

Safety Guidelines for Active Shooter Situations

I. Introduction

An active shooter is one actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a populated area; in most cases, active shooters use a firearm and there is no pattern or method to their victim selection. These situations are dynamic and evolve rapidly, demanding immediate deployment of law enforcement resources to stop the shooting and mitigate harm to innocent victims. This document provides guidance to faculty, staff, and students caught in an active shooter situation, and describes what to expect from responding police officers.

II. Guidance to faculty, staff, and students

In general, the encounter's specific circumstances dictate how you respond to an active shooter, bearing in mind the same situation may involve more than one shooter. If you find yourself involved in an active shooter situation, try to remain calm and use these guidelines to help you plan a strategy for survival.

- A. If an active shooter is outside your building, proceed to a room you can lock. Close and lock all the windows and doors, and turn off all the lights; if possible, get everyone down on the floor and ensure that no one is visible from outside the room. One person in the room should call 911 and inform them of what is taking place and your location; remain in place until the police, or a campus administrator known to you, gives the "all clear." The shooter may attempt to lure victims from their safe space; do not respond to any unfamiliar voice commands until you can verify that a police officer is issuing them.
- B. If an active shooter is in the same building you are, determine if you can lock your room and, if so, follow the procedure described in the previous paragraph. If you cannot lock your room, determine if there is a nearby location you can reach safely that you can lock, or if you can safely exit the building. If you decide to move from your current location, follow the instructions outlined below.
- C. If an active shooter enters your office or classroom, try to remain calm. Dial 911, if possible, and alert police to the shooter's location; if you can't speak, leave the line open so the dispatcher can listen to what's taking place. Normally, a dispatcher can determine the location of a 911 call without the caller speaking. If there is no opportunity for escape or hiding, the shooter may respond to negotiation; attempt to overpower the shooter only as a last resort, after you have exhausted all other options. If the shooter leaves the area, proceed immediately to a safer place and do not touch anything that was in the vicinity of the shooter.

No matter what the circumstances, if you decide to flee during an active shooting situation, make sure you have an escape route and plan in mind. Do not attempt to carry anything while fleeing; move quickly, keep your hands visible, and follow the instructions of any police officers you may encounter. Do not attempt to remove injured people; instead, leave wounded victims where they are and notify authorities of their location as soon as possible. Do not try to drive off campus until advised it is safe to do so by police or campus administrators.

III. What to expect from responding police officers

Police officers responding to an active shooter are trained to proceed immediately to an area which shots were last heard; their purpose is to stop the shooting as quickly as possible. The first responding officers will normally deploy in teams of four; they may wear regular patrol uniforms, or external bulletproof vests, Kevlar helmets, and other tactical equipment. They may carry rifles, shotguns, or handguns, and may use pepper spray or tear gas to control the situation. Regardless of how they appear, remain calm, do as the officers tell you, and do not be afraid of them. Put down any bags or packages you may be carrying and keep your hands visible at all times; if you know where the shooter is, tell the officers. The first officers to arrive will not stop to aid injured people; rescue teams composed of other officers and emergency medical personnel will follow the first officers into secured areas to treat and remove injured persons. Keep in mind that after you have escaped to a safer location, the entire area is still a crime scene; police will usually not let anyone leave until the situation is under control and they have identified and questioned all witnesses. Until you are released, remain at whatever assembly point authorities designate.

University Police Department's Response

- IV. Upon notification of an active shooter situation all sworn personnel not on an emergency call will respond to the scene. The first officer on scene will make an initial assessment of the situation and immediately relay information to the police 911 communications center. The first officer or dispatch will immediately notify the on-duty supervisor, and if warranted will assemble a contact team. Once the on-duty supervisor arrives on the scene he or she will make another assessment of the situation, and will immediately contact the University Police Department (UPD) command staff and relay pertinent information. If necessary, the on-duty supervisor will set up an incident command post and will function as incident commander unless properly relieved. The senior police officer in charge by way of the communication center will notify the following:

Command Staff

City of San Marcos Police and Fire Departments

Vice President for Finance and Support Services 5-2244

University News Service 5-2180

University's Response

- V. The University News Service will begin emergency notification procedures by way of reverse telephone messages, electronic billboard activation, public address systems, messages on the university Web site, and mass e-mails.

The vice president for Student Affairs or the Emergency Management coordinator will notify the following as appropriate:

Crises Management/Emergency Management Team

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs 5-2205

Vice President for Student Affairs 5-2152

Vice President for Information Technology 5-9650

President's Office, 5-2121

The Office of the Special Assistant to the President 5-2676

Vice President for University Advancement 5-2396

Student Health Center (if medical issues are involved) 5-2161

Housing and Residential Life (if residential students or facilities are involved) 5-2931