

Assessing, Managing and Mitigating Workplace Violence: Active Shooter Threat



CONTENT

- 04** THREAT SCENARIO
- 05** ASSESSING THE RISK
- 05** WHAT IS WORKPLACE VIOLENCE?
- 05** THE THREAT
- 06** WORKPLACE VIOLENCE CATEGORIES
- 07** WHO IS VULNERABLE?
- 08** ORGANIZATION LIABILITY AND ACTIVE SHOOTER LAWSUITS
- 09** PROACTIVE INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLANNING
- 11** CRAFTING A RESPONSE TO WORKPLACE VIOLENCE
- 12** ASSESSING AN ACTIVE SHOOTER WORKPLACE INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLAN
- 13** PREPARE MENTALLY
- 14** MITIGATING WORKPLACE VIOLENCE
- 15** THE ORGANIZATION-LEVEL THREAT ASSESSMENT PROCESS
- 16** MANAGING THE CONSEQUENCES OF AN ACTIVE SHOOTER SITUATION
- 17** SUMMARY



Assessing, Managing and Mitigating Workplace Violence: Active Shooter Threat



**ALBERT J. MARCELLA JR., PHD,
CISA, CISM**

Founder and President
Business Automation Consultants, LLC



MADELINE PARISI, MAEd

Founder
Madeline Parisi & Associates LLC

Violence in the workplace can have wide-reaching effects in communities. Victims of workplace violence can suffer from lasting physical and psychological problems and bear the financial burden of care after experiencing a violent incident. Workplace violence can also affect coworkers, witnesses and victims' families. For organizations, violent acts can lower employee productivity and morale and increase turnover. They can also increase financial burdens on organizations in the form of workers' compensation payments, medical expenses, lawsuits and liability costs.¹

THREAT SCENARIO



The Characters

Jane is a lawyer in a construction practice area within a midsize law firm located in a metropolitan area. She has several clients who are contractors in the same area, including one who is seeking to scale up his business.

Bill, the contractor, has been in business for over a decade and business has been good. Bill's clients have been in the small to midsize range, and he is ready to scale up to larger projects representing new and larger clients. Bill networked his way to a major project in the community to build a new residential development. To make this project a success, Bill hired new staff including several managers to assist in the bid process and others to develop the needed plans and drawings to move forward. Bill's company paid the application and licensing fees, as well as the legal fees.



The Setting

It is a Friday morning and staff are arriving at the firm. There are morning clients to see and work to wrap up before a late afternoon gathering for the three interns just completing their summer internship with the firm.

Bill arrives at the firm angry and in despair after being notified that the zoning board has denied his final appeal to rezone the proposed construction site for the new residential complex. The challenge to Bill's petition was initiated by an environmental group determined to preserve the proposed building site as a natural, undisturbed wildlife habitat. This denial to rezone the area will cause Bill great financial loss and tarnish his reputation with future developers and the community where many of his new employees reside.



The Incident

Bill enters the office building and takes the elevator to the law firm's fifth floor offices. Walking uncontested through the office, Bill searches for Jane. Bill is distraught and holds Jane and the firm fully responsible, believing that Jane did not accurately represent him or fight hard enough against the environmentalists, who opposed the rezoning.

Joe, the client services receptionist, is the first person to encounter Bill and tries to stop him. When he realizes Bill has a gun, Joe is too stunned to react. Bill makes his way to Jane's office. As a client, Bill has visited the firm many times and knows his way around the office. He gets to Jane's office and not finding her there, Bill frustratedly fires a shot into her empty office.

Bill begins walking through the office looking for Jane, firing random shots as he makes his way to the conference room where a client meeting is taking place. Firing sporadically, Bill hits an attorney and one of the interns. Bill is screaming and yelling for Jane. Staff is confused and frightened; some employees run to hide while others remain at their desks immobilized by panic and fear.



ASSESSING THE RISK

How would you and your staff react to this incident? Have you planned for an incident of this type or a similar incident so that personnel know where to go, what to do and how to respond? Do you have an incident management plan that covers this and other workplace violence incidents? Will personnel know what to do with guests or vendors who may be visiting or working on-site and who may not be familiar with your office or the facility? Do you test the incident plan via actual tabletop exercises and drills? Do you coordinate with external third parties to assist in plan development, review and test exercises? And do you debrief after each exercise?

If you cannot answer in the affirmative to any of these questions, your organization is at risk of being unprepared to address and mitigate the threat of workplace violence.

While many organizations have recognized the need to have active business resiliency plans in place, many fail to consider potential incidents that may pose a substantial risk and liability to the organization; to the organization's personnel; and to clients, visitors and vendors who may be on premises at the time of a workplace violence incident.

This white paper addresses workplace violence, specifically an active shooter incident, the risks to the firm and its personnel associated with this incident, and the critical role an effective incident management plan will play in addressing and mitigating an extreme example of workplace violence, an active shooter.

Use the information presented in this white paper to help assess (or design) your organization's workplace violence preparedness or make note of the proactive recommendations when you are a guest or a visitor in another company's office — always be aware of your surroundings and be ready to implement your own personal incident management plan if facing an act of workplace violence.

WHAT IS WORKPLACE VIOLENCE?

