

Tips on Surviving a Rampage Killing

Background Information

In a recent well done FBI video discussing a Rampage Shooting they stressed these three options, **run, hide and fight**. One might question why I elected to write an article that goes far beyond these three simple choices provided by the FBI. The video doesn't go far enough to give a complete understanding of Rampage Attacks nor does it provide enough choices for all members of the community especially old people and people with disabilities. I believe polishing these choices a bit can and will improve your chances. There is another side to the rampage, spree killing story and much more information would be needed and prove to be helpful. It is almost impossible to prepare for the "ideal" Rampage scenario because there is no "ideal" situation. While some factors might be known in advance, many others will only be apparent at the time. For example, you know what your health and physical condition is but will you know if you will be alone or with a spouse or child? What is the surrounding environment like? And how many shooters are there? The more knowledge you have the better you will be able to avoid a bad situation or make quicker choices. I will attempt to cover and elaborate on the following important areas:

1. What might trigger violence in schools and the workplace?
2. What is motivating the shooter to kill so quickly?
3. The 100% Rule
4. Improving awareness and alertness when traveling in public places.
5. The need for having a plan
6. Running away more effectively
7. Hiding and barricading oneself
8. How to create a door ambush
9. Playing dead
10. Rushing / Attacking the shooter
11. Victims response to first responders (police or emergency services)
12. Plus more

I have heard some police sources say "These shootings are not preventable" and guess what, to a large degree, I agree with them. Add to that, based on a shooting timeframe, shootings are usually over long before law enforcement would likely be on the scene. In the FBI report, a good number of rampages were over in 5 minutes or less with some ending in in as little as 2 minutes. Law enforcement response time is minimally 7-10 minutes at best but could be far longer. It might only be by chance that officers would be on the scene in under 7 minutes. SWAT

Team response time is much greater. Therefore, you are on your own and better know what to do to protect yourself and your family. What does this mean? This means survival will be based on what you know and/or luck. The less you know the more luck you need. You know I am not one to rely on luck when my safety or my family's safety is involved and that is the purpose of this article.

Why is the shooter in such a hurry to kill?

Many shootings usually end with the shooter killing himself/herself or being killed by law enforcement, "suicide by cop." Shooters know that it is only a matter of time before police will arrive so they are pressured to do as much damage as quickly as possible. The importance of this is that they will **avoid any obstacles** that would slow them down and not spend much time trying to get one person. There is one exception and that is if you are the target of the shooter i.e. stalker or deranged boyfriend or family member. It is only through a good understanding of the dynamics of this frightening and fluid encounter that one will have the best chance of success other than just plain luck.

Where might a shooting occur? Almost any public place is possible. In the past, shootings have occurred in malls, businesses, educational institutions, government properties, movie theatres, houses of worship, on a train and healthcare facilities to name some.

Most rampage shootings are random where the people selected are targets of convenience. No time is wasted on getting to difficult people like those that are barricaded or hidden.

Workplace Rampages

In many shootings in the workplace, we see certain people targeted i.e. boss, supervisor, or fellow worker as the result of the **3Ds in the workplace, discipline, demotion or discharge**. I believe an additional **B** is left out and that is **bullying**. It is well documented that many of the school shootings are triggered by bullying or the perception of being bullied. Bullies don't just disappear because they graduate from high school. A friend, **Alyse November director of the Brain Lane Memory Center**, has been doing extensive research on **Senior Bullying** and is currently designing a program to address this program. Clearly bullying is a serious problem in the workplace, politics and education. In some cases, the bully is the boss or supervisor but not always. There are many fragile people out there whose entire life revolves around their job. Anything that threatens or changes the circumstances of their work could cause them to go off the deep end and will seek retribution against those they perceived hurt them. We often see more shootings during times of an economic slowdown where people are being fired.

