

Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office

Review of Active Attack Response and Preparedness



**POLICE EXECUTIVE
RESEARCH FORUM**

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INTRODUCTION

In February 2018, a mass shooting occurred at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL, in which 17 people were killed and 17 more were wounded. Sadly, more than 200 similar mass shooting incidents have occurred in the United States since 2000.¹ Mass casualty events such as those that have occurred in Las Vegas, Orlando, Virginia Tech, and Newtown, CT have highlighted the need for law enforcement agencies to be prepared to respond to such incidents.

Following the Parkland shooting, the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office (PBSO) asked the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) to conduct a review of PBSO's current policies and practices to ensure that the agency is prepared to respond to and prevent similar active attack events.²

PERF reviewed PBSO's existing policies, directives, and training materials and conducted site visits to the agency to interview agency personnel and PBSO's partners who are involved in the response to active shooting incidents and other active attacks. PERF then convened a two-day meeting at PBSO that included PBSO command staff and deputies, telecommunications personnel, Palm Beach County School District Police, Fire Rescue Operations, and other local and federal law enforcement partners to discuss the agencies' coordination and preparedness with regard to active attack situations, and to identify any potential areas for improvement.

PERF also invited subject matter experts to this meeting, including Chief Michael Kehoe (ret.) of the Newtown, CT Police Department; Chief Dan Oates of Miami Beach, FL and former Chief of the Aurora, CO Police Department; Gil Kerlikowske, former Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection; and Dr. J. Pete Blair, Executive Director of the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) Center at Texas State University. These experts shared their insight and experience with regard to active shooter incidents in their jurisdictions, as well as best practices regarding research and training in this area.

Overall, PBSO is extremely well prepared to handle these types of incidents. By requesting this review, PBSO Sheriff Ric Bradshaw is looking to make additional improvements to ensure the safety and security of the citizens of Palm Beach County. PBSO has provided deputies with effective equipment, put command personnel in place to oversee and lead critical incidents, trained investigators, partnered mental health professionals with highly trained deputies, and established relationships with many local, state and federal response partners. As requested by PBSO, the PERF team was able to identify additional areas in which the agency can strengthen its current response readiness. This report outlines PBSO's current policies, procedures, and training with regard to the prevention of, response to, and aftermath of active attack incidents. In each section, PERF highlights the areas in which PBSO is doing well, and areas in which they can potentially improve. Although the recommendations are specific to PBSO, other agencies across the country can learn both from the promising

¹ *A Study of Active Shooter Incidents, 2000 – 2013*. Washington D.C.: Federal Bureau of Investigation/Department of Justice; *Active Shooter Incidents in the United States in 2014 and 2015*, Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) Center at Texas State University and the FBI, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, D.C. 2016; *Active Shooter Incidents in the United States in 2016 and 2017*, Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) Center at Texas State University and the FBI, Washington, D.C. 2018.

² For brevity, the term "active attack" is used to refer to any event in which an individual or individuals are attempting a mass murder. This could include the use of firearms, explosives, vehicle attacks, or any other weapon to inflict harm on a large number of people.

practices identified at PBSO, as well as the areas for improvement, so that law enforcement may be better prepared to respond to these incidents, and hopefully prevent incidents from happening in the future.

PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS

Policy

It is a standard practice for law enforcement agencies to establish clear, written directives concerning the expectations and restrictions associated with officer performance.³ The Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office (PBSO) complies with this standard and provides deputies with formal written directives, including General Order (G.O.) 500.02 ("Responding to Active Aggressive Deadly Behavior"). This policy details the procedures that PBSO deputies follow if they need to respond to an active attack situation. The policy contains language establishing the overall purpose and intent of the policy, characteristics of an active attack, response guidelines, proactive intervention tactics, and after-action responsibilities.

Single-Deputy Entry

Overall, PERF found G.O. 500.02 to be thorough and well organized. Also, in the wake of the mass shooting incident in Parkland, and just prior to the commencement of this review, PBSO began updating this policy to ensure that it includes the most up-to-date language and protocols. In reviewing this policy, PERF identified some areas in which PBSO can make improvements.

