. They also suggested that repeaters be installed in buildings where sending or receiving radio traffic is difficult. As a part of this interoperability problem, the use of a statewide-truncated system with all agencies having the same frequencies was recommended to the State of Colorado (Johnson, 2002). Improved verbal communication along with the implementation of a Shot Spotter system and upgraded dispatching abilities is able to link on-scene resources with backup in close proximity. Not only are officers dispatched faster, but response times for EMS and fire are cut (Law and Order, 2004). While the cost for implementing this system is high, the benefit of being able to productively work when lives are on the line is invaluable. This joint task force would have the ability to brainstorm, implement, and practice ways to overcome communication loss. The Joint Interagency Task Force-South (JIATF-S) is a good example of overcoming communication problems. In an effort to stop the movements, shipments, and growing of

narcotics, a joint network of law enforcement, intelligence, and the military came together to overcome a common problem. The use of the military's equipment, in conjunction with the arrest authority and enforcement ability of law enforcement, made for a unique and effective entity to stop drug traffickers. The JIATF-S ability to continually gather intelligence, deploy assets, and maintain 24 hours/365 day coverage is priceless (Yeatman, 2006). While an Active-Shooter Task force will not be at this scale, the same methods of inter-agency communication and cooperation can still be implemented to fit each community's need.

With the proper implementation of a joint task force, agencies will have the ability to rehearse events, strategize about implementing Incident Command, and identify problems that will hinder response efforts before a tragedy occurs. One suggestion for starting this task force is to jointly identify areas that are potential targets for a mass shooting event. Places like high-profile businesses, elementary and high schools, and colleges or universities in the area should be considered (Vernon, 2008).

## **Section IV. Conclusion**

While an officer cannot completely prepare for what they will see or need to do during an active shooter incident, planning and training officers allows them to make instant and effective decisions. Instilling fundamentals of the incident command system and line-level leadership will empower employees to be confident during chaos. Furthermore, the use of an on-scene commander will not only keep administrators informed about what is happening, but it will allow valuable assets and backup to support the incident properly. Through preparation of both on-duty and off-duty tactics, officers will be able to use useful training efforts and deploy resources properly. By simply providing realistic scenario training and implementing logical techniques and tools that give officers more options during an incident, deployment and resolution will be significantly better than being caught unprepared. More importantly are the benefits of multi-jurisdictional training, information sharing, and cooperation that a joint task force can provide.

By jointly sharing training tasks, inter-agency training, and important tools, agencies will be able to communicate better and establish staging locations to properly handle the incident. Especially with a pre-established mutual aid agreement and policies covering important aspects of cooperation that are needed, an agency will be able to immediately ascertain what resources are available to respond. While an incident on this massive scale does not happen often, the panic and impact that it provides leaves emotional scars on society for many years. As administrators and instructors, officers are dependent upon quality leadership, training, and tools to succeed in a hostile environment.

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