

**The Bill Blackwood
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**An Examination of Patrol Response to Active Shooter Incidents.
A Need for Added Training?**

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**An Administrative Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
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ABSTRACT

Over the past forty years, American law enforcement officers have been confronted with a relatively new breed of criminal. From the sniper in the University of Texas Clock Tower to the two deranged students at Columbine High School, these violent offenders seek only to inflict maximum death and carnage, including firing upon responding officers. The traditional law enforcement tactic of containing the scene and awaiting SWAT has proven ineffective against these “active shooters.” As a result, several progressive police agencies have developed innovative methods for neutralizing these murderous offenders.

This paper examines whether there is a need for additional training of patrol officers in how to effectively respond to active shooter incidents. A review of literature, including books, magazines, and newspaper articles was conducted. Several different active shooter response plans were examined, compared and contrasted. A survey of 29 Texas police agencies was conducted. Although the results of the survey indicated that over 50 percent of Texas police agencies currently conduct some form of active shooter training, there still exists a substantial need for this instruction. The review of literature reflects a need for not only additional training, but additional equipment such as long rifles and bunkers. Disturbingly, the results of this research indicate a strong need for police agencies to conduct active shooter training in conjunction with school district police departments.

Preservation of life is the ultimate goal of every police department. It is essential that police agencies provide officers with the best training and equipment with which to respond to active shooters and, therefore, save lives

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INTRODUCTION

On April 20, 1999 two deranged students at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado forever changed the way the public expects law enforcement agencies to respond to critical incidents. Despite being engaged in a brief gun battle with a school resource officer early in the shooting rampage, the two suspects were able to murder twelve other students and one teacher during the massacre. Twenty-four students were wounded. The images of trapped and wounded students awaiting rescue, while responding law enforcement agencies cautiously contained the scene and awaited the deployment of SWAT teams, were indelibly etched into the psyche of the American public by the mass media. From this, and several other high profile incidents of school and workplace violence, the term “active shooter” was coined.

The active shooter is “an individual armed with a firearm who has been shooting citizens, and who continues to do so even in the presence of responding officers. This individual is willing to exchange fire with officers and kill unarmed citizens” (Curry & Hastings, 2001, p. 21). Another prime example of an “active shooter” incident is the infamous North Hollywood Shoot-out, where two heavily armed suspects wearing heavy body armor engaged responding Los Angeles police officers for over 45 minutes, wounding 13 officers and civilians before finally being stopped by SWAT officers. Active shooter incidents continue to occur in all areas of the country to this day. On August 27, 2003, a disgruntled 36 year-old ex-employee carried a handgun into the Windy City Core Supply in Chicago, Illinois and began shooting. The suspect, who had been fired six months earlier, killed six and wounded fourteen before finally being shot and killed by responding officers during a running gun battle (Vanden Brook, 2003, p. 3A).

The traditional law enforcement response to these incidents, adopted over the previous thirty years, was to “contain, control, and communicate to the suspect” (Glick, 2001, p. 20). Active shooters, by definition, are not interested in negotiating with officers, instead only seeking to extend the carnage and body count. Responding patrol officers are, therefore, placed in a dangerous dilemma; whether to contain the scene and await the arrival of SWAT, or to attempt to assault the suspect with limited personnel, equipment, and training. The latter option exposes the officer to physical harm, while the first option risks significant emotional damage to the officer if innocent civilians are subsequently injured or killed. In response, several agencies have developed training programs designed to prepare patrol officers to respond to active shooter incidents. QUAD (Quick Action Deployment), Quick Clear Rescue, and Immediate Action Rapid Deployment are some of the more well known.

The purpose of this research paper is to examine the need for law enforcement agencies, specifically the Corpus Christi Police Department (CCPD), to adopt active shooter training for patrol officers. Additionally, this paper will compare and contrast the elements of the existing active shooter training programs, and to identify the key points required in any such program. The intended method of inquiry will include a review of literature regarding workplace and school violence, as well as active shooter incidents and training. Books, magazines, newspaper articles, and actual training presentations will be reviewed and analyzed. Additionally, a survey of law enforcement agencies to discover whether they currently conduct active shooter training, or would consider such training beneficial, will be conducted. It is hypothesized that the research will show that

law enforcement agencies, and specifically the CCPD, should adopt active shooter training into their training curriculums.

