

MAY-JUNE 2021

Protecting People and Operations from Active Shooter Threats



In 2016, the U.S. saw an average of one active shooter event every 18 days. Incidents often last less than 15 minutes, during which an assailant can cause significant harm. They can happen anywhere, any time, including in the workplace – as the early months of 2021 have shown.

Organizations cannot eliminate such threats, but they can form action plans covering what to do before and after an attack to reduce their risk, mitigate potential damage and hasten recovery.

Preparing for the Risk of an Active Shooter Event

Crisis management and communication plans should include active shooter scenarios and be well-tested. Employees should understand their specific roles and responsibilities, and what to do during an event.

Plans should be developed with input from risk management and safety teams, human resources and legal departments, and other key stakeholders. Organizations should also consult with local law enforcement and emergency responders, and consider any applicable state and local laws, including those regarding concealed weapons.

Half of assailants target a location with which they have a connection, such as a current or former workplace or school, or the workplace of a spouse or other acquaintance. Organizations should have specific processes in place for employees, students and others to confidentially report suspicious or potentially violent behavior or domestic concerns to human resources and security departments.

After a Shooting

Following a shooting, organizations should focus on assisting employees, customers and others, as well as the families of any victims. The physical and psychological effects can be devastating, even to people who do not directly witness the event. Outside advisors, including crisis management experts, can provide specific and objective advice to help an organization return to normal operations.

Like any crisis, an active shooter event can be a defining moment. How an organization responds can either threaten or strengthen its operations, financial performance, brand and confidence among investors, customers, employees, students and local communities. Effective crisis communications can help organizations manage their reputations.

Although it may be difficult, it is critical for organizations that are affected by shootings to thoroughly analyze the event and conduct post-incident reviews with applicable response teams. Detailed discussions or reviews of a shooting could yield valuable lessons learned that can be applied to future situations.

Insurance Considerations

In addition to the emotional and psychological impact of an active shooter event, any resulting injuries or deaths can lead to workers' compensation, general liability and other casualty insurance claims, along with litigation.

It is important to understand what coverages may apply, and to prepare for claims following a shooting. Organizations should include insurance advisors and legal counsel in all discussions, and document all injuries and property damage, including taking photographs to share with their claims teams and with underwriters.

Fortunately for the Farm Credit System, FCCS consistently reviews these threats in order to respond to such events and works to provide best in class coverage for the Farm Credit System, including many of the coverages outlined below.

There will likely be physical property damage and business interruption expenses. If anyone is injured or killed, an organization could face sizable property and casualty insurance claims. Other insurance considerations include:

Workers' Compensation and Employers' Liability

In most cases, workers' compensation insurance coverage responds in the event of an injury to an employee. Following a shooting, employers should ensure that injured employees receive prompt medical attention and notify insurers and claims administrators as soon as possible. Employees who were not physically injured but witnessed the event may be eligible for workers' compensation benefits for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other psychological effects. Benefits can vary by state.

General Liability

If a customer or other third party is injured or killed in a shooting on an insured's premises, a commercial general liability (CGL) policy may respond to provide coverage for medical care, bodily injury, property damage and defense of lawsuits alleging negligence. It is important for organizations to understand terms, conditions and coverage issues that may determine how a CGL policy responds.

Umbrella and Excess Casualty

Depending on the size of a loss, umbrella and excess coverage may respond, and could provide support to affected organizations and victims' families. Many excess insurance policies contain crisis response endorsements that provide funding for reasonable and necessary expenses incurred as a result of a crisis event, such as a shooting.

"Especially with the shootings we've seen over the past several months, and the anticipated return-to-office over the next few months, it's important for organizations to revisit their emergency response plans, make sure they include active shooter events, and test their plans with their employees," says Naomi Baumann, Claims Director for FCCS.

For more information or to talk to one of FCCS' Risk Management and Insurance experts, contact [Naomi Baumann](#) by email or at 303.721.3263.

Article content courtesy of Marsh Consulting