One critical issue that is beginning to emerge in the policing profession nationally is the extent to which law enforcement agencies should encourage or require one officer to respond without backup if the officer arrives at an active attack incident and killing appears to be occurring (for example, there is the sound of gunfire).

PBSO's current policies, like those of many other agencies, are not clear on this point; different sections of policy provide inconsistent guidance. The "Policy" section of PBSO's G.O. 500.02 contains the following language regarding deputy response to an active killer situation: "Although officer safety is paramount in any situation, the initial response must be quick, decisive, and of a single purpose – neutralizing the behavior." The "Response Guidelines" section of G.O. 500.02 includes language stating that "Deputies arriving at the scene of an active aggressive deadly behavior incident are authorized to intervene prior to the arrival of command personnel and specialty units." However, in this same section under the "First Responder Tactical Intervention" guideline, the following language appears: "Individual action is discouraged, but may become necessary based on the situation. A coordinated, focused response to an active deadly aggressor event is preferred. Once tactical responsibility is established in teams of two or more deputies or a single deputy if the situation dictates, an entry will be made without delay."

According to research conducted by the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) Center at Texas State University, most active killing events are over within five minutes or less, and it can take police an average of about three minutes to respond. This means law enforcement will often have roughly two

³ The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. 2009. "Standards for Law Enforcement Agencies: The Standards Manual for the CALEA Law Enforcement Accreditation Program." 5th ed.

minutes to stop the threat and minimize injury and the loss of life. **For this reason, ALERRT researchers recommend that officers be prepared to enter an active attack situation without back-up, especially if “exigent” circumstance exist (e.g., there is ongoing active killing when the officer arrives at the scene).**

If active gunfire cannot be heard when the officer arrives on scene, a “tactical” response may be more appropriate (e.g., officers assemble a team to conduct a systematic search of the building).⁴

It should be noted that the dangers associated with single-officer entry are real and are significant. According to data provided by ALERRT, an officer is shot in about one-fourth of the incidents in which active killing is ongoing when the officer arrives. However, the quickness with which an active attacker is neutralized is crucial in reducing the death toll of these incidents.

As PBSO’s *policy* is currently written, the agency expectation regarding single-deputy entry is not clear. However, PBSO personnel told PERF that the agency *trains* for single-deputy entry, and that the deputies have the *equipment and resources* that would facilitate a lone-deputy entry without waiting for additional responders if an active killer situation is still in progress. PBSO personnel interviewed by PERF also indicated that it was the agency’s *expectation* that deputies should enter, if necessary, without additional responders if the active killing is still taking place when a single deputy arrives on scene. PERF also learned that PBSO personnel have had discussions regarding this particular language in G.O. 500.02 and recognize the agency should address inconsistent language and ensure that policy is consistent with training and department expectations.

Recommendation: As PBSO revises G.O. 500.02 (“Responding to Active Aggressive Deadly Behavior”), it must ensure that the policy includes clear language establishing an expectation of single-deputy entry during an active attack situation. This will ensure that PBSO’s policy will be consistent with its training of deputies and with the equipment and resources that the agency provides for this purpose. There is a growing realization in the policing profession nationally that officers and deputies need clear policies on a critical life-and-death issue in which officers and deputies must know exactly what is expected of them. For additional information on considerations for single-deputy entry, see the “Stop the Killing” section on page 15.

Off-Duty Response/Self-Deployment

Active attack situations are often chaotic. While it is important for law enforcement officers to quickly arrive on the scene and handle the threat, consideration should also be given to clarifying expectations regarding response from off-duty officers, in order to reduce chaos and confusion. Current PBSO policy does not include statements on self-deployment during an active attack situation. Some agency personnel told PERF that deputies are not allowed to self-deploy, while other personnel indicated that deputies could self-deploy if they desired.

Recommendation: Because the agency’s message on self-deployment is not clear, PBSO should determine its official stance on deputy self-deployment during an active attack situation and include clear directives regarding deputy self-deployment in G.O. 500.02 (“Responding to Active Aggressive

⁴ Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT). “Stop the Killing: *Are your tactics obscuring your objectives?*”

Deadly Behavior”). Furthermore, PBSO should ensure that all personnel at all ranks are aware of the agency’s policy on self-deployment. If PBSO determines that deputies are not to self-deploy to an active attack incident, an exception should be made for instances in which a deputy is already on the scene or is in the immediate vicinity when the incident occurs, and the deputy may be in a position to neutralize the threat. In the event that a deputy does self-deploy, policy should require the deputy to notify communications that they are responding and provide as many situational details as possible, as well as a self-description.