Some History might be helpful

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Created by Professor Arthur Cohen B.A., M.A.
Center for School and Personal Safety Research
(561) 509-6345) Email: ArtmCohen@gmail.com

You might remember the events of July 22, 2011 where Anders Brevik exploded a huge bomb in Norway and then dressed as a police officer and went to a youth camp and began shooting. When he was done, 67 were killed, mostly young people, and 33 wounded. Two of the wounded died later. He said to the judge in court, “He hoped to have killed all 600 on the island.” And for this horrendous crime, where he showed no remorse, he was given 40 years in prison. The Norway killer of 67 was given 40 years in jail, after killing 67 and injuring 33 more. Plus he is allowed to study for a college degree. What’s more, he would be eligible for release in his 70s. I don’t know who is crazier, the shooter or the Norwegian government. You might wonder why I brought up an incident that was so far away and didn’t have any impact on the U.S. Well about two years later, 20 year old Adam Lanza went into a Newton Connecticut elementary school and killed a total of 27 people before killing himself. The world is a much smaller place and news of events travel everywhere. Sources mentioned that Lanza was in part motivated by the Norway shooting. Every major killing event i.e. Columbine, Virginia Tech, etc sets the bar and motivates others for the next big event. These are basically “Lone Wolf” attackers. Those who follow learn by the mistakes of their predecessors and the bar is set just a little bit higher, so each time, the chance of an attack being successful and more catastrophic is that much greater.

After every Massacre or rampage killing there is a huge debate involving prosecutors, defense attorneys, and the courts to determine if the killer is crazy, evil or stupid. Usually it is a combination of all three. This debate consumes a tremendous amount of court time, sometimes months or years and lots of money, with money that could be better spent elsewhere i.e. food and medical services for the poor, aid for returning veterans, aid to schools, or rebuilding infrastructure. For once I agree with something Hillary Clinton said, **“What difference does it make?”** Once the perpetrator is found guilty, it is time to pay the piper. The reason he committed his act shouldn’t even waste a minute of the courts time or money. The U.S. Government is not far behind this Norwegian idiocy and it gets worse by the day. Have compassion for the victims and not the killers. Recently, a convicted felon was given permission to have a sex change operation paid for by you and me while little or nothing is done to aid victims of violence. I just read recently that President Obama is pushing through Pell Grants to incarcerated prisoners. The question isn’t there enough qualified students for Pell grants who haven’t committed crimes? So who is worse, Norway or the U.S.? Remember guards in prison must keep watch over these people and are at risk of attacks daily. Many guards are injured and killed annually by disturbed prisoners who basically have nothing to lose. But let’s get back to our main purpose.

Where does help come from?

There is a religious school of thought that says, **“God will watch over and protect me.”** I was actually told that. So I often provide my quote, **“When it comes to personal safety, we**

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are often our own worst enemy.” That being said, I remind them, who protected the children in the Amish School slaughter, Sandy Hook Elementary School Massacre, the Beslan School massacre in Russia, Columbine High School slaughter, Virginia Tech, the Colorado movie theatre shooting or the slaughter in the Church in Charleston S.C. There have been more than 94 school shootings since Sandy Hook and thousands more shootings around the country. Many of these shootings never become part of the FBI massacre statistics. I remind these people of the saying, **“God helps those who help themselves.”** I am from this school of thought. The following article is for these people who agree with me.

The 100% Rule

Let me share with you the important **100% rule**. No plan of action works 100% of the time. That being said, there is often things that can be done prior to and during the shooting that could seriously improve your odds of surviving. That is if you take the time to learn what they are. Continue reading and I will provide tips about paying attention and quick responses.

Have a Plan(S)!

Having a plan is crucial otherwise you are operating by trial and error. Trial and error is not great when your life is on the line. As Ben Franklin once said, **“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”** And as I have learned from the law enforcement community over 30 years ago, **“Being proactive surely beats being reactive.”** So, **having a plan** is a first step and having a **back-up plan** as well if needed. The more information you know about rampage attacks and how they work the better prepared you can be in formulating a plan of action. Don't wait for the shooting to start to begin thinking about what choices are available. These choices must be prepared well in advance. There are really not very many required.

When it comes to choosing the right response, one size doesn't fit all. In schools, the lockdown is the only response against almost any threat except for fire. In some school shootings, children who had an opportunity to escape elected to go to the classroom for the lockdown because that was all they knew. Under the circumstances, considering the number of people involved in a school, the lockdown might be the only option that schools could perform well enough to save the most people.

