



LAW ENFORCEMENT HAS A UNIQUE ROLE IN ACTIVE SHOOTER/MASS VIOLENCE PREVENTION

The recent active shooter incidents in Nashville and Louisville have demonstrated to the public the intense training, bravery, resources, and equipment necessary to neutralize an attacker who is actively engaged in killing others. Law enforcement officials should utilize this increased public confidence to bolster their training programs, request essential equipment, and focus on measures to prevent these attacks from occurring whenever possible.

Many law enforcement agencies have engaged in robust active shooter training programs and acquired enhanced tactical equipment to prepare officers for mass violence. Such preparation is vital for the threats facing today's communities and law enforcement officers. However, focusing on prevention can be as important as preparing for a mass casualty event. As law enforcement leaders are developing their active shooter hostile event training programs and preparing their budgets, it is imperative they read the most recent [United States Secret Service January 2023 Publication, Mass Attacks in Public Spaces 2016-2020](#), which details key findings for law enforcement agencies to prevent targeted violence.

Some highlights from the U.S. Secret Service Publication:

- Most attackers had exhibited behavior that elicited concern in family members, friends, neighbors, classmates, co-workers, and others, and in many cases, those individuals feared for the safety of themselves and others.
- Over half the attackers experienced mental health symptoms prior to or at the time of their attacks, including depression, psychotic symptoms, and suicidal thoughts.
- The most common locations for mass violence attacks were places of business, followed by open space, and then education.
- Law enforcement neutralized the attacker at the scene in 17.7% of the incidents.
- 41% of the attackers were found to have had a history of engaging in at least one incident of domestic violence.
- Over half of the population in the United States will be diagnosed with a mental disorder at some point in their lifetime.
- 19% of the attackers displayed misogynistic behaviors.

These findings demonstrate that law enforcement should continue to focus on active shooter training and equipment acquisition, but also reinforce that law enforcement plays a crucial role in preventing mass violence.

Extreme Risk Protection Order Considerations:

- Does every agency member have a firm understanding of the New Jersey Extreme Risk Protection Order? Is there an agency policy that supports this [New Jersey Attorney General Directive](#)?
- Has the agency utilized its communication platforms and partnerships with community organizations to inform them of the availability of Extreme Risk Protection Orders in New Jersey and the proper methods for obtaining such an order?

- When responding to mental health calls for service, does the agency guide its officers when they are to inform family or household members of the process for applying for a Temporary Emergency Protection Order (TERPO)? Is the Officer aware of when they are required to initiate or take over the process for obtaining a TERPO?
- Has the agency incorporated the topic of Extreme Risk Protection Orders into its existing educational programs, such as Citizens Policy Academy, Neighborhood Watch Groups, and Employee Family Orientation Programs?
- When conducting active shooter training, has the agency discussed as part of the overall training session the proper agency procedures concerning Extreme Risk Protection Orders or the critical findings from the most recent United States Secret Service report concerning mass violence?
- When working or visiting local businesses, are officers informing them of the availability of Extreme Risk Protection Orders so that employers can include this knowledge in their workplace safety initiatives and wellness efforts?

Other Considerations:

- Does the agency have a policy or consistent procedures in how they handle calls for service at local businesses involving "disgruntled employees," "threats by an employee," and "standbys during termination?" Is it possible that some officers from the same agency will query various databases such as firearm records and [NICS Denial Notification](#) information, and others will clear the scene, only indicating the business requested "extra patrol?" Is it possible that some scenarios might warrant informing a family member involved in the incident of the availability of an Extreme Risk Protection Order? Does the Officer have a robust working knowledge of the Extreme Risk Protection Order Act, if applicable, during such a call for service? The agency leader should define specific procedures concerning these incidents, as inconsistency might lead to tragedy and an accusation that the agency failed to guide its officers.
- Considering the prevalence of domestic violence offenses among those who have committed mass violence, is the agency dedicated to enforcing domestic violence violations, prevention, and follow-up when necessary and appropriate?
- While knowing that misogyny was identified in 19% of mass attackers, do officers know this? Has this been part of the agency's active shooter training program?
- Do agencies encourage bystander reporting for concerning behavior in general, or is the focus more on terrorism? [See Something. Say Something](#) campaigns were very popular post 9/11, but do agencies push such messaging now to help prevent mass attacks that might take place in a local business? If the agency does have a tipline or other reporting mechanism, can information be acted upon immediately? If not, is this clear to those utilizing the reporting platform?
- Does the agency have an updated and well-understood policy concerning [bias investigations](#), and do officers understand the [New Jersey Law Against Discrimination](#)? Such knowledge is essential, considering that 26% of attackers subscribed to a conspiratorial, topic-specific, or hate-focused belief system.

- Have agency leaders read the Law Enforcement Risk Analysis, [Considerations for the Law Enforcement Leader – MOA and New Threat Assessment Legislation](#) to learn about the agency's risks and strategize to mitigate such vulnerabilities?
- Does the agency have a legal and appropriate intelligence process, meeting, or function to synthesize calls for service or other intelligence involving persons of interest, those exhibiting concerning behavior, subjects known to follow hate-specific groups, misogynistic individuals, and more?
- Command personnel, supervisors, and all law enforcement officers should consider completing the following:
 - [Violence Prevention and Risk Considerations for Officers When Interacting with Mental Health Consumers](#) (This course addresses the criticality of understanding the Extreme Risk Protection Order, 988 implementations, and use of force considerations when dealing with those in crisis).
- Civilian employees in the organization should consider completing the following:
 - [Workplace Conduct and Violence Prevention](#)
 - [Implicit Bias in the Workplace](#)
 - [Dealing with Difficult People](#)

The critical role of law enforcement in responding to an active shooter and neutralizing the threat is undisputed. However, every law enforcement officer must play a role in prevention. The best outcome of any planned targeted violence is using effective strategies to stop the threat and violence from ever happening.

If you have any questions, please contact your Law Enforcement Risk Control Consultant.