The implications of this research into patrol officer response to active shooter incidents are two-fold. First, this research will benefit the community by giving the patrol officer additional training with which to save innocent lives. Secondly, this research will benefit the patrol officer responding to these incidents by providing training and techniques with which to bring the incident to a successful conclusion, while minimizing the increased risk to the officer.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

While the tragic events at Columbine High School seared the images of dead and wounded teenagers into the American psyche and helped lead to the coining of the term active shooter, it was not the first such incident in recent history. Active shooter incidents in the United States can be traced back over forty years. Perhaps one of the first and most widely remembered incidents occurred on August 1, 1966 when an ex-Marine named Charles Whitman climbed the clock tower at the University of Texas and began to indiscriminately fire on innocent civilians. Before two Austin Police officers shot him to death, Whitman was able to kill fifteen and wound thirty-one with his high powered arsenal of rifles (Glick, 2001, p. 20). In San Ysidro, California on July 18, 1984 forty-one year old James Huberty walked into a McDonald's restaurant and began randomly shooting the terrified patrons. Armed with a 12-gauge shotgun, Uzi 9mm submachine gun and a Browning 9mm handgun, Huberty murdered twenty-one people, many of them children, and wounded another nineteen. Huberty's murderous rampage lasted nearly an hour. "Responding patrol units could not get close enough with

conventional sidearm and shotguns. The gunman was stopped when a sheriff's deputy used a scoped rifle that he kept in the trunk of his car" (Hawkins, 1999, p. 53). Violence in the workplace has resulted in numerous active shooter incidents throughout recent years. Southerland, Collins, and Scarborough (1997) noted that workplace violence is not a new phenomenon; it is as old as the relationship between employer and employee, with homicide accounting for approximately twelve percent of all employee deaths. The incident that brought workplace violence to the forefront of American consciousness occurred just after dawn on August 20, 1986, in tiny Edmond, Oklahoma. Patrick Sherrill, a full-time substitute letter carrier concealed two .45-caliber pistols inside his mailbag. Sherrill had taken the pistols from the local National Guard Armory, where he was a member of the marksmanship team. Sherrill immediately shot his supervisor in the chest at close range, and then murdered thirteen more of his coworkers during a ten minute rampage (Kelleher, 1996, p.143). Corpus Christi has also experienced the tragedy associated with workplace violence. On April 4, 1995 disgruntled ex-employee James Simpson, age twenty-eight, walked into the Walter Rossler Company armed with a .38 caliber revolver and a 9mm pistol. Before committing suicide, Simpson murdered Walter Rossler, 62, owner of the company; his wife, Joann, 62; Derrick Harrison, 35; Wendy Patty Gilmore, 41; and Richard Tomlinson, 34. Responding CCPD officers could still hear shots being fired as they arrived on scene and prepared to make entry (True, 1995, ¶ 2).

Among the most horrific images of the Columbine massacre were the video clips of wounded students beckoning for help as law enforcement officers cautiously approached, following the traditional response to mass shooting incidents. Whether this

approach led to more students being wounded or killed is still being debated, but what is clear according to Douglas (2002) is that, “through no fault of their own, the tactics they were trained to use were not suited to the nature of the incident.” Perhaps it was the fact that both the victims and suspects were so young that was so shocking, but whatever the case, this tragedy has led directly to a paradigm shift in the philosophy of how law enforcement responds to these incidents. Citizens have made it clear to law enforcement professionals that they are expected to take immediate action to neutralize active shooters and rescue victims (Douglas, 2002, p. 44). This is a major philosophy transformation within a profession that is notoriously slow to accept change.

The development of the Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) concept by the Los Angeles Police Department following the 1965 Watts riot changed the way police agencies responded to sniper and hostage situations. “The current approach for dealing with hostage and sniper situations is no longer to assault the location. Police departments are using a negotiations process. This allows them to deal with the suspect or suspects psychologically. The new outlook is to contain the location, isolate the problem, negotiate with the suspects and use assault tactics only as a last resort” (Perry, 1998, p.86). Columbine and other high profile incidents have caused the law enforcement community to rethink these tactics, since active shooters are only interested in creating a high body count, not negotiations.