Being Alert at all times is Crucial

First and foremost, when in the street one must **“Always stay alert!”** This might give you precious seconds to take preventative action. In almost every safety program I offer, I explain and stress the importance of the **Color Code System** of mental alertness developed by **Col. Jeff Cooper** for the law enforcement community back in the 1980s. To keep this simple, **Color Code White** is equivalent to sleep walking, talking on a cell phone, Ipad, blackberry, blueberry,

strawberry or texting, being drunk or under the influence of drugs. Not the state of mind you would want. **Color Code Yellow** is the state of mind you want to be in when you are out in the street and the best comparison is the equivalent to **defensive driving**. While it is difficult at first to maintain this mode most of the time, with practice it does get easier. What type of distractions could get you out of this mode? First, being stressed, worried, or in a hurry can all provide a distraction. Like I mentioned before, having earphones for music, cell phones, texting, drinking and drugs can reduce your level of awareness to zero. For your safety, whatever you can do to focus on your surroundings will surely pay off. Often you can spot trouble by paying attention and this will often allow you an opportunity to recognize and avoid problems. **Color Code Yellow is your first line of defense**. With a little training, you could learn some specific danger signs. While in **Color Code Yellow** and scanning your surroundings you might notice someone in the distance acting strangely, dressed inappropriately or even walking with a gun in his hand. These would be precious seconds to take advantage using the information in this article. I can't stress the importance of being alert because if we are caught by surprise there is a shock effect which could cause freezing and valuable time lost. It might also enable a shooter to get an "easy" shot at you.

If avoiding trouble hasn't worked, we will now discuss some specific actions that might be helpful. Unfortunately, our response time has now dropped to seconds or milliseconds and more knowledge and training is required.

More training is needed to help recognize dangerous people and situations from a distance. Is it always possible, No! Do you know what the **1000 mile stare** is? This is often a sign that a person is out to hurt people. It is a stare where an individual just looks into the distance and beyond anything in the nearby field of vision. It is hard to miss. Seeing people dressed in clothing that might be inappropriate with the weather or circumstances. This might mean the person is trying to conceal a weapon. Or possibly even notice the person is carrying a gun which is exactly what happened on a recent French train encounter. Remember the 100% Rule because some cultures normally dress in outfits that are out of context with the weather.

Considerations that must be taken into account in Selecting a Plan of Action

Some factors that might influence your plan are your overall health i.e. high blood pressure, heart condition, poor balance, lack of stamina and any recent injuries etc.? Who is with you i.e. wife, girlfriend, children? Were you injured in the initial attack? How close is the shooter, cover, concealment or an exit to safety? In which direction is the shooter facing and how close are you to the shooter(s)? Because rushing and attacking the shooter might be your best option it would be beneficial if you have some strength and combat skills.

The 4; Fs Fight, Flight, Faint or Freeze

For your information, during times of crisis and stress *Homo sapiens* (humans) have a built in safety response and are in some ways protected by the **4 Fs, fight, flight, faint or freeze**. These take over when the conscious mind shuts down and the unconscious mind takes over. These responses evolved over time from our animal ancestors but no longer work as well for certain threats. As an adult, you will probably have already been exposed to one or more of these responses during a past stressful encounter. Believe it or not, each of these has some positive value under certain circumstances. However, with training we could maximize these responses to our best advantage. Our strategies will in some way revolve around these 4 choices.

Running Away

Electing to **run** is another good choice at times and under certain circumstances. However again, thought must be given to your physical condition and **where to run**. When running, you want to get out of a shooters' gun sights as quickly as possible. Are you with a family member that might not know your plan or who are unable to run as fast as you are. Everyone should be aware of their physical limits. If you have health issues, the decision to run a long distance would be out of the question. When traveling in public places, one should frequently practice checking out exits, escape routes and cover. In time, this decision can be made quickly even if one is caught by surprise.

