



Increasing Preparation in Communities in the Event of Emergencies (Active Shooters, Domestic Terrorism, and Natural Disasters): A White Paper by the National Center for Citizen Safety

**By Lois J. Blevins
& Austin Moon**

Introduction:

Active shootings and Domestic Terrorism has become a tragic norm in our American society today. With the numbers rising to epidemic proportions in the United States, citizens can no longer sit on the sidelines and wait for an epic answer or solution. In addition, Americans cannot wait years for gun control and other proposed legislation that may or may not thwart this huge “elephant in the country;” but rather the United States must begin to prepare our communities when faced with this problem. We need to conduct outreach locally and nationally to teach the communities how to conduct proactive measures (just as we have taught millions of Americans how to “stop, drop, and roll” – we too need to teach the public how to “**Assess the Situation, Cover Yourself, and Take Action**” or “A.C.T.” – as NCCSAFE states, “Saving lives ONE A.C.T. at a time.”

Not only do we need to teach citizens how to A.C.T., but there is also a critical need for legislation to be put in place to mandate emergency preparedness drills (shelter-in-place and lockdown). Only through drills can people be properly prepared in times of emergency. This policy should be implemented with all citizens-at-large by

implementing the NCCSAFE organization's A.C.T. Campaign to teach communities how to safely react in case of an active shooting and other emergency situations we will be able to prepare the public for a multitude of crisis and potentially save lives.

Background:

Active Shooters:

The Department of Homeland Security defines an active shooter as "an individual actively engaging in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area."¹

In a 2013, a study was conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Texas State University on active shooters. The FBI compiled and analyzed over 160 active shooter incidents over the last 13 years, from 2000 – 2013.² From this data, the FBI found that the number of active shooting incidents is rising with epic levels. The last four years (2009-2013) had almost the same number of incidents as the previous nine years (2000-2008). The FBI's critical analysis report, which lead this writer to the NCCSAFE mission, solidified out of 160 incidents, only 107 ended before police arrived, or (67%) of the incidents ended before any first responder could arrive to the scene to disable the subject. These statistics drive home the need to have a system in place to

¹ Blair, J. Pete, and Schweit, Katherine W. (2014). A Study of Active Shooter Incidents, 2000 - 2013. Texas State University and Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington D.C. 2014, <https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/office-of-partner-engagement/active-shooter-incidents> .

² Federal Bureau of Investigation, "A Study of Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Between 2000 and 2013" page 6-10

guide the public on how to respond in times of an emergency without relying on law enforcement or first responders.³

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA);

The OSHA agency which was started in 1971 by President Richard Nixon was created in order to “assure safe and healthful working conditions for working men and women by setting and enforcing standards and by providing training, outreach, education, and assistance.”⁴ This organization requires all business with more than 10 employees to have a written fire prevention and emergency exit plan for each work area, and an oral version for businesses with less than ten employees.⁵ In addition, the State of Maryland created their own division called the **Maryland Occupational Safety and Health (MOSH)** and also abides by these rules. But the State of Maryland also obeys the **National Fire Protection Associations (NFPA)** fire drill policies, which are evacuation drills. (See Appendix A, Table 1.1)

State Legislation:

All 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia, have no additional legislation requiring businesses to conduct safety preparedness drills. Various states have different fire codes for schools, hospitals, and state agencies which require a certain number of safety drills throughout the year. Several states abide by the **NFPA 101: Life Safety**

³ Federal Bureau of Investigation, “A Study of Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Between 2000 and 2013” page 9-16

⁴ U.S. Department of Labor, <https://www.osha.gov/about.html>

⁵ U.S. Department of Labor, https://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=FEDERAL_REGISTER&p_id=17456

Codes, which get more specific about drills for different types of buildings. However, each state has their own Department of Emergency Management agency that does not mandate, but rather encourages emergency preparedness practice drills. These drills are strongly encouraged for homes and businesses, but are not required or enforced by the state.

