

Firefighters guidance note #6-XX: Active attacker events

Plan for events with active shooters before they happen. Everyone needs to know their role to keep safe.

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Background

Firefighters, in the course of their duties, may respond to events with an active attacker, or shooter. An active attacker is an individual using a weapon and actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area. There may be no pattern or method to their selection of victims.

Concerns/hazards

The type of emergency response to an active attacker event depends on the unique circumstances of the incident. Active attacker emergencies can be unpredictable and the situation can evolve quickly. Responding to active attacker events will generally be a tiered

response. Incident command at the scene may initially be fire personnel in cases where police are not first to arrive at the scene.

Actions for employers

Employers should determine the role of fire personnel, and be familiar with the role of police and paramedics. Consideration should be given to jointly developing local protocols with police and paramedic responders to respond to active attacker events. Fire personnel should receive training consistent with the role as determined by the employer.

Safety measures

Although active attacker events are unpredictable in nature, the following safety measures should be considered:

- conduct joint fire, police and paramedic training on local protocols, including classroom and practical training sessions with practice scenarios, where possible
- familiarize personnel with local lock-down procedures for schools, hospitals and other facilities
- have the first arriving fire officer at an active attacker scene conduct a risk assessment before committing fire crews
- establish an incident management system as soon as possible to share information and action plans on scene
- establish how incident command will be transferred to police as necessary upon arrival
- determine, in consultation with paramedics on scene, how to remove injured persons as areas are secured/cleared by police - where possible, cover should be used to withdraw savable victims first
- only provide tactical equipment to trained personnel
- assist paramedics on scene in providing appropriate patient care as requested (for example, extremity wounds may be treatable on scene with tourniquets whereas more serious wounds will require hospital treatment within a reasonable time)
- maintain ambulance access and egress to the scene

- post-incident, the fire department may consider providing counselling to personnel in accordance with local Critical Incident Debriefing protocols

Applicable regulations, acts and standards

Read:

- [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#)
 - clause 25(2)(a) for providing information and instruction to a worker
 - clause 25(2)(d) for making workers aware of hazards
 - clause 25(2)(h) for taking every precaution reasonable to protect workers
 - Part III.0.1 for violence and harassment requirements
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Related

Guidance note 6-13 Violence and harassment

[Active Shooter Toolkit](#) – International Association of Fire Chiefs

This resource does not replace the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA) and its regulations, and should not be used as or considered legal advice. Health and safety inspectors apply the law based on the facts in the workplace.