Running Away is one our primary responses to being very frightened. Avoid running away in a wide open area. Use obstacles such as trees, walls, or cars etc. to prevent the shooter from getting a clear shot. **Serpentine running** or **jig jaggging** is often recommended by many, while it makes sense, unless you are in tremendous physical condition, serpentine running is exhausting. The quickest you can get cover or out of the shooters field of vision, the better. If there are exits to the right or left, perpendicular to the shooter, running to these might be a good option. If you are concealed behind something, taking a low peek, if possible, to see if the shooter is focused on you. If not and you start running it would take the shooter up to two seconds to get a bead on you and fire. **According to research conducted by police instructor Dennis Tueller and now called the Tueller Drill, you could cover 21' in 1.5 seconds**. This means if the exit/doorway or safety is 21' or less away, you could possibly make it before he could shoot you. When the shooter reloads that is a good time to make your break because it could take 2 seconds or more to reload based on his proficiency and then he first must aim before firing. This might be a good time to make your move to run to an exit or even rush the shooter.

Panic running/rioting (response) is the most common form of rioting and has a pro and con. With herd animals we call it a stampede. It is quite common in large groups of people as well. It is a spontaneous tactic employed when one is overcome with fright and has no plan. While there is some value in this tactic, there are many risks as well. People panicking have

little regard for anyone around them and will often crush or trample anyone in their way. On the other hand, a shooter might be confused by people running in all directions and therefore many might get away unharmed. It is always better to have a plan where you want to run before starting.

Playing Dead

Playing dead is similar to freezing or fainting and is an option used by some. For some people because of health issues they are unable to run and when no place to hide is available, this might be their only option. One or two people in the Charleston Church shooting survived this way. This was not the only case I read about. However, remember the 100% rule. Why this tactic might work is because shooters realize that police are probably on the way so they have only minutes to do maximum damage. As such, they usually don't take time to check out each body lying on the ground. However, there have been times where the shooter went from body to body and put bullets into them and I believe Virginia Tech was one of those cases. **Playing dead** comes closest to **Fainting** and **freezing** a tactic that has saved people in many situations where the shooter just kept moving on thinking the person is already dead.

Cover vs. Concealment

When attempting to hide, it is important knowing the difference between **cover and concealment**. Don't think just because you are behind a door, wall or car you are safe from being shot. Bullets can go right through. This is concealment and it simply makes you invisible which could significantly reduce the chances of being shot provided the shooter didn't see you go there. The public's perception of what is safe to hide behind is based on the movies and TV shows and is very distorted and mostly inaccurate. If you take refuge behind a vehicle, get behind the engine block: it has the best chance of stopping or deflecting bullets.

When you are behind cover or concealment, resist the temptation to look out to check on the shooter. You risk revealing your position and possibly even getting shot. If you must peek, keep it very short, one to two seconds at most, peek low instead of eye level. A **low peek** is far safer because it is less expected.

To Fight or Not to Fight

Electing to **fight** should be a carefully made decision. This might be the best choice when you are close to the shooter. However, health and physical condition factors are important must be taken into account. Obviously, some form of combat training would be a great asset. Also opportunity is important. This would include the shooter reloading, on at an angle or facing away from you. Having something handy to throw at his or her head to facilitate your approach would be great especially if you are face to face. Hopefully others around will join you.

Barricades

Barricade yourself in a room or closet, lock the door and be very quiet. When barricading yourself, turn off your cell phone and shut off the lights where appropriate. Stay off to the side just in case bullets are shot through the door. If the door opens inward, barricade the door with furniture inside. If the door opens outward, the **door ambush** is a possible option and will be further described shortly. If the outer hall is well lit, darken the room. The shooter's eyes will need a few seconds to adjust to the change. Keep in mind, most shooters realize that it is only a matter of time before law enforcement will be on the scene, so they avoid getting bogged down by locked or barricaded doors or other obstacles. Quietly look around for small objects that are light and hard i.e. ash tray, telephone, scotch tape dispenser which can be used as a weapon to throw at or attack the shooter's head and face should he/she get in. The head is a good target because attacks to the head could trigger a **flinch response** and or stun which would provide valuable seconds to either run or attack. A fire extinguisher is a great weapon. First spray the shooter in the face, this will temporarily blind him and then smash him in the face and head with the container as hard and as often as you can. Then get control of the gun.

The Door Ambush

Making the decision to ambush a shooter should not be taken lightly. Planning and some serious skills are needed. Any ambush requires the element of surprise. Plus there are a number of other variables to consider such as are there multiple shooters? What type of weapons does the killer have i.e. guns, knives, bombs etc.? Are you in the shooter's field of vision? Does he appear to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol?