In interviews with PBSO personnel, one concern PERF heard was that when plainclothes deputies are dispatched to a scene, they are often difficult to identify. PBSO supervisors reported that most units have access to PBSO windbreakers or other equipment with highly visible PBSO insignia that they can wear in the event of being dispatched to an incident in plainclothes. However, not all of the deputies PERF spoke with appeared to be aware of these jackets.

Recommendation: All PBSO personnel should be provided with PBSO windbreakers or some form of insignia so they are easily identifiable on scene. Policy should dictate that deputies must wear some type of clear PBSO insignia to ensure that other responding deputies recognize the individual as law enforcement. This will assist the incident commander to control access to the scene, and help to reduce the risk of blue-on-blue shootings.

Training

Law enforcement personnel must undergo training to be prepared and learn the best ways to respond to an active attack event. PBSO has conducted several in-service training events to prepare for an active attack incident.

For example, PBSO participated in “Operation No Fly Zone” in 2016. This four-hour active attack training was conducted at the Palm Beach International Airport in conjunction with the Palm Beach County (PBC) Fire Rescue and other agencies. The objectives of “Operation No Fly Zone” included testing dispatch and 911 call taker capabilities, testing law enforcement response, testing initial communications and notifications, testing PBSO and PBC Fire Rescue integration of Protective Element Medical (PEM) Teams, multiple agency coordination/communication (unified command), multiple agency strategic response, and verification that PBSO’s active attack policy was followed.



Two PBSO deputies responding to an active threat during “Operation No Fly Zone” training.

In 2017, PBSO held another active attack training at a local mall. Similar to “Operation No Fly Zone,” this exercise focused on searching for and subduing an active shooter, as well as searching for victims. Unlike “Operation No Fly Zone,” this mall exercise involved only PBSO deputies. This

training event included two scenarios that included a team of six deputies making entry, eliminating two active shooters, and providing first aid to victims.

May 2018 Deputy In-Service Training

PBSO deputies began additional active attack training in May 2018, as the agency is dedicating an entire in-service topic to active attack preparedness. For this training, PBSO plans to partner with the Palm Beach County School District Police and the Florida Highway Patrol to train for an active attack situation in a vacant school.

In addition to the in-service training provided to deputies, all newly-hired deputies receive lecture-based training on response to an active attack during PBSO's 11-week academy.

The extent to which PBSO trains for an active attack event is commendable. The following issues were identified through PERF's discussions with PBSO personnel as challenges that could be addressed in the future:

- The frequency of active attack training opportunities differs by district;
- There is a need to address unnecessary radio communication during active attack scenario-based training;
- Historically, the Palm Beach County School District Police Department has not participated in active attack training events with PBSO;
- After-action reports are not formalized following active attack training events.

Recommendation: If possible, opportunities for active attack training should be consistent across all PBSO districts. This is crucial to ensure that a uniform message and consistent information are conveyed throughout the agency, which will help deputies to respond effectively to an active attack incident.

Recommendation: During active attack training exercises, deputies should use their radios only when necessary. Deputies should be more disciplined in their radio usage, and training staff should stress the importance of using the radios only when necessary to avoid confusion and distractions. Additionally, radio transmissions that are important and necessary should be relayed multiple times to ensure that responding officers are informed as they respond to an incident.⁵

Recommendation: While PBSO is conducting a joint active attack training with the Palm Beach County School District Police Department in May 2018, interviews indicated that these agencies have not previously trained together to prepare for active attack events. Going forward, Palm Beach County



PBSO deputy during May 2018 in-service training

⁵ Police Executive Research Forum. 2014. "The Police Response to Active Shooter Incidents." http://www.policeforum.org/assets/docs/Critical_Issues_Series/the%20police%20response%20to%20active%20shooter%20incidents%202014.pdf

School District Police Department must be an active participant with PBSO in scenario-based active attack training.

