Preparing Your Staff for Workplace Emergencies
Tips and FAQs for Supervisors:
WORKPLACE VIOLENCE and ACTIVE SHOOTER SCENARIOS

The purpose of this guide is to give you the information necessary to have meaningful conversations with your employees about violent situations at work, how the Public Health Department is addressing vulnerabilities and employee concerns, and what individual employees can do to protect themselves.

Tips for Facilitating a Discussion

The thought of an armed individual on campus is an unsettling image and one that some of us do not want to think about. Asking people to mentally rehearse how they would respond to such an event may evoke some anxiety and discomfort.

However, there is evidence that imagining such things ahead of time produces a psychological “inoculation effect” which promotes greater psychological resilience and leads to a more effective response in the event of an actual emergency.

When facilitating discussions about violence remember that everyone interprets these scenarios a little differently. Some members of your group may automatically think of the worst possible scenario while others will deny that such an event could ever happen.

Please encourage anyone who wants to share their views to do so. Validate the person’s concerns and briefly try to explore what would make them feel more at ease.

To be an effective facilitator, consider your own level of comfort in talking about the topic.

- Prepare yourself with what your own plan would be if you were suddenly involved in a workplace shooting.
- Visualize your office environment:
  - Are there exits close by?
  - If possible, could you escape without travelling down long corridors or further exposing yourself to danger?
  - Would it be safer for you to stay where you are and secure yourself in an office or conference room?
- Because your response will be dependent on where the perpetrator is located, think through a few scenarios yourself. Walk through your work areas and identify possible escape routes and practice shelter in place procedures.
- Once you are comfortable with your own response, please spend a few minutes reviewing the Department of Homeland Security’s advice on surviving an active shooter event as well as some of the resources contained in this package.
Frequently Asked Questions

1) What is the Public Health Department doing to improve workplace safety?
   Our buildings are going to be assessed for security vulnerabilities September 13th-15th by an outside contractor who will tour each building, identify areas of concern, and make recommendations for protecting our employees through engineering, and administrative controls.
   The assessment report in conjunction with vulnerabilities identified by PHD staff will be used to prioritize any structural changes made to buildings, policy revisions, and additional trainings necessary to promote a safe work environment.

2) Does the Public Health Department have emergency plans for me to review with my staff?
   Emergency plans for each PHD building are available on the Employee Health & Safety SharePoint. Feel free to contact the PHD Safety Officer with specific questions or to request an individual training session for your team.

3) Will we ever drill for Active Shooter situations in the workplace?
   The annual disaster exercise will focus on an active shooter situation occurring at one of our Public Health Department buildings. We will take lessons learned from this initial active shooter drill and apply them to a training that can be conducted at each PHD building, similar to an annual fire drill.

4) How can we plan for emergencies in our specific area of the building?
   An Individual Emergency Action Plan template (link) is available on the Employee Health & Safety SharePoint. Complete this plan with your employees and review often. Use these in conjunction with Building Emergency Plans and identified shelter-in-place rooms.

5) How are individuals notified of the need to lockdown or shelter in place?
   A variety of emergency notification tools will be used to ensure the message is delivered as quickly as possible. Notification may come from a text or voice message, department administrator, by email or directly from emergency personnel. Overhead paging systems have been set up in the buildings and will be utilized during an emergency.

6) What happens if someone knocks on the door while I’m sheltering in place? Should I open it to share my space?
   Do not open the door once it has been secured until emergency personnel are at the door or you have received an official “All Clear” alert. Before securing your door you may consider sharing your space with individuals seeking a space to shelter.
   a. How do I know that the police are really the police and not the perpetrator?
      Emergency personnel will identify themselves; provide identification and will have master keys for all doors. If you have doubt as to the identity of any individual, remain secured inside and request that they open the door.
   b. What should I do if an individual inside the room I am in insists on opening the secured door, potentially exposing the other occupants?
      Individuals who refuse to follow instructions from emergency personal during a shelter in place risk endangering themselves and others. Appealing to the individual’s respect for their own safety and the safety of others is encouraged.

7) What if I have to use the restroom?
   In most cases, restrooms only have one entry/exit and therefore do not offer a secondary means to escape. Restrooms offer limited locations to hide and noises are often amplified in restrooms which can bring attention to your location.
8) What other places should be avoided?
   a. **Do not travel down long corridors.**
      Unless you are very close to an exit, do not travel down long hallways to get to one. Hallways offer limited areas of refuge should you encounter a threatening individual.

   b. **Do not assemble in large open areas.**
      Generally they do not have doors that can be secured and offer limited areas in which to hide. An assailant may intentionally target these areas believing that they can create a larger impact in populated gathering places. If you find yourself in an open area assess your surroundings and proximity to adjacent rooms and exits. Should you need to remain in an open area, attempt to put an obstacle or barrier in front of yourself for protection. If it safe to do so, you may consider relocating if you can access a room that can be secured.

9) **What if the fire alarm is activated?**
   If the fire alarm is activated, remain where you are and wait for further instructions. A perpetrator may attempt to have individuals evacuate from their secured rooms by pulling the fire alarm. Emergency personnel will immediately provide instructions to occupants if they are to evacuate or remain secured. Consider your closest exit and an alternate in the event that you are directed to evacuate. Be assured that police would be working with the fire department in evaluating the appropriate response to this type of occurrence.

10) **What if I encounter or am held hostage by an assailant?**
    It is important to recognize that every situation is unique and that you must use your own judgment to protect yourself. Try to stay calm, avoid sudden movements and refrain from provoking the individual.