The Door Ambush is a carefully planned attack that was developed by a number of law enforcement professionals years ago. It is not for everyone and some specific skills are needed. Door ambushes have been used successfully in a variety of situations involving terrorists, rampage shooters, hostage situations, riots, and multiple attackers. The door ambush has a good chance of succeeding if the shooter has to fight his way through a barricaded doorway. Again, the element of surprise is crucial here. If there is more than one shooter the doorway acts as a choke-point prohibiting more than one person from entering at a time. Once the first person is neutralized, you might be able to take his weapon away and use it to attack the others. It might also be possible to use the first person who enters as a shield against others who are behind. You can see where this is not for the novice.

Survival Tips, Strategies and Tactics for Executing a Door Ambush.

- When you enter the room, lock and barricade the door with anything available. If we are "lucky" the barricade will keep those trying to hurt you out long enough until help arrives. In the meantime, we prepare for the worst.

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- Look for anything that can be used as an improvised weapon something with substance but can be swung quickly i.e. ash tray, telephone, shoe, bottle, fire extinguisher etc. Anything that can disrupt vision or shock the brain is good. If we are lucky, hitting the shooter strongly in the head might knock him out or get him to retreat and this wouldn't require the other more elaborate skills needed to disarm.
- Activate any machines in the room i.e. copiers, computer, television, fan or radio to serve as a distraction to anyone as they enter.
- Turn off the lights and close all shades or curtains that allow light into the room. Anytime a person goes from light to dark or dark to light it takes the pupils of the eyes about **four seconds** to adjust.
- If possible, position yourself on the side of the door furthest from the hinges. Behind the door is the likeliest place for someone to hide and the first place intruders will look.
- Stay within an imaginary 45 degree angle between the wall and the center of the room. **Be sure your cellphone is OFF.** Stay close to the wall and make sure the shooter cannot see any part of your body or weapon.
- Be sure when leaning against the wall to maintain noise discipline.
- Touching or rubbing against the wall might produce sound to attract the shooter's attention. That was the reason for turning on as many machines as possible to act as a distraction.
- If the room is dark and the hall is light, the first thing the shooter might do is to flip the light switch. This might be a good chance to attack. If he is using a flashlight, you will know where he is looking based on the beam of light.
- As the gunman enters, he will encounter some blind spots in the room and he can't see both hard corners of the room immediately beyond the entrance at the same time. The distant corners are easy because they are in the visual field provided there is sufficient lighting. Cops have a safer technique called "slicing the room" but this method is far too slow for a rampage shooter.
- When the shooter enters the room, he will assume that his "victims" are unarmed and unprepared to resist. This will encourage a hasty entry and this gives us the element of surprise. He might also be under the influence of drugs and alcohol, which further encourages rash behavior.
- Be prepared to clobber the gunman in the head or face with an improvised weapon immediately as he walks through the door. If you have a fire extinguisher or pepper spray, all the better as a first attack before you clobber him.
- As soon as you strike him in the face, grab for the gun with both hands. As you prepare to disarm him, try to point the gun in a safe direction. If the disarm doesn't work and he pulls the gun back, a natural reaction, shove it into his face and a knee to the groin or lower body would be a good follow-up. And then attempt another disarm.

Warning: It isn't my intention to teach you how to perform gun disarms here; you can't learn how to do disarms by reading a book or watching a video. Learning how to physically disarm a shooter requires specific training with a qualified instructor and a lot of actual practice.

If you already know how to disarm, the information presented would be of great value. If your strip is successful and you get the gun, aim center mass and if necessary shoot him.

Rushing the Shooter

Rushing the shooter might be the last thing on your mind but in some cases and under the right conditions might be your best option. There are times where this is the only choice. On December 7, 1993 you might remember the L.I. Railroad Massacre. The shooter, Colin Ferguson, walked down the aisle and shot people hiding behind their seats. This was a unique shooting where the shooter had plenty of time and wasn't concerned about law enforcement interrupting him because law enforcement couldn't get there until the train pulled into the station. In this case, hiding just got many people shot, 25 in total with 6 dying from their injuries. Finally as Ferguson was reloading a new 15 round magazine someone yelled "grab him." At this point three men tackled him and got the gun away. The answer was **to rush** the shooter because no other choice was feasible. Hopefully, everyone would join the rush and their mass alone would overpower the shooter and get him under control. For those who attempted to run to the next car some people were trampled in the stampede of passengers.

