



Attacks in Crowded and Public Spaces

While the threat of mass attacks is real, we can take steps to prepare, protect ourselves and help others.

What are Mass Attacks?

Types of Mass Attacks

- Active shooter: Individuals using firearms to cause mass casualties.
- Individuals using a vehicle to cause mass casualties.
- Individuals using homemade bombs to cause mass casualties.
- Other methods of mass attacks may include knives, fires, drones or other weapons.

Be Informed

- **Stay Alert.** Always be aware of your environment and any possible dangers.
- **If you see something, say something** to local authorities. That includes suspicious packages, people behaving strangely, or someone using strange communications.
- **Observe warning signs.** Signs might include unusual or violent communications, expressed anger or intent to cause harm and substance abuse. These warning signs may increase over time.
- **Have an exit plan.** Identify exits and areas to hide wherever you go, including work, school and special events.

- **Learn lifesaving skills.** Take trainings such as [You Are the Help Until Help Arrives](#) and first aid to assist the wounded before help arrives.
- Practice wearing a mask when in public to slow the spread of COVID-19. You will not have time to put on a mask in an active shooter situation. Wearing one regularly will allow you to be prepared to hide safely with those who are not a part of your household. Masks should not be worn by children under two, those who have trouble breathing, and those who are unable to remove them on their own.

Survive DURING

During the COVID-19 pandemic, focus on Run. Hide. Fight. Do not worry about social distancing, wearing a mask, or reducing the spread of COVID-19 during an active shooter situation.

Run to Safety

- **Seek safety.** Getting away from the attacker is the top priority.
- Leave your belongings behind and get away. If you are not wearing a mask, do not stop to put one on. It is more important to run to safety.
- Call 9-1-1 when you are safe and describe the attacker, location and weapons.

Cover and Hide

- If you can't evacuate, cover and hide. Find a place to hide out of view of the attacker and if possible, put a solid barrier between yourself and the threat. If you are hiding with people who are not part of your household, wear a mask and maintain a distance of six feet between yourself and others, if possible. Children under 2 years old, people who have trouble breathing, and people who cannot remove masks on their own should not wear them. Do not leave your hiding place to retrieve your mask.
- Lock and block doors, close blinds and turn off lights.
- Keep silent.

Defend, Disrupt, Fight

- **Fight only as a last resort.** When you can't run or cover, attempt to disrupt the attack or disable the attacker.
- Be aggressive and commit to your actions.
- Recruit others to ambush the attacker with makeshift weapons like chairs, fire extinguishers, scissors, books, etc.
- Be prepared to cause severe or lethal injury to the attacker.

Help the Wounded

- Take care of yourself first and then, if you are able, help the wounded get to safety and provide immediate care. If you are experiencing a medical emergency, call 9-1-1 and let the operator know if you have, or think you might have, COVID-19. If possible, put on a mask before help arrives.

Be Safe AFTER

When Law Enforcement Arrives

- Remain calm and follow instructions.
- Keep hands visible and empty.
- Report to designated areas to provide information and get help.

- **Follow law enforcement's instructions** and evacuate in the direction they tell you to. When possible, maintain a distance of at least six feet between yourself and people who are not a part of your household and wear a mask to slow the spread of COVID-19. masks should not be worn by children under two years old, those who have trouble breathing, and those who are unable to remove them on their own.
- Once you are out of danger, continue taking steps to protect yourself from COVID-19 and other infectious diseases, by washing your hands, maintaining six feet between yourself and persons who are not part of your family, and avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.

Monitor Communications

- Listen to law enforcement's messages for information about the situation. Share updates with family and friends.

Consider Seeking Professional Help

- Be mindful of your health. If needed, seek help for you and your family to cope with the trauma.
- Engage virtually with your community through video and phone calls. Know that it's normal to feel anxious or stressed. Take care of your body and talk to someone if you are feeling upset. Many people may already feel fear and anxiety about the coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19). The threat of an active shooter can add additional stress. Follow CDC guidance for [managing stress during a traumatic event](#) and [managing stress during COVID-19](#).

Associated Content

- [RUN. HIDE. FIGHT.® Surviving an Active Shooter Event - English](#) (Video)
- [Active Shooter Information Sheet](#) (PDF)
- [Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\) Active Shooter Preparedness Resources](#) (Training, videos, brochures and more for individualized audiences link)
- [Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\) Active Shooter Preparedness Resources Translated](#)

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