The United States Geological Survey's (USGS) Workplace Violence Handbook defines workplace violence as:

Any act or attempted act of physical aggression or harm by an individual that occurs at the workplace.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

1. Causing or attempting to cause bodily harm or death to another person
2. Acting or attempting to sabotage, destroy, damage or deface government or personal property in the workplace
3. Possession of unlawful and unauthorized weapons in the workplace²
4. Harassment and intimidation or other threatening disruptive behavior³

Workplace violence is one of the leading causes of job-related deaths. However it manifests itself, workplace violence in the form of active shooter incidents is a growing concern for employers and employees nationwide.⁴

THE THREAT

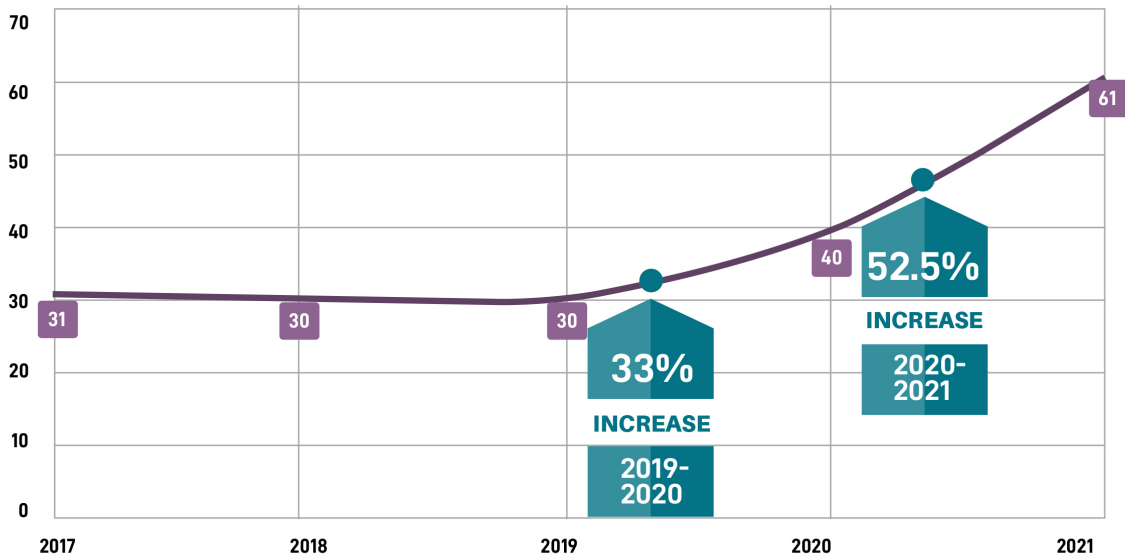
For the period 2017–2021, active shooter incident data reveals an upward trend: The number of active shooter incidents identified in 2021 represents a 52.5% increase from 2020 and a 96.8% increase from 2017. (See Figure 1.) Moreover, 2021 witnessed the highest number of active shooter incidents since the year 2000.⁵

Various risk factors can contribute to workplace violence. These risk factors could include the following:

- » Client characteristics
- » Physical work environment
- » Work activity/culture
- » Job factors
- » Employees' personal relationships
- » Other external factors



Figure 1: Active Shooter Incidents in the United States 2017–2021⁶



WORKPLACE VIOLENCE CATEGORIES

Workplace violence can take various forms, and it takes a tremendous toll on the both the employees and the general workplace environment. It results in increased absenteeism and turnover, high stress levels and decreased productivity, increased workers’ compensation claims, damaged morale, costs involved with post-incident counseling, and much more.

Researchers have divided workplace violence into five categories. Most workplace violence incidents fall into one of the categories listed in Table 1:

Table 1: Workplace Violence Categories

| WORKPLACE VIOLENCE CATEGORIES | DESCRIPTION |
|--|---|
| Criminal Intent (Type I) | The perpetrator has no legitimate relationship to the business or its employees and is usually committing a crime in conjunction with the violence. These crimes can include robbery, shoplifting and trespassing. |
| Customer/Client (Type II) | The perpetrator has a legitimate relationship with the business and becomes violent while being served by the business. This category includes customers, clients, patients, students, inmates and any other group for which the business provides services. |
| Worker-on-Worker (Type III) | The perpetrator is an employee or past employee of the business who attacks or threatens another employee(s) or past employee(s) in the workplace. |
| Personal Relationship (Type IV) | The perpetrator usually does not have a relationship with the business but has a personal relationship with the intended victim. This category includes victims of domestic violence assaulted or threatened while at work. ⁷ |
| Ideological Violence (Type V) | This type of violence occurs when a workplace or organization represents an ideology that opposes that of an extremist or value-driven individual or group and becomes a target for violence. It is rare and is a subset of terrorism. At times, governmental entities or workplaces may be targeted if the perpetrator’s desired result is mass destruction. Many of the recent active shooter and terrorist incidents across the globe fall under this category of violence. ⁸ |

It is important to note the specific characteristics associated with these workplace violence categories as the organization assesses workplace risk and the viability of its incident management plan to address these separate violence categories and their characteristics.

Type IV Violence, for example, has the following characteristics, separating this level from all the others:

- » It is spillover of domestic violence into the workplace.
- » It generally refers to perpetrators who are not employees or former employees of the affected workplace.
- » It targets women significantly more often than men, although both male and female co-workers and supervisors are often affected.