Across the country, law enforcement agencies have developed new strategies for responding to active shooter situations. QUAD, Homicide in Progress (HIP), and Quick Clear Rescue are some of the better known. Most of these concepts are very similar in nature, although there are some minor differences. The basic philosophy behind all of

these concepts is the same; patrol officers, or sometimes school police officers, will be the first to arrive at the scene of an active shooter incident. The traditional response calls for securing the perimeter and calling for SWAT, yet the average response time for SWAT varies from thirty to fifty minutes. Since the vast majority of incidents involving active shooters are over in less than ten minutes, there is no time to call for SWAT. Patrol officers, therefore, must quickly size up the situation, coordinate with each other, and then make entry as a team. The primary goal behind these concepts is the same for all departments who employ them; locate and neutralize the suspect before he can kill or injure any more victims. Scanlon (2001) writes that "Their mission, and only mission is to locate and stop the active shooter(s)." Many may read that to mean the goal is to arrest or kill the active shooter. Oldham (2002), writing about Quick Clear rescue states that, "The goal of this operation is not to apprehend or kill the suspect. The goal of the operation is to stop the killing and halt further injury to anyone else once the officers are on the premises." If the suspect manages to escape, the goal has still been accomplished. This stands in stark contrast to the traditional concept of patrol officers containing the scene and awaiting SWAT. However, while many active shooters plan their massacres in great detail, very few actually include an escape plan (Douglas, 2002, p. 44).

The four essential elements of this new philosophy are summarized by the anagram CATT, which stands for communications, aggressiveness, tactics and teamwork. Officers responding to active shooter incidents must communicate with each other as well as the dispatcher, and they must aggressively seek out the suspect. Aggressiveness does not mean uncontrolled anger, but seeking out the suspect with

confidence and courage. While searching for the suspect, officers must rely on traditional officer safety tactics and depend on their fellow teammates to keep them from harm (Eberly, 2003, p.40).

Once the patrol officers determine that an active shooter situation exists, they must form a team and make entry immediately. The recommended number of officers required for this task varies from four to six. Oldham (2002) writes that Quick Clear Rescue can be initiated using as few as three officers, while Nichols (2003) demonstrates tactics for contact teams using only two officers. While Scanlon (2001) emphasized that it was an officer's legal and moral obligation to do everything within his power to stop a suspect from injuring or killing civilians, Douglas (2002) reminds us that "the decision for the first responding officer to act must be accompanied by a reasonable likelihood of success." No one expects officers to undertake a suicide mission. Most writers, however, recognized that patrol officers will risk making entry without the minimum allotment if lives are at stake.

Once the team has been formed, entry is made into the building, with officers notifying the dispatcher of the entry point. In formation, the officers then cautiously, but quickly proceed towards the last known location of the suspect. The two most commonly mentioned formations are the diamond or quad formation and the "T" formation, both adopted from SWAT team tactics. Each of these formations includes a point officer, flankers or utility officers, and a rear guard. The point officer should be armed with a rifle and is responsible for any threats from the front, especially down long hallways. The flankers or utility officers are responsible for covering threats from the side rooms or doorways, while the rear guard is responsible for any threat coming from

the rear. While the team should utilize traditional techniques such as “slicing the pie” and “quick peeks” as it advances towards the suspect, the team must balance safety with speed. Officers must remain focused on their primary mission of locating and neutralizing the suspect and cannot be distracted from this. “Walking past bombs, stepping over injured children and running past rooms full of terrified individuals sounds ridiculous, but it is the right thing to do morally and tactically,” writes Wood (2001, p. 77). As the assault team moves forward, other officers may flow in behind, securing the hallways and rooms that the assault team has already cleared. Rescue teams may also follow in to evacuate the wounded. Rescue teams do not include paramedics or EMT’s, but are comprised solely of officers operating in the same diamond or “T” formation as the assault team. The only difference is that the rescue team includes “grabbers”, officers who are responsible for carrying the most severely wounded victims back to the entry point while the rescue team covers them. Once the assault team has reached the suspect, the incident may conclude in one of several ways: the assault team may engage and eliminate the suspect; the incident may evolve into a traditional hostage or barricaded subject scenario; or the suspect may have already escaped or committed suicide.