Recommendation: PERF recommends that PBSO document its after-action following an active attack training exercise. A formal report should be produced so that PBSO leaders may review the positive outcomes and ensure that identified shortcomings are appropriately addressed.

Equipment

Because patrol officers are likely to be the first to arrive at the scene of an active attack event,⁶ it is vital that law enforcement agencies provide equipment to patrol personnel that they may need to respond to such incidents. Agencies must also include all necessary equipment in active attack training scenarios, so patrol personnel can become familiar with these tools and know how they can best be used in an active attack situation.

PBSO issues the following equipment to all patrol deputies:

- Glock 22 or 23 .40 Caliber handgun;
- Shotgun (for deputies who are issued a PBSO vehicle);
- Ballistic helmet;
- A gas mask;
- A tourniquet; and
- An Individual First Aid Kit (IFAK)

PBSO does not require deputies to carry an urban rifle in their patrol vehicles. Any deputy who wishes to carry an urban rifle must complete a three-day training course. Currently, 75% of law enforcement operations personnel are issued urban rifles.

According to PBSO personnel, there are about 100 sets of breaching kits distributed throughout the agency. At minimum, these kits include rams and pry bars (Halligans). Approximately one-third of the kits are equipped with rams, pry bars, and bolt cutters.

Some of the PBSO Sergeants interviewed by PERF indicated that they would like to see ballistic shields made available to more personnel. Currently, only Sergeants have access to the ballistic shields. In the event of an active attack situation, patrol personnel will likely arrive on scene before a Sergeant does. PBSO personnel told PERF that at least 100 additional ballistic shields have recently been ordered.

Recommendation: In addition to sergeants, PBSO should consider providing ballistic shields to deputies assigned to patrol. Deputies are likely to be the first responder to an active attack threat and should be provided as much protection as possible beyond their ballistic vest to stop the killing.

⁶ Police Executive Research Forum. 2014. "The Police Response to Active Shooter Incidents." http://www.policeforum.org/assets/docs/Critical_Issues_Series/the%20police%20response%20to%20active%20shooter%20incidents%202014.pdf

Personnel should keep in mind that these shields are heavy and could potentially be burdensome in an active attack situation. Therefore, it is imperative that the agency incorporates the use of ballistic shields into active attack training and annual firearms scenario-based exercises for patrol deputies. Deputies should have an understanding of the protection capabilities as well as the limitations of the shield and how it may impact a speedy response.

Recommendation: PBSO deputies are equipped with standard body armor and helmets, which should provide sufficient protection if encountering an active shooter armed with a pistol.⁷ But because many active shooters have been armed with more powerful firearms (e.g., an assault rifle), additional protective armor is necessary. PBSO should examine deploying plate carriers to provide deputies with additional protection from active shooters armed with rifles.

Intelligence and Information-Sharing to Prevent Active Attacks

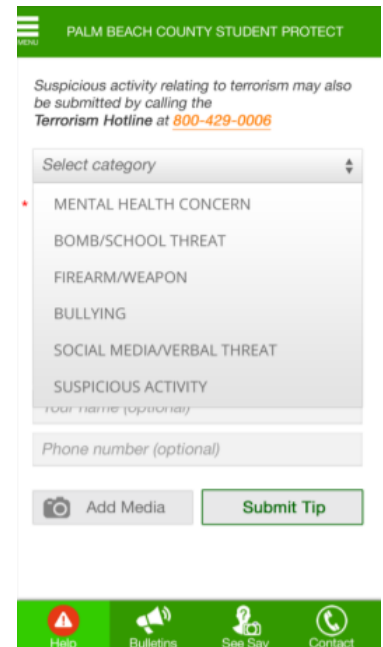
Preventing an active attack incident requires a multifaceted information-sharing network that involves multiple law enforcement entities as well as the public. It is important to have good processes and relationships in place for information-sharing networks to function.