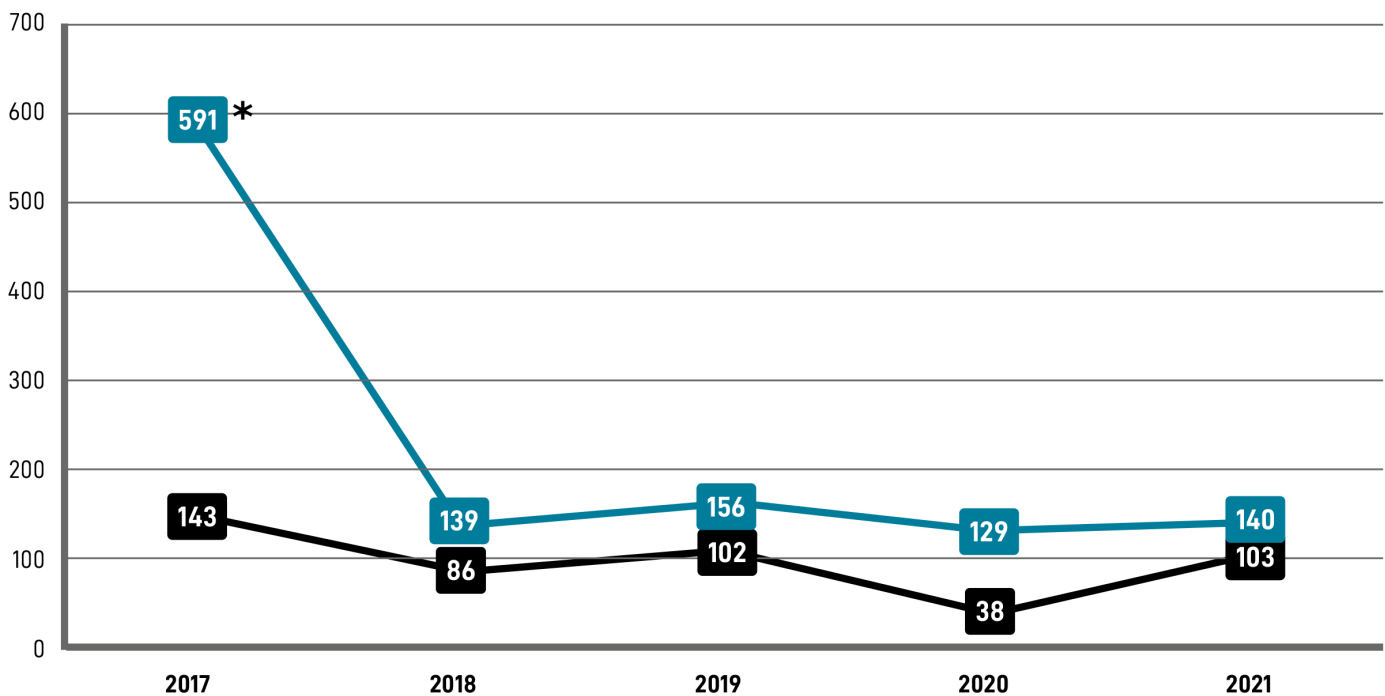
An organization’s workplace violence incident management plan should be broad in its scope, thereby addressing each of these categories and potential sources of workplace risk.

WHO IS VULNERABLE?

Statistics show 2021 saw the highest number of active shooter incidents resulting in deaths since 2017, and a 171.1% increase from 2020. Deaths in 2021 were above the average (92.3) for the period 2017–2020. There was a 11.1% increase in people wounded in 2021 compared with 2020. In 2021, the number of individuals wounded was below the average (253) for the period 2017–2020. (See Figure 2.)

It is important to note that the drop in workplace violence incidents occurring in 2020, dragging the violence trend-line downward, may directly be correlated to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, many offices were forced to close, requiring personnel to work from home and shielding them from potential workplace active shooter threats.

Figure 2: Active Shooter Incidents 2017–2021 Total Killed and Wounded⁹

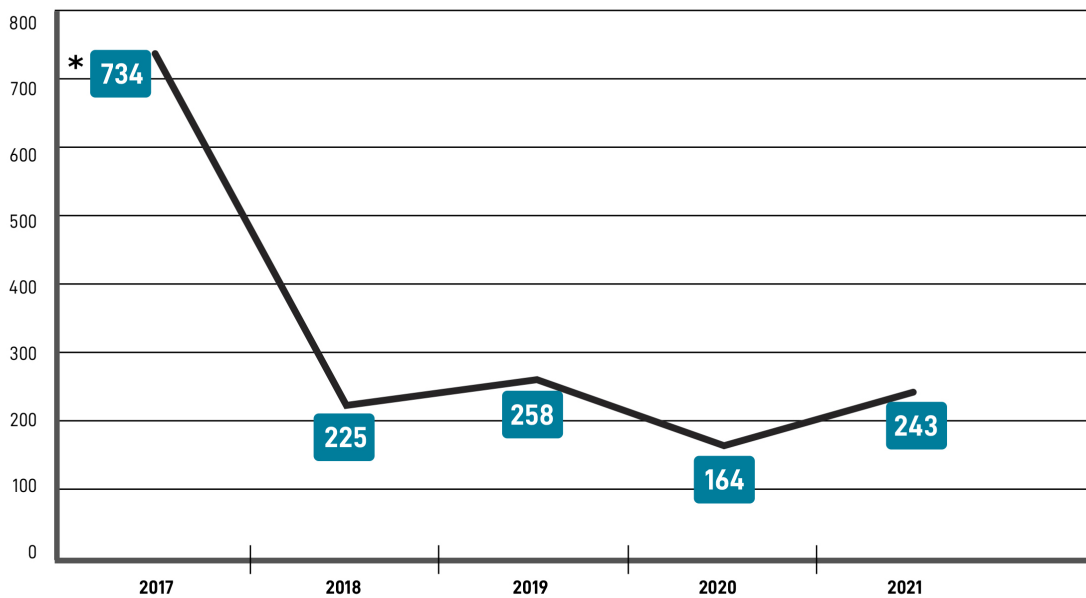


***The Route 91 Harvest Festival shooting impacts the 2017 casualty count (56 killed, 489 wounded).**

■ KILLED ■ WOUNDED

The active shooter incident total casualty count for 2021 (243) is below the average for the period 2017–2020 (345.25), but exceeded casualties in 2020 (164) with a 48% increase. Again, pandemic-related closures in 2020 likely contributed to such a sharp rise. The 2021 numbers represent the third highest total casualty count over the last five years (2017–2021). (See Figure 3.)

Figure 3: Active Shooter Incidents 2017–2021 Total Casualties¹⁰



***The Route 91 Harvest Festival shooting impacts the 2017 casualty count (56 killed, 489 wounded).**

These statistics are difficult to ignore and should be a wake-up call to executive management, administrators, human resources and anyone responsible for establishing and maintaining a safe and secure workplace environment.

Nearly all fatal workplace violence incidents have been followed by lawsuits brought by the victims' aggrieved families. In the period of fact-finding that follows, organizations are legally compelled to provide information to the parties that filed suit. Managers and supervisors closest to the tragedy are often called to attest to their organization's preparedness plans and training (or lack of awareness of violence-prevention strategies). Company personnel have been required to testify, under oath, as to their organization's actions to plan for, mitigate and educate personnel on the proper response to incidents involving workplace violence.

As a result of increased occurrences, more individuals harmed in workplace violence incidents — or the families of victims who succumb to these acts of violence — are filing lawsuits,

naming both the organization and executive management as plaintiffs for failing to create and maintain a safe workplace environment.