Types of Drills:

Currently, the State of Maryland only practices evacuation drills. These evacuation drills comply with the NFPA evacuation drill policies and standard. Although evacuation drills can be used for an appropriate response to various types of emergencies. The NFPA has a focus on fire prevention and evacuation. Many of their codes and articles in their Life Safety Code manual address basic requirements required, such as having an emergency preparedness plan and evacuation plan. As well as having standards for fire prevention equipment (fire extinguishers, sprinklers, etc.). However, there are also disasters and emergencies where the worst thing to do is to try and exit a building in mass. For those types of situations there are shelter-in-place and lockdown drills.⁶

A shelter-in-place and lockdown drills can be used, but not limited to, national disasters, incidents with hazardous materials, and active shootings. In the past shelter-in-place or lockdowns were implemented through the police and fire departments. They would enforce a state of emergency and require a lockdown. Even though there are emergencies that require building to go into a state of lockdown, the employees are

⁶ Ohio government Shelter-in place
<https://www.odh.ohio.gov/~media/ODH/ASSETS/Files/chss/school%20nursing/sipguidelinesforweb.pdf>

never trained on performing these drills. They may be told about the emergency preparedness plan, but do not receive further instruction.

The decision between evacuation and shelter-in-place comes down to whether or not the building itself is considered safe. If it is not then it is best to evacuate. If it is safe then it is best to shelter-in-place.

Recommendations and Future Direction:

Frequency:

Shelter-in-place and lockdown drills are currently not required in the State of Maryland by any organization or business. The NCCSAFE recommends the State of Maryland adopt new legislation to mandate two drills (shelter-in-place and lockdown) for stronger emergency preparedness in local communities and throughout the state both for businesses (both private and public) to include schools and hospitals. The proposed Rescorla Safety Drill Act should be passed as it will enforce and list the required steps for buildings to go through to prepare for several different types of emergencies. This act will require facilities to conduct a minimum of two drills to address, prepare, and allow citizens to practice evacuation and lockdown or shelter-in-place procedures. Businesses (both private and public) to include schools and hospitals of a certain size will also be required to work with the local police and fire departments to increase communication and help each community become more prepared.

Conclusion:

Preparation and practice are critical elements for emergency preparedness and for ultimately saving lives. American cannot sit on the sidelines and wait for gun control or

other gaps to be filled. Just as we have conducted the “stop, drop, and roll” campaign for fire prevention, we must now move into the 21st Century and conduct “A.C.T.” campaigns so citizens understand how to take shelter or lockdown during an active shooter, other type of domestic terrorist attack, or natural disaster.

By teaching Americans several simple procedures and a mnemonic to go with it (A.C.T.), we will fill a significant gap in today’s society.

By partnering with first responders and when necessary working in tandem during mandated drills, it will ensure everyone understands what and when to conduct the procedures and how to act according. The more educated and prepared the public on how to act is on these types of events, the more first responders can contain, command, and stop an incident. Only through practice will American citizens know how to respond in a safe and correct manner to a critical incident.

Appendix A

Table 1.1: National Fire Protection Agency, "NFPA 101: Life Safety Code"

<i>Occupancy</i>	<i>Location in Life Safety Code</i>		<i>Number of Drills Required per Year</i>
	<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Section</i>	
Assembly	12, 13	12.7.6, 13.7.6	N/A
Educational	14, 15	14.7, 15.7	Not less than 1 per month for every month a facility is in session*
Day care	16, 17	16.7, 17.7	Not less than 1 per month for every month a facility is in session*
Health care	18, 19	18.7.1.2, 19.7.1.2	Quarterly on each shift
Ambulatory health care	20, 21	20.7.1.2, 21.7.1.2	Quarterly on each shift
Detention and correctional	22, 23	22.7.1, 22.7.1	N/A
Hotels and dormitories	28, 29	28.7.1.2, 29.7.1.2 28.7.3, 29.7.3	Hotels: Quarterly emergency organization Dorms: Regular evacuation drills
Residential board and care	32, 33	32.7.3, 33.7.3	Bimonthly drills (2 must be while patients are sleeping)
Mercantile	36, 37	36.7.1, 37.7.1	Periodic employee drills
Business	38, 39	38.7.1, 39.7.1	Periodic drills in buildings with more than 500 occupants or more than 100 above or below street level
Industrial	40 [†]	40.2.2.11	Regular drills [†]

This is a table from the NFPA to show their requirements for different buildings under their Life Safety Codes.