

# Preparing You for Emergencies: Armed Intruders

This month's Preparing You for Emergencies is a direct result of the incident at Virginia Tech last month. Whether you are a student, faculty or staff member, you could be in the path of a person with a weapon intending to do harm. These situations do not occur only in dorms or classrooms. In 1989, a gunman entered a Louisville business and shot 20 people; eight people died. You shouldn't live in fear of this occurring, but you should be prepared if it ever does occur.

## Active Shooter

If a perpetrator enters a university building to commit acts of violence, the university may be unable to provide any warning that a person with a gun is on campus. The first warning you receive may be the sounds of gunfire. Once you become aware of the perpetrator **TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION.**

If you are in an office or a classroom, immediately close the door and lock it. Stay away from windows and out of view. Take a position behind heavy furniture, a counter or anything that will hide your location and provide some cover in the event the gunman opens fire. Call Public Safety at 852-6111 or if you are unable to get through, dial 911. Advise the dispatcher of the situation and your exact location. Stay hidden until the police arrive. Once the police arrive, they will escort you from the building. Police officers may ask you to keep your hands in plain sight to ensure you are not mistaken for the perpetrator.

If you are in an open area, visually sweep the area until you find a suitable room that might offer protection from the perpetrator. Make your way into the room as quickly as possible. Then follow the procedure outlined above.

It is imperative that you move quickly to a secured room and stay there until the police arrive.

If you are unable to get into a secured area and the gunman approaches you, your actions will depend solely on your judgment and capability. No strategy is 100% effective. You may be inclined to remain docile and hope that he does not take specific action against you. Another option would be to attempt to reason with the assailant. You may want to escape by running from the area. The last option would be to attack the assailant and try to gain advantage in an attempt to escape.

None of these options will guarantee your safety if you are face to face with an assailant. You must decide what action is best for you and your chance for survival. It is imperative that you quickly react to any sound of gunfire and protect yourself in a locked room outside the sight of a perpetrator. This will be your best chance for survival.

## **Hostage Situation**

If a hostage situation develops, your first actions should be to prevent the perpetrator from taking you as an additional hostage. You can either move immediately to a secure room as outlined in the active shooter strategy or evacuate/escape the area as quickly as possible. Your goal needs to be to escape and to prevent the perpetrator from taking you hostage.

If you are taken hostage, your actions will again fall solely on you. Most people confronted with being taken hostage have found success in passive compliance. In other words, doing what the perpetrator says. Try to maintain your composure and avoid becoming emotional. If you become emotional, the hostage taker may become irrational or angry.

You should look for and mentally plan an escape route. You should not make an attempt to escape unless you feel that the situation has deteriorated and your life is at extreme risk.

Remember that the first warning you will have in these situations may come from the perpetrator or the building occupants. You need to be aware of events occurring around you and take immediate action as soon as you realize that a person is taking a hostage or shooting people.