ORGANIZATION LIABILITY AND ACTIVE SHOOTER LAWSUITS

Not every lawsuit filed is successful for the plaintiff. However, the time, efforts, energies and financial costs associated with defending such lawsuits, responding to court-ordered discovery motions — along with the personnel time involved — is a financial cost (and associated risk) that many organizations (especially small or mid-sized firms) may be unprepared to manage.

An active shooter incident may occur in almost any environment; it need not be confined to a single office, a single floor or a single building.

For example, on October 1, 2017, 58 people were killed and more than 600 physically injured when a man opened fire on the Route 91 Harvest Festival, an open-air music venue, from a hotel room on the 32nd floor of the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino on the Las Vegas strip.

In a 225-page civil complaint filed in Clark County, plaintiffs accused MGM Resorts of failing to protect people at the concert venue or stop the shooter from amassing an arsenal of weapons and ammunition over several days before he opened fire.

MGM Resorts, owner of the hotel and the concert venue — acknowledging no liability — settled the lawsuit, agreeing to pay \$49 million. The full suit was for nearly \$800 million, and its insurance companies are paying out the remaining claims. Not many organizations would be financially able to pay \$49 million to settle a workplace violence lawsuit without either creating a serious financial deficit from which they may never recover or simply ceasing operations altogether.

Does your organization have coverage for a workplace violence incident? And does your organization have up-to-date policies, procedures and training in place and to address an active shooter incident, if it were to occur in your office? Both are necessary to successfully weather the storm of a lawsuit.

PROACTIVE INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLANNING

What is your organization's responsibility (ethically, morally, legally) to provide a safe and secure working environment?

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is the organization within the Department of Labor that addresses hazards in the workplace. Although workplace violence is included as a hazard, no specific OSHA standards currently exist that address workplace violence.

However, under the General Duty Clause, Section 5(a) (1) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, employers are required to provide their employees with a place of employment that is "free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm."

The courts have interpreted OSHA's general duty clause to mean that an employer has a legal obligation to provide a workplace free of conditions or activities that either the employer or industry recognizes as hazardous and that cause, or are likely to cause, death or serious physical harm to employees when there is a feasible method to abate the hazard.

OSHA recommends employers develop workplace violence prevention programs and implement administrative controls — such as physical barriers, alarm systems, lighting, staffing and other implementations — to reduce overall risk. To comply, employers must show they undertook efforts to prepare for what is now considered a legitimate threat to all private enterprises.¹¹

Employers who do not take reasonable steps to prevent or abate a recognized violence hazard in the workplace can be cited.¹²

What documented, proactive steps has your organization taken that demonstrate an awareness of the responsibility to protect employees, visitors and the general public who may be in your workplace environment?

Incident management (sometime referred to as crisis management), is a critical component of an organization's overall disaster management strategy, and often designed to get the organization back onto its "operational feet." These plans can be viewed as longer-term strategies.

For additional information on business resiliency and proactive preparation, see ALA's white paper "**Business Resiliency: 7 Steps to Successful Incident Management, Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Planning.**" For other types of incidents like bomb threats, visit bit.ly/3XW86uR.

Incident management covers the immediate, shorter-term “event” which is addressed, contained and resolved. An event can escalate into a larger crisis, which may result in the organization moving to implement its business continuity plan and if warranted, the organization’s disaster recovery plan.

In the case of any event, its impact on personnel and operations varies, and planning should include thorough risk analysis. It is essential to identify at-risk factors on the organization level and conduct a basic individual threat assessment that will identify threats at the personnel level. It is prudent to coordinate this analysis and assessment with your organization’s human resources department so as not to violate state or federal legislation governing personnel practices.

Organizations should consider all threats, vulnerabilities and associated consequences during their risk assessment. Conducting a risk assessment will ensure organizations understand their situation, prioritize their actions, identify and compare options, and effectively allocate their resources. Read more about risk and threat management on page 5.

In the tabletop training scenario presented at the beginning of this white paper, the example of Bill and Jane could have been nothing more than a business dispute regarding

services. The severity of the event escalated into something more disastrous when Bill’s actions threatened innocent people in the firm’s office and potentially the office building, as well as caused bodily harm and impacted daily internal operations.

Have you recently conducted a tabletop or similar training exercise involving all personnel (including executive management) that addresses workplace violence, specifically in the form of an active shooter?

Are your organization’s personnel encouraged (or mandated) to take annual training on identifying and addressing workplace violence, which may occur in many forms, and especially active shooter awareness and response training? Does the organization provide this training internally? Through a third party?

Will failure to substantiate and provide this awareness, preparation and training place the organization at risk? Legally? Financially?

In determining how to proceed, most organizations should consider following the “crawl, walk, run” approach to designing and implementing their active shooter incident plan. Leveraging this method helps organizations prepare their staff and improve their plan. (See Figure 4.)

Figure 4: Timeline — Planning Active Shooter Preparedness¹³



CRAFTING A RESPONSE TO WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

When incidents occur and their containment is impracticable or not immediate, then an organization must be prepared to implement its enterprisewide incident management plan.

Addressing the following questions will assist your organization and its personnel to be better prepared when an incident does occur in the workplace.

