



Are Employers Acting on What They Learn from Mass Shootings

Insights

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After every public shooting, we discuss how to prevent and better respond to the next active shooter, but each subsequent shooting event suggests we are not acting upon knowledge gained.

Wrestling with Mental Health and Gun Possession

On a policy level, if this shooter does turn out to be acting based on mental illness, we must consider steps to limit the possession of guns by individuals suffering from mental illness. I am a gun owner and I am very protective of individual privacy rights, but many of the mass shooters were known to suffer meaningful and often violent mental health issues, and yet were permitted to continue to own guns. California implemented a law last year which created a process for concerned family members or other individuals to approach a judge to obtain a temporary order until further investigation was carried out. Other states have somewhat similar laws, but only law enforcement officials can implement the process.

There are obviously risks in developing such legal processes. I've written a great deal about the need to eliminate the stigma in the workplace for individuals suffering from depression and other mental and emotional issues. Few of these individuals present a threat to others, and are suffering from an illness, which should be treated with no more stigma than any other health challenge. Employers should encourage them to seek help.

There are other concerns. Some individuals might use such laws as a way to hurt someone's reputation. Angry individuals in marital and custody disputes might misuse such laws as a club. Some might view any interest in firearms or hunting to suggest a mental illness. But we deal with balancing issues in legislation every day.

Safety at Work/Safety at Home!

Many employers are devising on programs to encourage workers to act safely at home. Bad judgment doesn't start or stop at work, and we can only create a true safety mentality by making it a part of life. Employers are working to inculcate safe habits and activities ranging from driving to home repairs to hanging Christmas lights. Train employees to avoid violence away from work, including while travelling. Maybe even provide basic self-defense learning opportunities. [*EHS Today*](#) [Article](#).

Teach and Reteach Employees to Continuously Practice “*Situational Awareness*.”

Look for ways to teach employees to be situationally aware at work, and then expand to outside scenarios. I am sure that once the full details of the Ft. Lauderdale shooting are released, we will learn that many of the victims lay on the floor or stood still in shock, which made them easy targets for a methodical shooter. Uninformed reflex action is often wrong.

My past experience in Full Contact fighting, especially with younger quicker opponents, made me very aware of my environment, and that alertness has assisted me in driving on Atlanta interstates and in avoiding unsafe situations.

One will not develop situational awareness solely by watching a ***Run Hide Fight*** video or an attending an occasional active shooter class. Investigate simple exercises and training routines which might remind individuals of how to *continuously* evaluate everyday situations and remain alert. Such a mindset easily transfers over to workplace behavior. Expand your training on “Distracted Drivers,” Avoiding Struck-bys, and PIT training. And if you are in healthcare, especially home health occupations, provide detailed training on how to be sensitive to risk. Have run ... use VR and online gaming!

I've linked to a post by Active Response Training as an example of down in the dirt tips for surviving an airport shooter: [How Not to Get Killed in an Airport. Interesting Ted Talk on staying Calm When Stressed.](#)

Include Basic Trauma Instruction and Materials in Your First Aid Efforts.

We will probably soon see FEMA, DHS, and other Federal groups endorse enhanced first aid training and materials for trauma response. About 80% of mass shooting victims would've had a chance of surviving had someone on site had basic training in trauma response and available materials.

One can obtain a basic trauma kit for about \$50 to \$200 at an REI or online at multiple sites. Here's [one at Amazon](#) for \$54, although it might not be adequate for your needs. I keep a basic trauma pack in my vehicle first aid kit. Every employer should consider adding such a package to at least some of its first aid kits.

Please take the time to go to DHS' [Stop the Bleed](#) site.

First Aid Training is an Opportunity, Not a Burden.

Instead of viewing first aid training as a burdensome obligation, view first aid training as a meaningful opportunity to limit the severity of workplace injuries, as well as create more of a sense of community and team. [OSHA interprets its First Aid standard 1910.151 to require an employer to provide first aid training if emergency response will take more than three to four minutes depending on the industry setting.](#)

- [OSHA Medical and First Aid page.](#)

Most employers provide some First Aid training. Why not offer to at least some interested employees, more than the usual first aid and CPR course? A wide range of training is available ... and useful.

When one goes on the two week Boy Scout Philmont high adventure backpacking trip, at least one member of the group must undergo the full one or two weekend Wilderness First Aid training. The Wilderness First Aid training is premised on the fact that the group may be unable to get to a medical provider for several days. I valued my course experience and have used it in many context.

There are obviously many other steps employer can take and we regularly write about developing a full program to respond to workplace violence, including active shooters, along with other emergencies. As an example, have you recently looked at your Employee Action Plan (EAP) and related training and procedures? [Recent FP Post on Workplace Violence planning.](#)

Learn from each incident ... and act.

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