While the general concept regarding patrol officer response to active shooters was consistent throughout the literature reviewed, much of the literature neglected to explain how this would be implemented. In order for patrol officers to successfully employ this new concept, two things are essential; the officers must be adequately equipped and they must be properly and thoroughly trained. Joint training between law enforcement agencies and school district police departments was exemplified by the

“The Baldwin Park Model”. Police officers from the Baldwin Park Police Department in California attended active shooter training along with officers from the Baldwin Park Unified School District. The two departments combined on the purchase of .223 rifles to be carried in every squad car, and the school district upgraded the sidearm their officers carried from 9mm to the same .40 caliber model that the city officers were issued (Sanders, 2001, p. 100). In Pinellas County, Florida, the St. Petersburg Police Department conducted a massive active shooter training exercise including the Pinellas Co. ISD, the St. Petersburg Fire Department, and over 1,500 high school students and teachers (Weiss & Davis, 2003, p. 74). This level of cooperation, however, appears to be the exception, rather than the rule. The El Paso County Sheriff’s Office in Colorado equips all patrol deputies with .223 rifles and high capacity semi-automatic pistols, prior to conducting intensive active shooter training (Curry & Hastings, 2001, p. 22). In order to safely and successfully engage an active shooter, officers must train regularly. Dugger (2002) emphasizes the importance of safety precautions during active shooter training to avoid the tragic consequences that resulted in the death of an Arlington, Texas police officer during a training scenario in 2001. Finally, Sanow (2002) recommends that every patrol car carry some type of .223 rifle, and that every patrol officer and supervisor in the country attend active shooter training.

The standard issue sidearm for Corpus Christi Police Officers is the .357 magnum revolver. Officers are allowed to purchase a Beretta 9mm or Sig Sauer .45 caliber pistol after they have completed the six-month field training officer program. A study is currently under way to examine the feasibility of issuing semi-auto handguns to all officers. CCPD officers are authorized to carry the Remington 870 pump action

twelve-gauge shotgun, but must first complete a ten hour training course. The department, however, does not issue enough shotguns to equip all patrol officers. Officers are permitted to purchase their own. Only SWAT officers are allowed to carry any type of rifle. The CCPD does not conduct any active shooter training either in the academy or during in-service training.

METHODOLOGY

A survey was prepared as a method of inquiry to the question of whether added training is necessary for law enforcement officers who respond to active shooter incidents. The survey was distributed to the thirty students of the October 2003 LEMIT Module I at Texas A&M, College Station. All thirty students were sworn law enforcement officers, including one member of the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officers Standards and Education (TCLEOSE). Twenty-nine of the thirty students responded to the survey. Although a small sample, the respondents represented a cross section of law enforcement professionals; from agencies of less than fifty officers serving communities under 10,000 civilians, to agencies with over 500 sworn officers serving cities of well over 500,000 citizens. The survey was simply constructed and consisted of six questions including two follow-up questions. A copy of the survey is attached as Appendix A. It is hypothesized that the survey results will reveal that the need exists for added active shooter training for law enforcement first responders.

FINDINGS

The survey of the LEMIT class was conducted based on two fundamental reasons. First, the class represented a broad cross section of department and

community size, as well as a wide diversity in age and experience among the officers. Secondly, the LEMIT class offered a readily accessible sample for survey purposes. What follows is the results of that survey.

Of the 29 respondents to the survey, 11 were employed by agencies of fewer than 50 officers, seven by agencies between 50 and 99 officers, two by agencies with 100 to 249 officers, four by agencies with 250 to 499 officers, and four by agencies with over 500 sworn officers. One respondent, as mentioned earlier, was employed by TCLEOSE. For the purposes of this research, his responses will not be included since he was not employed as a law enforcement first responder, and therefore most of the questions did not apply to him.