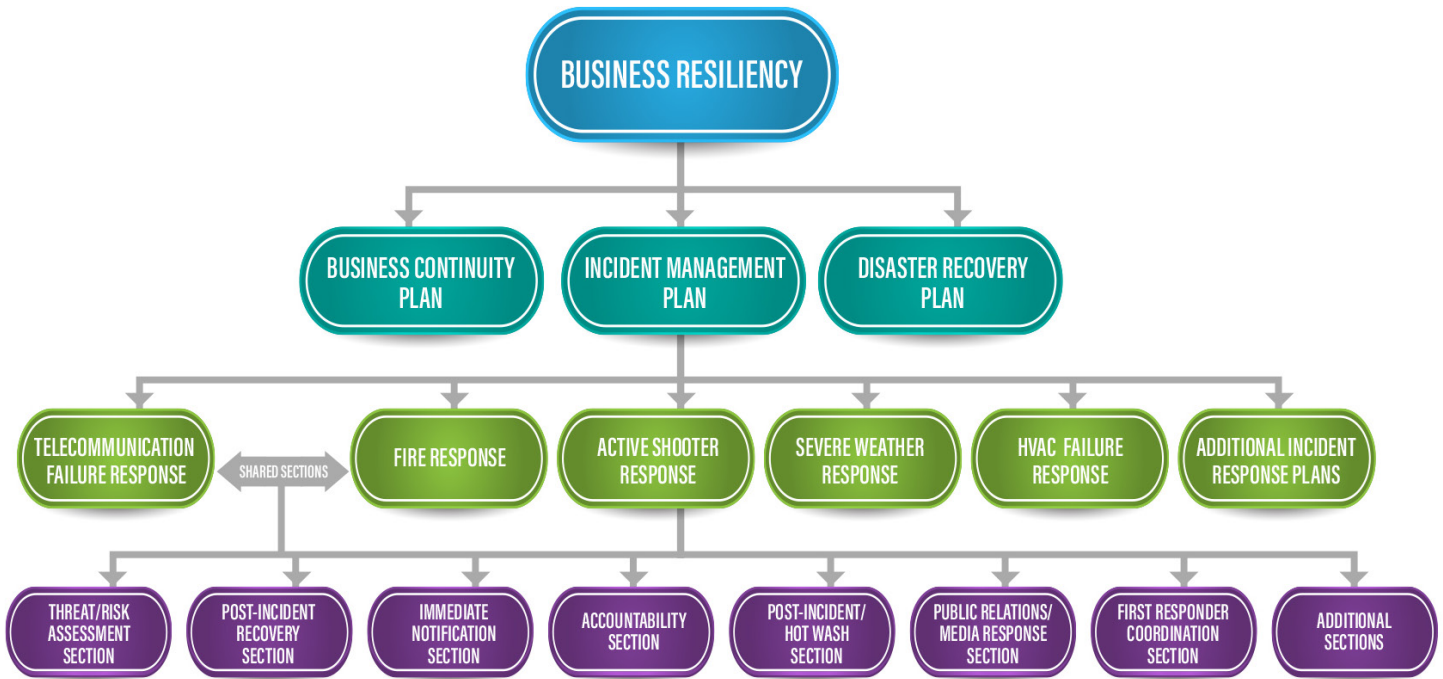
- » Does your organization have a master incident management plan?
- » Does the plan address an active shooter incident?
- » Has an assessment been performed to determine if the active shooter incident management plan can stand independently, or will the plan supplement a broader suite of incident management plans, under an even broader category of business resiliency? (See Figure 5, page 12).
- » Who is responsible for its implementation?
- » What procedures are in place that actively test the credibility, functionality and feasibility of the organization's incident management plan(s) related to active shooter?
- » What risk analysis is performed to examine current physical security and daily business practices to identify security shortcomings that may materially affect personnel safety and security?
- » What training is in place for personnel, i.e., tabletop exercise(s) to practice individual roles and responsibilities, and to be prepared to act in the event of an active shooter threat event?
- » Which organization functions have been included in the design and development of the overall incident management plan? The active shooter incident management plan? In general, a comprehensive, collaborative team should be tasked with designing and developing your active shooter incident plan. Consider including the following organization departments/functions:
 - Human Resources

- Information Technology Managers
- Security, Risk or Safety Managers
- Legal Advisers, Facility Managers or Engineers
- Persons with Disabilities or Functional Needs
- First Responders (Police, Fire/EMS)
- Communication Managers
- Other essential services/departments may be included as warranted within your organization.

- » It is very important to consult with legal advisers throughout the planning process. When collecting personally identifiable information from personnel, has the collaborative team assured compliance with Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)? Both have exceptions that allow for information sharing to protect the health and safety of individuals.
- » Has the organization's plan been "legally reviewed and approved" to confirm that the plan supports all local, state and federal regulatory and statutory requirements including Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandates?
- » How would your organization react to the scenario involving Bill and Jane? Are your personnel prepared? Are you? Are you sure?



Figure 5: Incident Management Plan — Hierarchy Addressing Specific Threats



ASSESSING AN ACTIVE SHOOTER WORKPLACE INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

Your active shooter incident management plan should be specific to the type of facility, building and the workers it covers. In general, the major sections and points that an active shooter workplace violence incident management plan should address include, but are not limited to, the following:

- » **Run. Hide. Fight.** Know when each is appropriate in an active shooter incident.
 - Emergency escape procedures and routes.
 - Safe places to escape inside and outside of the facility.
 - Procedures to secure the work area where the incident took place.

(For additional details describing specific actions to take, see sidebar “Run, Hide, Fight: What to Do and When to Do It”: bit.ly/3H0eRow)

RUN **HIDE** **FIGHT**

This FBI training video explains the three tactics (Run. Hide. Fight.) that you can use to keep yourself and others safe in the event of an active shooter incident. Watch now: youtube.com/watch?v=TeOdxKozra0

- » If you are a tenant, have you coordinated your organization’s individual incident plan with the building management company?
- » Have you examined the need/feasibility of integrating/ coordinating your incident plan with that of the facility’s owner/management company?
- » If you are in a multistoried building, does building management have a plan in place, and do they run drills to practice that plan? This is critical when personnel must know where to run or hide.
- » Are procedures in place for the timely notification of the proper authorities or whoever is acting in their place, e.g., internal security personnel, local police, etc.?
- » Does the plan identify qualified, internal personnel who may be called upon to perform medical or rescue duties?
- » The incident plan should specify procedures to be followed when engaging first responders — when people are hiding or sheltering in place, or when evacuating the building. First responders must be able to immediately identify “friend” from “foe” especially when personnel are evacuating a building. For a list of what actions to take when encountering first responders see sidebar “How to React When Law Enforcement Arrives”: bit.ly/3De88q0.
- » What procedures exist that will account for (track and identify) all employees inside and outside of the facility — where to gather and who is checking everyone in?
 - o In today’s work-from-home environment, how do you know the personnel in your office? Guests?
- » Does the organization conduct and practice via tabletop exercises and role play to assure all participants know their role and needed action in the event of an active shooter incident? Training and educating employees in workplace violence issues is essential to the implementation of the incident management plan.
- » Have procedures been created for regularly evaluating, practicing and updating the plan?
- » Do procedures for debriefing participants to identify lessons learned, both after a practice drill and an incident, exist?