Information regarding potential threats comes to PBSO in a variety of ways, including the 911 call center, the PBSO website, Crime Stoppers of Palm Beach County (via telephone or website), the “ConnectProtect” Palm Beach County smart phone application, and the “StudentProtect” smart phone application. Additionally, relationships exist internally at PBSO, with the Strategic Intelligence Section (SIS) serving as the “hub” for information on potential threats such as mass shooting incidents. PERF learned that SIS has internal relationships with other key units (e.g., the Behavioral Services Division, the Firearms Unit, etc.) and that information is coordinated and communicated to patrol deputies.

As the repository for information and data regarding threats that have been reported to the agency, the SIS checks previous information and intelligence that are maintained in accordance with state statutes to ensure that information regarding individuals who have made threats in the past is not overlooked.

Relationships with Other Agencies

It is important for PBSO to have good working relationships with other law enforcement agencies, mental health providers, businesses, and school partners. PBSO has worked hard to form relationships with Palm Beach County Fire Rescue, emergency communications centers across the county, hospitals and trauma centers, and municipal and federal law enforcement agencies. These agencies could benefit from written memoranda of



The StudentProtect smart phone application allows students, parents, and school personnel to report threats to PBSO.

⁷ Ibid., Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT). “Stop the Killing: *Are your tactics obscuring your objectives?*”

understanding (MOUs) or agreements to strengthen the informal relationships that have formed over the years, and PBSO should work with these agencies to create mutually agreeable plans.

PBSO's Behavioral Services Division: A Model for Other Agencies

One unique aspect of PBSO is its Behavioral Services Division (BSD). This Division is comprised of a sergeant, five full-time investigators, two part-time investigators, five licensed therapists, a pastoral counselor, a substance abuse professional, a case manager, and an administrative aide. In 2018, the Division will add an additional five members (therapists and investigators) to its team.

The investigators and therapists work as a team and respond jointly when there are calls involving individuals with mental illness. The Division works with these individuals to get them the assistance they need. When a client is deemed "critical" or "high risk," the Division works with the Strategic Intelligence and Special Investigations Units at PBSO to monitor any future law enforcement contacts. Members of the BSD check in with clients to see if they are taking their medicine and to help them if needed. BSD personnel told PERF it is difficult to monitor everyone on their client list, because there are approximately 200 active clients who need assistance. Nevertheless, this unit provides beneficial assistance to many individuals in Palm Beach County.

BSD also helps PBSO employees who are in need of assistance or guidance. Because BSD staff members are licensed therapists, the assistance they provide is subject to confidentiality protections. While BSD therapists do not see individuals regularly as a psychologist or therapist would, they help PBSO employees to work through issues, and refer individuals to appropriate services.

on PBSO and other municipal law enforcement agencies in the event of an active attack in a school, which presents obstacles to an effective response.

There are more than 180 schools in Palm Beach County, and School District Police officers assigned to the schools report to the school's principal. Since each principal can have a different philosophy on what

Recommendation: PBSO should move toward formalizing the working relationships that have been established with municipal law enforcement agencies in the county, mental health providers, school partners, and businesses. PBSO and other entities should develop mutual aid agreements/memoranda of understanding and routine practice (i.e., collaborative training exercises) to formalize these relationships. This will help ensure that information-sharing and partnerships will continue when there are personnel changes.

The Palm Beach County School District Police Department

PERF learned that historically, PBSO and the Palm Beach County School District Police Department have not had consistent lines of communication and coordination. After the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL, these agencies are collaborating and working together more effectively, and joint active attack training is currently being conducted. However, the information-sharing and relationships between these agencies must be defined more clearly.

As a smaller, specialized agency, the School District Police Department has fewer personnel and resources than PBSO. For example, School District Police officers use their personal vehicles to report to work, so in the event of an active attack, School District Police officers responding from nearby schools would be responding in their personal vehicles, with no means to safely expedite an emergency response. The School District Police Department would rely heavily

information is important to share with local law enforcement, information-sharing about potentially dangerous students may vary, which can impact prevention efforts as well as the response to an incident. Consistency of information-sharing is imperative to ensure that intelligence is properly identified, vetted, and acted upon.⁸

Recommendation: The current role of the Palm Beach County School District Police Department in protecting students against active attacks and other incidents is not ideal, and the status quo is not acceptable. PERF sees two options for moving forward:

- 1) The relationships and information-sharing between the School District Police Department and PBSO needs to remain strong. The coordination efforts that have begun post-Parkland must be normal practice, and information-sharing must be more open than before Parkland. The agencies must create plans and agreements for resource sharing and incident response. Partnerships and practices established as a result of a critical incident can often wane over time. The efforts to work together that accelerated following the Parkland mass shooting **cannot recede or lapse over time.**
- 2) If the School District Police Department and PBSO are unable to create effective mechanisms for preventing and responding to active attacks in the county's schools, Palm Beach County officials should consider a consolidation of the agencies or other action to provide that PBSO and/or municipal law enforcement agencies will provide consistent law enforcement support and services in the schools.

One model that has been effective in other communities is to have the primary law enforcement agency, such as PBSO, provide all school security staffing. In this model, law enforcement resources have consistent training, policies, response philosophies, and intelligence coordination.

Recognizing Potential Threats

After active attack events, the general public often looks to law enforcement to understand why the attacker may not have been stopped before carrying out the attack. While active attacks are rare and characteristics of attackers can vary greatly, in many cases, law enforcement had contact with the attacker prior to the event. Some state laws have given law enforcement the authority to place individuals experiencing mental illness under an involuntary hold if they are deemed to be a danger to themselves or others. Protective custody laws are one method by which law enforcement can come into contact with potentially dangerous individuals and connect them with mental health professionals. However, it is important to note that one in five adults in America experience mental illness, the majority of whom are not violent or a threat to the general public. Therefore, mental illness alone is not necessarily an indication of an individual's propensity for violence.⁹

In Florida, the Baker Act¹⁰ describes the circumstances under which an individual with a mental illness (or presumed to have a mental illness) can be held in a hospital or crisis unit involuntarily for up to 72 hours. In order to be taken in under the Baker Act, an individual must be a danger to himself or others as a result of the

⁸ In March 2018, the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act was signed into law in Florida. The law establishes various safeguards aimed at increasing public safety in schools, including considerations for information-sharing. For more information about the law and relevant considerations, please see Appendix A.

⁹ NAMI. "Mental Health Facts in America." <https://www.nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/Infographics/GeneralMHFacts.pdf>

¹⁰ State of Florida Department of Children and Families Mental Health Program Office, May 2002. *History of the Baker Act – It's Development and Intent.* <https://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/samh/MentalHealth/laws/histba.pdf>

mental illness. Additionally, the individual must be unable or unwilling to give consent for voluntary treatment.¹¹ This process can be initiated by a relative or service provider who files a petition/affidavit, a health care provider, or a law enforcement officer. If it is determined at any point during the 72-hour hold that the individual is not a danger to himself or others, he or she must be released. The Baker Act has additional provisions to provide continuing help to individuals needing more than 72 hours of care.¹²

PBSO's Behavioral Services Division (BSD) is well equipped to handle these requests, as the division is staffed with licensed therapists (see page 9 for more information on the BSD). However, the large volume of calls coming in every day makes it impossible for this division to assist with every call. It is therefore imperative that patrol deputies responding to these requests thoroughly understand the Baker Act and the requirements for bringing someone in under this Act, in order to effectively protect the individual while also protecting public safety.

Recommendation: PBSO (and other law enforcement agencies) should consider creating an agency protocol detailing the “who, what, when, why, and how” of assessing someone who is possibly in need of protective custody. Deputies can benefit from a list of questions and factors to consider, such as:

- Does the individual have a history of mental illness?
- Does the individual have a history of violence?
- Has the individual been prescribed medications for mental illness?
- Is this individual currently medication-compliant?
- Has the individual threatened to harm him/herself or others?
- Does the individual have a history of suicide attempts?
- Are there signs of moderate or severe symptoms, such as:
 - Depressed mood
 - Delusions
 - Paranoid ideas
 - Substance abuse.

Answering these questions will not provide a definitive answer as to whether a deputy should bring someone into protective custody. However, a list of questions or factors to consider will assist in gathering information from the individual or from family members and friends, which might otherwise be overlooked. With this information, deputies can make more informed decisions regarding the Baker Act and taking individuals into protective custody. Agencies should work with local mental health professionals to develop these questions and protocols to ensure they are relevant and applicable.