Coincidentally, this week on a French train, a man comes out of the bathroom with a rifle, handgun and box cutter. He was quickly noticed by three American servicemen who immediately rushed him and got him under control. Two of the soldiers were injured in the fight but they prevented the shooter from hurting many others. This turned out to be a radical jihadist and I am concerned this might be the beginning.

One of the 9-11 planes went down over Pennsylvania where a similar situation existed. They couldn't escape and they couldn't let the terrorists control the plane, so the captives rushed the terrorists. While they weren't successful in overcoming the terrorists, they did prevent that plane from targeting a building.

If you plan on rushing, hopefully others will join you. Alone, I am hoping you have good physical skills, either past contact sport training or combat skills. However, it is amazing how effective an "**adrenalin rush**" could be for the average person in a life and death situation. If you are closer than 10' it would take less than 1 second to be on top of the shooter. As mentioned, if the shooter is reloading you could be on him before he can reload and fire. Rushing from the side or back gives you some breathing room to approach before he could get a shot off. When rushing from the front, having something handy to throw at the shooters face/head i.e. ash

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tray, cell phone or shoe can buy a few more seconds. Having something in your hand to smash him in the head i.e. lamp, computer, ash tray or small table when you close the gap is again helpful. These same tools could be used in a door ambush. Anything thrown at a person's face could trigger the "**flinch response**" and this will disrupt his ability to shoot for seconds. Plus, if you hit the shooter, the damage done could incapacitate him for longer periods or knock him out. Once close to the shooter you would try to control the weapon and hopefully strip it from his hand. If you can't reach the weapon, control the arm holding the weapon until you can reach the weapon and then disarm.

New Threats on the Horizon

I hope this information is useful and you never need to use it. You notice I spoke mostly about our domestic crazies and didn't speak much about Islamic Suicide Killers. It is only a matter of time before they are here. Wait a second; we already have had a bunch. Many of the tips presented in this article would apply to them as well. Plus it might not be long before our domestic variety of rampage killers might not be adopting some of the tactics used by Islamic Jihadists.

Islamic Jihadists will present many additional problems because they have developed a higher level of military and combat skills and training. Plus, they often work in teams and their weaponry is more sophisticated. I am very concerned about this new threat. Fortunately, so far we haven't seen this team effort here but I feel it is only a matter of time.

Never rush your Rescuers

One last tip, **Never rush to the rescuers** unless you have a death wish. They will not know who you are or how many shooters are around. If you are injured, you must be patient because first responder's primary role is to take out the shooter and helping the injured is secondary. Also, follow the directions of the rescuers. If they tell you to lie down or put your hands behind your back, do it and do it quickly. We are seeing lately where people are defying law enforcement. This is not a good idea under these or any other circumstances especially where they are under stress also. Obey law enforcement commands and in time who you are will be resolved.

Stay Safe!

Arthur

P.S. I am often asked what establishes me as an expert in this area. I don't pretend to be an expert in anything but would like to share my background briefly. I have worked with the law enforcement community as an "expert" / consultant and student since the early 1980s. I was

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invited to speak at over 60 state and national law enforcement conferences. Also, I was invited to appear on **Law Enforcement Television Network (LETN)** and I was included in two editions of **Who' Who in Law Enforcement Training**. I was twice awarded the **Defensive Tactics Newsletter Leadership Award** in 1996 and 2002. However, it was my time spent as a student sitting in and listening to the best of the best law enforcement instructors from around the U.S. and the world, hundreds of hours, that I acquired a great education. If nothing else, I am an “expert” student. Over the past 30+ I have collected and read over thousands of articles and news stories involving criminal acts including rampage shootings. I reviewed the tactics used by the victims and survivors and from that I determined which ones were successful. After many years of research and writing, in 2010, **Paladin Press** published my book “*Surviving a Massacre, Rampage and Spree Killing.*”