PREPARE MENTALLY

There is another threat to manage in emergency situations, and especially in an active shooter situation — preparing oneself mentally.

- » Confusion is intentionally created by the threat itself. Ensuring your staff knows what to do will help minimize internal confusion.
- » Carnage is not something most people encounter or have encountered in their life. Recognize this may exist in these scenarios. Organizations that routinely practice these tabletop exercises/scenarios employ real-life actors (university students who are majoring in theater arts and performance, makeup artists, costume design, etc. make excellent sources) to represent victims and realistically depict the violence.
- » Alarms may be sounding and sprinklers may go off, creating additional sensory confusion.
- » The unpredictability of a situation that changes rapidly is not easy to mentally manage.
- » Intimidating or harassing behavior is conduct that in the opinion of a reasonable person creates a hostile environment, impairs organizational operations, or frightens, alarms or inhibits others.
 - o Part of the intent of many threat actors is to incite fear whether the gun has real bullets.

Assessing the personnel in your office, how mentally prepared are they to effectively and safely respond to an active shooter incident?



MITIGATING WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

A risk assessment is a thorough look at your workplace to identify those things, situations, processes, etc., that may cause harm, particularly to people.

A threat assessment is a process for evaluating and verifying perceived threats, including assessing their likelihood. The systematic process of a threat assessment is designed to IDENTIFY, INQUIRE, ASSESS and MANAGE potentially dangerous or violent situations. As such, the threat assessment process is collaborative in nature and should interface with other risk assessment processes already established within the organization.

As a proactive tool, the threat assessment process can be a very detailed and comprehensive written document, or simply an awareness of the potential threats faced in various situations. Knowing what is being protected will help determine which threats are most likely to be encountered. The next step in a formal threat assessment is to examine the risks.¹⁴

This white paper does not specifically address organizational risk or risk assessments. However, the reader should be aware that once they have identified the threat, it is critical that their organization is ready to respond and to recognize the risks associated with the threat(s).

Does your organization have a standing threat assessment team? A risk management team/function?

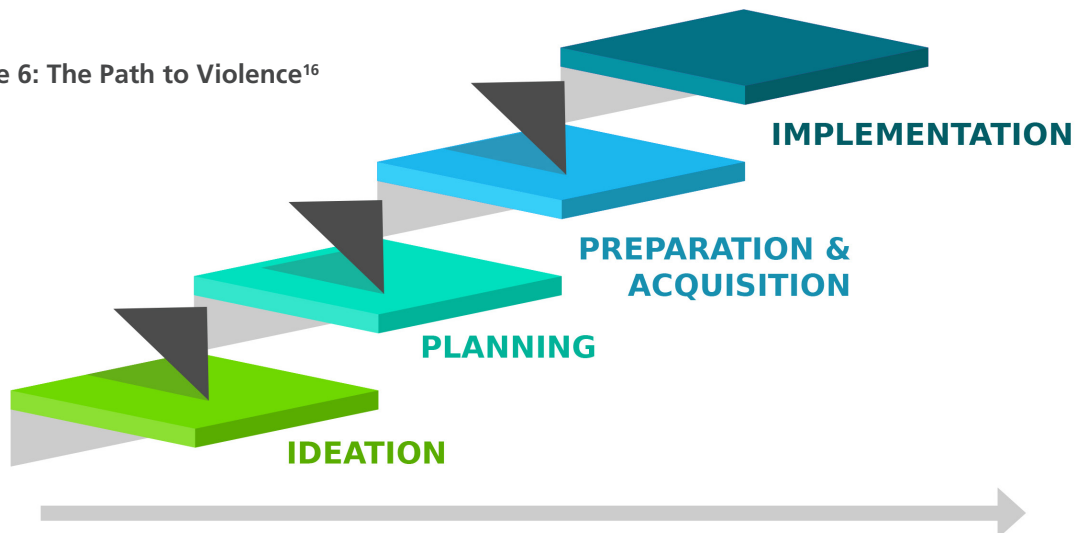
A threat assessment team includes a cross section of the organization, including a member from human resources, security, corporate compliance or the legal department, a customer service leader and a local law enforcement officer. A senior executive or the business owner should also be involved due to the risks and for support.

The threat assessment team is responsible for analyzing any violent behavior or risk and determining what steps or measures to take to protect personnel as well as visitors, contractors and others. Unfortunately, understanding what is going on in someone's head is not an exact science, so the team has to be thorough in the assessment to make the best recommendations and determinations possible.¹⁵

To support the implementation of effective threat assessment protocols and procedures, organizations should develop and implement a threat assessment policy. This policy needs to communicate to all personnel and establishes authority for the organization to act upon reported threats and/or concerning behaviors.

Figure 6 illustrates the “pathway to violence” typically taken by those who have engaged in active shooter and other acts of targeted violence: They start with an idea to do harm, develop a plan to carry it out, prepare by acquiring the means or capacity to do harm and then implement the violent act. (See Figure 6.)

Figure 6: The Path to Violence¹⁶



While policies are designed and specific to individual organizations, a policy addressing threat assessments should include, but may not be limited to, the following:

- » Executive management approval authorizing the establishment of threat assessment teams at the enterprisewide level and if warranted at all subsidiaries and offices
- » Personnel who have the responsibility to establish these teams
- » Roles and duties to be performed by designated threat assessment team members
- » Expertise and training of professionals who will serve on the threat assessment team
- » Awareness training for all personnel, including executive management
- » Reporting procedures and requirements (i.e., mandatory, compliance, local, state, federal)
- » Threat assessment protocol, procedures and documentation, including exceptions to individual confidentiality
- » Procedures for implementation of interventions, supports and community services
- » Timeframe required to responsibly act upon reported concern(s)
- » Engagement of internal and external resources in the threat assessment (human resources, legal department, security (internal), law enforcement (external), etc.

