

What Makes A Good Active Shooter Training Program?

When it comes to an active shooter training program, some people feel that any training is good training. I do not believe in that philosophy. Here is a list of what I think makes a good active shooter training program versus a training fail.

Keep in mind that this information is intended for civilian adults in companies and organizations.

This information is not intended for young children and active shooter drills in schools. It is not intended for emergency workers, law enforcement or military who are trained at different levels.

A GOOD ACTIVE SHOOTER TRAINING PROGRAM

The active shooter training must be engaging.

Most people do not want to be scared! They are looking for information and skills on how to keep themselves alive and get home to their families.

Training Fail: A talking head! No one wants to listen to an hour of statistics that may or may not apply to them.

The active shooter training program drill must be realistic.

This is a serious topic and lives are at stake. If you are bringing active shooter training program into your workplace make sure that the instructor is going to focus on your audience. We get numerous calls a month from potential clients who were very dissatisfied with the offerings of their local law enforcement presenting only from the police perspective.

Training Fail: Instructors and presenters who allow audiences to get out of control with telling jokes. Another training fail is making the training too difficult to understand with too many components.

The active shooter training program needs to be memorable.

No matter how intriguing the presenter is or how fascinating the topic is, adults learn by doing. This is why interactive, experiential drills work. After a recent active shooter training in Orlando, an attendee shared with us that she had just spoken to her husband who is in law enforcement. Diane told him all the things she had learned. Her husband kept saying “I’ve been telling you that for 2 years.” Diane responded by saying “You may have told me but now I get it! Now I understand!” We remember by doing, not by listening.

Training Fail: Boring webinars or video presentations that have low retention rates. I recently had a discussion with a pharmacist from a very large corporation who had just completed her annual mandatory active shooter training. I asked her a couple of basic questions about it. She responded by saying that she either couldn’t remember or maybe it wasn’t covered in her training. That was just a few days post-training! Can you imagine what the retention rate is a few months after the training?

The organization holding the active shooter training program must warn all others in the building.

Make sure to have notices on all doors for visitors, vendors and those passing by that have an active shooter drill in progress. I also recommend to post an employee at the main entrance to warn others. If possible ensure that your employees do not schedule any meetings with clients.

Training Fail: Not double checking to ensure that everyone is aware of the drill including local law enforcement and 911 operators. A long-term care facility decided to host an active shooter drill and did warn everyone of the event and the date but what they failed to do was warn them that an employee would be dragged out of the building in a pseudo kidnapping. The woman who was grabbed was terrified believing that she indeed was being taken hostage and believed she would be killed. There are several pending lawsuits over this training fail.

The active shooter training needs to teach critical thinking skills.

Run, hide and fight alone are not enough. People need to understand how to make critical decisions very quickly amidst chaos and panic. A visceral reaction helps people to understand what they may face in a real situation and how they might respond.

Training Fail: Not talking about emotions! Not talking about what to do when you are terrified.

“Every month I see attendees doing all the wrong things in our mock drills. They freeze, they walk right into the shooter, they gather together at the doorways, they forget about others, many don’t even look up. Why do they make these mistakes – because they have never been taught anything different? When we have a lack of knowledge we all do the best we can but it may not be the smartest choice.”

– *Written by Carol Cambridge, Workplace Violence Expert*