



ACTIVE SHOOTER HOSTILE EVENT TRAINING CONSIDERATIONS

Active Shooter Hostile Event (ASHE) training is not new to New Jersey's law enforcement and first responder communities. Active shooter refresher in-service training is required to meet the standards of the 2024 New Jersey Police License mandatory training.¹ This critical training area should always reflect the most contemporary concepts to ensure the safety of officers and the public. The recently published report, [Critical Incident Review – Active Shooter Robb Elementary School](#), provides vital considerations for the Chief of Police and those developing and delivering ASHE training.

The Critical Incident Review – Active Shooter Robb Elementary School [Executive Summary](#) provides a concise but highly informative assessment that is a must-read for every Chief of Police.

Some Highly Critical Considerations from the Executive Summary:

1. Officers and command staff lacked training and practical experience utilizing the Incident Command System (ICS) (Pages 10 and 19). Chiefs of Police must ensure that, in addition to their officers completing the mandatory Active Shooter training in 2024, all officers have completed any required ICS training. Chiefs of Police should ensure that ICS principles are practiced, reinforced, and integrated appropriately into the agency's ASHE training program. Chiefs of Police should review the [New Jersey Office of Emergency Management Directive, National Incident Management System Training Requirements](#), and the [New Jersey State ICS Training Policy](#) and discuss ICS requirements with their applicable Office of Emergency Management to determine needs and appropriate training mandates.
2. Arriving law enforcement officers searched for keys to open interior doors for more than forty minutes (Page 17). Law enforcement agencies should closely evaluate how their officers will gain access to the school and various rooms while understanding that multiple master keys will be necessary. The need for highly secure key boxes should be discussed with applicable stakeholders. Chiefs or their designees should determine if schools and other high-risk targets are equipped with a [KnoxBox](#), or similar locking systems, and engage in the necessary discussions to determine how such systems can be accessed in a critical incident.
3. Officers assigned to the school had a culture of complacency concerning locked-door policies, and although door audits were conducted, they were not done systematically and were not documented (Page 17). Chiefs of Police should review the Sample Drill Checklist Forms below that can be utilized by law enforcement officers when they are present at school security drills. This form, combined with agency training and policy, assists in ensuring the officer does not become complacent during drills, documents identified concerns, and establishes a communication method to ensure observed deficiencies or non-compliance are appropriately reported.

[Police School Lockdown Security Checklist](#)

[School Security Checklist – Non-Lockdown](#)

Law enforcement agencies choosing to utilize the sample checklists should:

1. Utilize the sample forms as a template and modify them as necessary, with input from the essential stakeholders.

2. Implement these forms as part of a written school security agency or other pertinent policy.
3. If implemented, develop a training program that supports the school security or other policy, including the forms. The training program should ensure that officers understand they might not be able to answer some questions accurately and that "unknown" might be an acceptable response in some situations.
4. Ensure the Chief of Police or their designee thoroughly discusses the usage of these forms with the school district Superintendent, and the Superintendent advises that school administrators are aware of their use. Ideally, a joint training session or information meeting would occur with school officials before utilizing these forms and processes.
5. Ensure officers know the notification and distribution process of completed forms inside the agency and with school officials.
6. Identify in the agency policy, the distribution, including supervisory review, retention location, and retention schedule of completed forms.

The [Critical Incident Review – Active Shooter Robb Elementary School Full Report](#) is a sizeable but highly valuable resource containing numerous recommendations for specific disciplines, roles, and planning considerations. It is recommended that those assigned to create the agency ASHE Training Program familiarize themselves with this document. The report is broken into eight specific chapters, which are listed below with some considerations:

Chapter 1: Incident Timeline Reconstruction

Chapter 2: Tactics and Equipment

Considerations:

- Ensure officers train in one-, two-, three-, and four-person team formations during ASHE training (Recommendation 2.2, Page 109).
- Determine appropriate understanding of terminology such as "contained" and "barricaded" and how an officer's description of the incident influences other officers, sometimes inappropriately (Observation 4, Recommendations 4.1-4.2, Page 110).
- Ensure a unified system is developed to mark rooms that were searched. (Observation 5, Recommendation 5.1, Page 110).
- Agencies should also consider ensuring equipment is available at critically vulnerable locations, such as schools and other soft targets (Recommendation 11.2, Page 112). Also, review Page 104, *Shields*, concerning training considerations and teaching officers not to believe that they need to wait for the arrival of a shield.
- Determine what communication methods should be utilized when radio systems do not operate as expected (Recommendation 12.1, Page 113).

Chapter 3: Leadership, Incident Command, and Coordination

Consideration:

- The recommendations listed on Pages 172-176 further emphasize the need for ICS training and utilization of such principles on a routine basis.

Chapter 4: Post-Incident Response and Investigation

Consideration:

- Direct those who might be responsible for investigative functions and crime scene activities and those who supervise such personnel to read this chapter.

Chapter 5: Public Communications During and Following the Crisis

Considerations:

- Determine the agency's ability to swiftly deliver proactive messages to the community in an organized manner (Recommendation 1.2, Page 229).
- Direct those who might be responsible for media and community relations and those who supervise such personnel to read this chapter.

Chapter 6: Trauma and Support Services

Considerations:

- Include in the ASHE Training Program evacuation planning routes, medical staging, and other critical locations for high-risk soft targets (Recommendation 1.1-1.3, Page 464).
- Direct those responsible for agency wellness programs to read this chapter and discuss the availability of employee and victim assistant services teams from other agencies.

Chapter 7: School Safety and Security

Considerations:

- The chapter contains numerous recommendations concerning mutual aid amongst first responders and memorandums of understanding between law enforcement and schools (Pages 475-480).

Chapter 8: Pre-Incident Planning and Preparation

Considerations

- Every agency must have a clear, concise active shooter policy (Recommendation 1.1, Page 480).
- Law enforcement agencies should provide a total of 8 hours of scenario-based, stress-induced active shooter training annually for officers at all levels of ranks. (Recommendation 7.1, Page 483).

Additional Considerations:

Include a review of the agency's policy concerning the [New Jersey Extreme Risk Protection Order Act](#) in the ASHE training program.

¹Office of the New Jersey Attorney General, 2024 Mandated Training. New Jersey.