THE ORGANIZATION-LEVEL THREAT ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The process of performing a threat assessment, while it may differ in the number of steps and the names of those steps, is typically performed as follows:

Step 1: Identify the Potential Insider and/or External Threats.

Identifying critical business resources (e.g., personnel) requiring safety and protection, begin to map out the threats that your organization is exposed to.

Step 2: Assess Likelihood.

Once the list of threats is complete and the definitions are clear and detailed, the next step is to consider how likely each threat is to occur.

Step 3: Assess Impact.

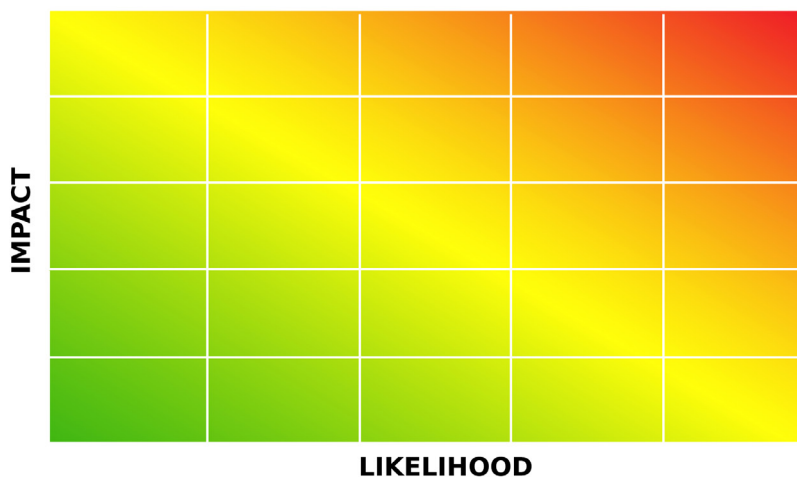
Determining the impact consists of examining each threat and assigning a relative value from 1 (lowest impact) to 5 (highest impact).

Step 4: Determine the Risk Priority.

Once determining the likelihood and impact values, use those values to determine the risk priority of each threat.

Once the impact and likelihood values have been determined, multiplying the two scores leads to an overall risk score. This risk score is plotted on a matrix that provides a visual indication as to where the focus of your organization's resources should go to deal with the highest priority threats. (See Figure 7.)

Figure 7: Risk Matrix



The threats in the top right corner of the chart, with the highest likelihood and the greatest impact, will need to be addressed urgently, while those in the bottom left corner, which have the lowest likelihood and least impact, can be addressed as time and resources are available.

MANAGING THE CONSEQUENCES OF AN ACTIVE SHOOTER SITUATION

After the active shooter is no longer a threat, human resources and/or management should engage in post-event assessments and activities, including:

- » Accounting of all individuals at a designated assembly point to determine who, if anyone, is missing and potentially injured
- » Determining a method for notifying families of individuals affected by the active shooter, including notification of any casualties
- » Assessing the psychological state of individuals at the scene, and referring them to health care specialists accordingly
- » Identifying and filling any critical personnel or operational gaps left in the organization as a result of the active shooter¹⁷

COPING WITH THREATS AND VIOLENCE

FOR SOMEONE WITH A WEAPON:



Stay calm. Maintain eye contact.



Stall for time.



Keep talking ... but follow instructions of the person with the weapon.



Don't risk harm to yourself and others.



Don't ever try to be a hero. Never try to grab a weapon.



Watch for a safe chance to escape, then contact security personnel or local police if they have not already been contacted.¹⁸

Active Shooter Preparedness: Incident Management Plan Assessment Questions

For a list of 75+ questions applicable to the assessment of an organization's existing active shooter incident management plan or to assist in development of a plan, use the link provided to access and download "Assessing Active Shooter Incident Preparedness": bit.ly/3XFjllv.

This accessible document provides a series of questions designed to assist you with an assessment of your organization's capability to respond effectively and safely to an active shooter incident in the workplace.

As with all lists of this type, this list is neither all-inclusive nor are the questions listed in any particular order.



SUMMARY

Workplace violence isn't selective; it can and does occur, unfortunately with more frequency than anyone would like. Given this reality, the potential for such an event occurring within your organization should be a probability taken very seriously and addressed within your organization's incident management plan and overall business resiliency preparedness strategy.

Business owners should examine their existing security plans and look for ways to improve prevention efforts. Even where an attack cannot be prevented altogether, premises owners can reduce risk and create a more defensible position in a lawsuit by taking proactive steps to secure the location. This process could include facility upgrades, lighting, additional exits, bulletproof materials, panic buttons and security vendor contracts. Employee training is also essential, as you can train employees to recognize and react to potential shooter situations.¹⁹

This article addresses workplace violence that is directed at (or between) individuals, a type three violence category. Workplace violence should not, however, be viewed as an event limited to or directed only at employees/personnel. Workplace violence can take on many forms (see Table 1, page 6) and regardless of its form or target, the potential liabilities to the organization remain the same — critical.

Organizations can face both legal and financial liabilities due to their being ill-prepared in recognizing, containing and mitigating workplace violence. Being proactive and not reactive to the reality of workplace violence is the key to the successful implementation of a workplace violence incident management strategy.

Courts are receptive to the new theory that all premises owners are on notice of an active shooting, even where a premises owner has no specific basis to believe its business will be targeted. The best defense to this new reality is to diligently assess and improve security features and secure appropriate coverage.²⁰

Prevention is not and cannot be a passive process. It requires a strong and overt commitment by organizations and communities to prioritizing public safety and caretaking for those in need. This is manifested by adoption of policies and programs to support targeted violence prevention efforts, establishment of threat assessment and management teams, and education to underscore the importance of these processes and to promote acceptance and engagement by all.²¹

For additional Workplace Violence, Active Shooter Threat Resources, visit bit.ly/3XzSZYg.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Al Marcella, PhD, CISA, CISM, President of Business Automation Consultants, LLC, is an internationally recognized public speaker, researcher and seminar leader with over 43 years of experience in IT audit, security and assessing internal controls. An author of numerous articles and books on various audit and security related subjects, Marcella's latest book is *Cyber Forensics: Examining Emerging and Hybrid Technologies*. He can be reached at albert@bac-mail.com.

