

Active Shooter Event

(Facilitator Note: The intent of this scenario was to create a very challenging situation for the participating FLSs to navigate. The training objective for this scenario is to overwhelm the available resources and personal decision-making capabilities of the FLSs. There may be no clear-cut, “correct” answers for some of the challenges. Therefore, there is no expectation for the FLSs to correctly address every variable that is presented. Instead, this scenario provides a learning experience for FLSs to help them identify individual strengths and weaknesses that will help them perform better when facing difficult and extremely challenging situations.

Discussion topics can involve the importance of staying calm during a major crisis, walking through the steps of the Critical Decision-making Model (CDM), and reviewing the availability of their agency’s immediate and extended resources. Agency trainers need to be mindful that delivering the contents of this scenario in the proper manner may be difficult for less-experienced facilitators. They should ensure the selected facilitator is comfortable with guiding participants through the scenario before commencing with the exercise.)

Facilitator:

It is a Saturday evening in mid-December, and you are assigned to supervise a patrol area that contains several large retailers and the area’s only shopping mall. Due to the holiday season, other supervisors in your work group have taken the day off and you are covering other areas in addition to your own.

At approximately 7:00 p.m., dispatch receives a report of a shooting in the parking lot of the local mall. You listen as the dispatcher begins sending several units to that location. The dispatcher also requests that you respond. You are about to acknowledge the call on the radio when the dispatcher quickly comes on again and states, “Responding units, we are receiving multiple calls that a subject has shot several people in the parking lot with a semi-automatic assault rifle and is now shooting towards the mall entrance near the Food Court.” You are aware the Food Court is located in the northeast corner of the mall and that you are the closest supervisor available to assist. It will be approximately 5-7 minutes for you to reach the mall from your current location and approximately 10-12 minutes before other supervisors are in a position to assist you.

As you are responding, the dispatcher states, “The subject is a large white male wearing camouflage pants and a black top. He has on a blue backpack and has a large black duffel bag strapped over his shoulder. The subject is still actively firing the weapon and just entered the mall near the Food Court. We have multiple callers asking for medical help, stating there are numerous people wounded and dead in the parking lot and also on the walkway leading to the mall entrance.”

You attempt to quickly assess the information and use the radio to coordinate the response. However, you are prevented from broadcasting by the dispatcher, who states, “We have another caller stating the subject has removed the blue backpack and left it at the entrance as he entered the mall. The subject is now inside the mall.”

What are your thoughts on the response to this point?

(Facilitator Note: Do not allow the FLSs to process their entire response to the above information. Instead, interrupt them and give them the additional information provided below.)

Scenario Update: You are informed by dispatch that they are now receiving numerous calls from the interior of the mall, which is very crowded because of the holiday season. There are reports that the same subject is now shooting people randomly inside the mall. It is also reported that he has another assault rifle slung over his shoulder and a handgun visible in his waistband. There are additional reports of trash receptacles on fire inside the mall and that people are running and screaming to get away from the subject and the fires. People inside the mall are reporting that the subject is “throwing things” into the trash receptacles, causing them to catch fire. He is moving through the first floor of the mall and shooting at everyone with whom he comes into contact.

Dispatch states outside agencies monitoring your agency’s radio are sending resources to assist. The dispatcher states they are trying to keep up with the inter-agency radio communications, their 911 phone systems, and your own agency’s radio traffic. They are becoming overwhelmed by the volume of radio traffic and phone calls.

Dispatch now states callers are reporting additional armed people in the mall. They are carrying handguns and slowly walking through the mall as if they are searching for something. The callers think they might be police or military, but are reporting they do not see any badges or markings on their clothing.

(Facilitator Note: Do not stop the exercise here. If they do not take note on their own, you will help the FLSs determine these are actually off-duty officers later in the exercise. Without command and control over the outside agencies and off-duty officers, the FLSs should understand they are likely to have uniformed officers unknowingly firing at fellow off-duty officers.)

Officers from both your agency and other law enforcement agencies begin to arrive at the mall. You are aware that two (2) of the officers from your shift have arrived at the mall, but there is no way of knowing exactly who else from your agency or other agencies are on-scene because your dispatchers are not able to keep up with all the radio traffic. It is apparent to you that several armed individuals and police agencies have self-deployed to the mall and are acting independently of one another. The dispatcher has been attempting to contact the responding outside agencies to provide a location for them to meet the officers from your agency, but all the radio traffic is interfering with that effort.

What actions might you take at this time?

(Facilitator Note: AGAIN, do not allow the FLSs to process their entire response to the above information. Instead, interrupt them and give them the additional information provided below.)

Scenario Update: The mall has public entrances that lead directly into the mall’s common areas and several other exterior public entrances directly connected to some of the larger stores and restaurants. As the first officers arrive on scene, they report a completely chaotic scene that includes injured and dead people in the parking lots and on the walkway to the northeast entrance of the mall. They also

report people screaming and running from the mall in every direction out into the parking lots as well as people in vehicles speeding out of the mall parking lot. They report several motor vehicle crashes in the parking lot and on the surrounding streets as they arrived.

A third unit with two officers arrives. They exit their cruiser. One officer grabs a patrol rifle, and they both begin to approach the northeast entrance of the mall. The blue backpack left by the suspect suddenly explodes. The explosion sends glass and metal from the mall's windows and doors flying in all directions. Debris from the explosion strikes both officers causing minor injuries to one and major injuries to the other, including an arterial bleed from the officer's femoral artery.

A fourth and fifth uniformed officer arrive on scene and you are pulling into the mall now.

FLS Response:

Issues to deal with:

1. *Civilian injuries*
2. *Officer injuries*
3. *Continued actions of the active shooter*
4. *Command and control over outside agencies and off-duty personnel*
5. *Casualty collection point*
6. *Medical aid*
7. *Massive news media presence*
8. *Hospital notification of Mass Casualty Incident.*

Facilitator Actions: A well-seasoned facilitator should attempt to take this as far as reasonable. A possible extension may involve updating the information on the active shooter. These may include:

- *Determining the number of dead and wounded.*
- *Having a blue-on-blue incident between two off-duty officers or between a response team and an off-duty person.*
- *Incorporating a gunfight with the shooter or having the shooter flee from the mall.*
- *Having witnesses or responding officers find additional explosive devices, including some that do not work.*