Of the 28 remaining respondents, 54% reported that their department conducted active shooter training. As to the question of whether they had attended active shooter training, 61% of the respondents indicated that they had received some form of active shooter training, either through their department or from an external training agency. 36% of the officers reported that they had not attended active shooter training. One officer failed to respond to this question. Of the 17 officers who indicated they had attended active shooter training, 65% responded that they strongly agreed that this training had been beneficial, 18% agreed that it had been beneficial, one was uncertain, while two responded that they strongly disagreed that the training had been beneficial.

54% of the officers surveyed responded that they are employed in a jurisdiction that includes a school district which has its own police force. Of the fifteen, one respondent indicated that his police department contracts with the school district for police services. Of the 15 officers who indicated that their jurisdiction included a school

district police department, only 33% responded that their agency conducts active shooter training in conjunction with the school district police department.

25% of the respondents to the survey indicated that their department has some form of written policy outlining the required patrol officer response to active shooter incidents. Of these seven, one indicated that the policy was currently in the process of being written, while another officer indicated that the policy was included within an inter-jurisdictional SWAT agreement as opposed to the department's general manual. One officer indicated that he was unsure if his department had a written policy, while the remaining 68% responded that their department had no written policy governing patrol officer response to an active shooter incident. 86% of the officers responded that they believed it was necessary to have a written policy outlining the response to an active shooter incident, while 11% answered that they believed it was unnecessary. One officer failed to respond to this question. 100% of the officers who responded that their department does not conduct active shooter training indicated that they believed this type of training would be beneficial to them and their agency.

Of the 11 respondents employed by agencies with less than 50 sworn officers, 36% reported that their department conducts active shooter training. 57% of respondents employed by agencies with a sworn contingent of between 50 and 99 officers reported that their agency conducts active shooter training. 50% of the respondents from agencies consisting of between 100 and 249 officers stated that their department conducted active shooter training, as well as 50% of the officers from agencies with 250 to 499 officers. 100% of the officers from agencies with over 500 sworn officers indicated that their department conducted active shooter training.

While only 36% of the officers employed by agencies with less than 50 officers reported that their department conducts active shooter training, 64% indicated that they had been through some type of active shooter training. This indicates that at least 27% of these officers attended active shooter training outside of their own agency. The responses from the officers employed by the larger agencies matched the responses to the first question, indicating that if they had received active shooter training it had been through their department.

Of the four officers employed by agencies of under 50 who reported there was a school district police agency within their jurisdiction, 25% indicated that they conduct active shooter training in conjunction with that agency. Of the four officers from agencies consisting of 50 to 99 officers who answered yes, 50% indicated that they conduct joint active shooter training with the school district. 50% of the officers from agencies consisting of between 100 and 249 officers reported that the department conducts joint training with the school district, while none of the officers from agencies consisting of 250 to 499 indicated that they conducted active shooter training along with the school district police. 50% of the officers from agencies over 500 with a school district police department within their jurisdiction indicated that the police department and school district conduct joint training.

27% of the officers from agencies with less than 50 officers indicated that their department either had a written policy regarding response to active shooter incidents, or was in the process of writing one; one officer responded that he was unsure, with the remaining 64% responding that they had no policy. 29% of the officers employed by agencies consisting of between 50 and 99 officers indicated that their department had

no written policy regarding active shooter response. 100% of officers from agencies consisting of between 100 and 249 officers indicated that their department had no written policy. Of the four officers from agencies between 250 and 499, 25% indicated the department had a written policy, one stated he was unsure, and the remaining 50% indicated that no such policy existed. 25% of the officers from agencies larger than 500 indicated that their department had a written active shooter response policy.

Most officers believed that a written active shooter response policy was necessary. Less than one percent of the officers from agencies with less than 50 officers indicated that they believed it was unnecessary, less than one per cent of officers from agencies with between 50 and 99 officers believed it was unnecessary, although 50% of the officers from agencies consisting of 100 to 249 officers believed it was unnecessary. One officer did not respond to the question. Officers from all size agencies responded unanimously that they believed active shooter training would be beneficial to them and their agency.