Madeline Parisi, MAEd, is a recognized adult education content developer with a distinguished career in business training and professional development. In 2013, she started Madeline Parisi & Associates LLC (MPA). MPA, with a pool of subject matter experts, provides business training materials, in-house and virtual training, white-label writing services, and professional certification training and certification exam question development services. Parisi may be reached at madeline@madelineparisi.com.



WORKS CITED

1. Harrell, E, Langton, L, Petosa, J, Pegula, S, Zak, M, Derk, S, Hartley, D, and Reichard, A., 2022, "Indicators of Workplace Violence," U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Statistics, NCJ 250748. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Safety, Health, and Working Conditions, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Morgantown, WV: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, DHHS (NIOSH) Publication No. 2022-124, <https://doi.org/10.26616/NIOSH PUB2022124>, retrieved September 8, 2022.
2. (n.a.), (n.d.), "Workplace Violence Handbook," USGS, Department of the Interior, [usgs.gov/human-capital/workplace-violence-handbook](https://www.usgs.gov/human-capital/workplace-violence-handbook), retrieved September 8, 2022.
3. (n.a.), (n.d.), "Workplace Violence," Occupational Safety and Health Administration, United States Department of Labor, [osha.gov/workplace-violence](https://www.osha.gov/workplace-violence), retrieved August 12, 2022.
4. (n.a.), (n.d.), "Workplace Violence," Occupational Safety and Health Administration, United States Department of Labor, [osha.gov/workplace-violence](https://www.osha.gov/workplace-violence), retrieved August 12, 2022.
5. Ibid.
6. (n.a.), 2021, "Active Shooter Incidents in the United States 2017-2021, Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, D.C., [fbi.gov/file-repository/active-shooter-incidents-in-the-us-2021-052422.pdf/view](https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/active-shooter-incidents-in-the-us-2021-052422.pdf/view), retrieved September 8, 2022.
7. Loveless, L. (ed.), February 2001, "A Report to the Nation," Injury Protection Resource Center, University of Iowa, Document ID OSHA-2016-0014-0017, page 4, [regulations.gov/document/OSHA-2016-0014-0017](https://www.regulations.gov/document/OSHA-2016-0014-0017), retrieved September 8, 2022.
8. (n.a.), (n.d.), "Violence Prevention," Office of Violence Prevention, Los Angeles (LA) County Workplace, <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/ovp/WorkplaceViolencePrevention.htm>, retrieved September 8, 2022.
9. (n.a.), 2021, "Active Shooter Incidents in the United States 2017-2021, Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, D.C., [fbi.gov/file-repository/active-shooter-incidents-in-the-us-2021-052422.pdf/view](https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/active-shooter-incidents-in-the-us-2021-052422.pdf/view), retrieved September 8, 2022.
10. Ibid.
11. Burgess, E., 2020, "Prevention, Preparation, and Defense of Active Shooter Lawsuits," USLaw, pg. 26, [uslaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/USLAW-Magazine_Spring-2020.pdf](https://www.uslaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/USLAW-Magazine_Spring-2020.pdf), retrieved September 9, 2022.
12. (n.a.), (n.d.), "Workplace Violence, Enforcement," Occupational Safety and Health Administration, [osha.gov/workplace-violence/enforcement](https://www.osha.gov/workplace-violence/enforcement), retrieved September 8, 2022.
13. (n.a.), (n.d.), "Emergency Action Plan Guide, Active Shooter Preparedness," Homeland Security, [cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/active-shooter-emergency-action-plan-112017-508v2.pdf](https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/active-shooter-emergency-action-plan-112017-508v2.pdf), retrieved September 10, 2022.
14. Black, I., 2010, "Chapter 38 - Defensive Tactics and Officer Safety," The Professional Protection Officer, Elsevier B.V., <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-1-85617-746-7.00038-9>, retrieved September 12, 2022.
15. Smith, E., 2014, "When Things Get Down and Dirty: Workplace Violence" Workplace Security Essentials, Elsevier B.V., <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-416557-1.00008-6>, retrieved September 12, 2022.
16. (n.a.) 2022, "Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management for Educators and Administrators, 7.0 How Threat Assessment Works: Understanding the Pathway to Violence," Texas School Safety Center, <https://txssc.txstate.edu/tools/tam-toolkit/understanding>, retrieved September 12, 2022.
17. (n.a.), October 2008, "Active Shooter How to Respond," U.S. Department of Homeland Security, [dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/active_shooter_booklet.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/active_shooter_booklet.pdf), retrieved September 11, 2022.
18. (n.a.), (n.d.), "Coping with Threats and Violence," Workplace Violence Handbook, Appendix 1 - Emergency Response Checklist, Department of the Interior, [usgs.gov/media/files/emergency-response-checklist](https://www.usgs.gov/media/files/emergency-response-checklist), retrieved September 8, 2022.
19. Burgess, E., 2020, "Prevention, Preparation, and Defense of Active Shooter Lawsuits," USLaw, pg. 26, [uslaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/USLAW-Magazine_Spring-2020.pdf](https://www.uslaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/USLAW-Magazine_Spring-2020.pdf), retrieved September 9, 2022.
20. Ibid.
21. Amman, M., et al., 2017, "Making Prevention a Reality: Identifying, Assessing & Managing the Threat of Targeted Attacks," Behavioral Threat Assessment Center, National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime, Critical Incident

Response Group, Federal Bureau of Investigation, [fbi.gov/file-repository/making-prevention-a-reality.pdf](https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/making-prevention-a-reality.pdf), retrieved September 12, 2022.