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

In the past several years the United States has witnessed a dramatic rise in the number of school shootings, episodes of workplace violence, and incidents of terrorism. Patrol officers today are more likely to find themselves responding to these incidents outgunned and untrained. The purpose of this research was to determine if a need exists for law enforcement agencies to provide added active shooter response training to patrol officers. It was hypothesized that the research would show that law enforcement agencies, and specifically the CCPD, should adopt active shooter training into their training curriculums.

Of the 28 law enforcement agencies surveyed, 54% provide officers with active shooter response training. Although this number was somewhat higher than what was anticipated, it still suggests that almost half of all law enforcement agencies in the state of Texas do not provide their officers with this training. 11% of the officers who had received training indicated that they had attended the training outside of their own departments. While this was a limited sample, it supports the hypothesis that there is an added need for active shooter training in law enforcement. Additionally, where a school district police department existed, only 33% of the officers surveyed indicated that their department conducted joint training with the school district. Since schools are one of the most common targets of active shooters, this percentage is disturbingly low. For small departments it would seem the most crucial to combine resources with school districts, since most small departments do not have the manpower to respond to major incidents.

A review of the literature revealed there are numerous active shooter training programs already in existence that could be readily adapted to an agency's own policy and procedure; Quad, Quick Clear Rescue, HIP, are a few of the familiar curriculums. The San Diego Police Department, El Paso County Sheriff's Office (Colorado), and the Columbus Police Department (Ohio) are but a few of the law enforcement agencies that have already implemented active shooter response plans for their officers. The Baldwin Park Police Department (CA.) and St. Petersburg Police Department (Fla.) demonstrated the importance of joint active shooter training. The review of literature emphasized the need for upgrading the weapons and equipment carried by patrol officers to respond effectively to active shooters.

While it has been over five years since the tragedy at Columbine and almost three years since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the question for law enforcement is not if another such event will occur, but when. The relevance of this study to law enforcement is that there still exists an urgent need for departments to properly equip and train the patrol officers who will respond to these incidents. As the 9/11 commission searches for answers to what went wrong, law enforcement agencies must assure the public that they are doing everything possible to provide for their safety. Active shooter training is just one means of accomplishing this goal.

Within the city limits of Corpus Christi there exist numerous targets of opportunity for active shooters and terrorists. The Corpus Christi Intermediate School District covers sixty-eight square miles and consists of 62 campuses, including seven high schools and twelve middle schools. The CCISD Police Department provides security to almost 40,000 students with twenty-eight armed police officers and eighteen unarmed safety officers. In addition to the CCISD, the city has the fifth largest deep water port in the United States and has recently established its own police department; many large refineries exist just outside the city limits on “refinery row.” It is essential that the CCPD prepares its officers to respond safely and successfully to potential attacks on these targets by providing better equipment and increased education including active shooter training.

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Appendix A

Active Shooter Training Survey
Todd Green
Corpus Christi Police Department

Name: _____

Agency or Department Name: _____

Number of sworn officers (circle one): <50 50-99 100-249 250-499 over 500

Approximate population of jurisdiction: <10,000 10,001-50,000
50,001-100,000 100,001-250,000 250,001-500,000 over 500,000

The topic of my research paper is active shooter training. An **active shooter** is defined as “an individual armed with a firearm who has been shooting citizens, and who continues to do so even in the presence of responding officers. This individual is willing to exchange fire with officers and kill unarmed citizens.” Please take a few minutes to complete this brief survey.

1. Does your department conduct active shooter training? Yes No

2. Have you attended any type of active shooter training? Yes No

If yes, please respond to the following statement: Active shooter training was beneficial to me (circle one):

strongly disagree disagree uncertain agree strongly agree

3. Does your jurisdiction include school districts that have their own separate police departments? Yes No

If so, does your agency conduct active shooter training with the school district police? Yes
No

4. Does your department have a written policy regarding response to active shooter incidents?
Yes No

5. Do you believe a written active shooter response policy is necessary? Yes No

6. If your agency does not provide active shooter training, do you believe this training would be beneficial to you and your agency? Yes No