Recommendation: Deputies and officers should receive periodic and regular refresher training on mental illness and the Baker Act (or relevant state statute on protective custody). Training should include procedures for taking someone into protective custody and why the information from these questions is important for making good decisions. This training can be carried out in in-service or

¹¹ Ninth Judicial Circuit Court of Florida. *The Baker Act (The Florida Mental Health Act)*. <https://www.ninthcircuit.org/sites/default/files/TheBakerAct-English.pdf>

¹² Ibid.

through roll call and should also be included for new hires. Relevant units with experience in working with individuals with mental illness, such as PBSO’s BSD, are a valuable resource to provide this training to deputies.

Public Preparedness and Education

An FBI study of active shooter events from 2000-2013 revealed that about one in four attacks occurred in a place of education. Approximately 71 percent of attacks occurred at businesses, malls, government properties, health care facilities, open spaces, and houses of worship.¹³

More than other locations, schools prepare for and practice active shooter drills. It is important for everyone, regardless of where they live or work, to be educated about active shooter and active killer events and to know about the steps to take to survive an attack.

Most individuals are familiar with the Run, Hide, Fight strategy, which is used by many government agencies, including the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).¹⁴ This strategy means that getting away from the shooter is the first priority. If possible, individuals should run away and call 9-1-1 when they are safe. If running is not an option, individuals should hide out of view and stay hidden until law enforcement gives the all clear. Finally, as a last resort, individuals should act aggressively and try to stop the shooter.¹⁵

RUN	HIDE	FIGHT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Have an escape plan in mind •Leave your belongings behind •Keep your hands visible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Remain in an area out of the shooter's view •Block entry to your hiding place. Lock the doors •Silence your cell phone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •As a last resort and when your life is in imminent danger, attempt to incapacitate the shooter •Act with physical aggression and throw items at the shooter

The Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) at Texas State University teaches a similar method to describe actions to take during an active attack event: Avoid, Deny, Defend.¹⁶ Individuals should first attempt to avoid the attacker. If this is difficult or impossible, individuals should deny the attacker

AVOID	DENY	DEFEND
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pay attention to surroundings •Have an exit plan •Move away from the source of the attack as quickly as possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Keep distance between you and the attacker •Create barriers to prevent or slow down the attacker from reaching you •Remain out of sight and quiet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Be prepared to defend yourself •Be aggressive and committed to your actions •Do not fight fairly- this is about survival.

¹³ Blair, J.P., & Schweit, K.W. (2014). *A Study of Active Shooter Incidents, 2000 – 2013*. Washington D.C.: Federal Bureau of Investigation/Department of Justice.

¹⁴ Department of Homeland Security. *Active Shooter Pocket Card Information*. https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/active_shooter_pocket_card_508.pdf

¹⁵ FEMA. *How to Prepare for And Respond During and After an Active Shooter Incident*. https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1472672897352-d28bb197db5389e4ddedcef335d3d867/FEMA_ActiveShooter_OnePagev1d15_508_FINAL.pdf

¹⁶ ALERRT Center at Texas State University. *Avoid Deny Defend*. <http://www.avoiddenydefend.org/add.html#> Accessed 7 May 2018

entry to their location. Finally, as a last resort, individuals should defend themselves.¹⁷

Law enforcement agencies can help prepare community members for these situations. A number of agencies across the nation have hosted workshops and trainings for the community, businesses, and places of worship regarding possible attacks. For example, the Delray Beach (FL) Police Department hosted a training for approximately 60 business owners and leaders of religious congregations, where officers shared tips on responding to an active attack event. The police department also encouraged businesses to “prepare for the worst” and create a “site plan” that outlines exit strategies, places to hide, and how to fight if necessary. Finally, the agency offered to visit businesses to help identify any security needs and review crisis plans.¹⁸

Similarly, the Fairfax County (VA) Police Department and the Office of Emergency Management teamed up to present a series of “Active Violence in the Workplace Preparedness Workshops.” These workshops include a segment on options available when planning a response, as well as information the Stop the Bleed program.¹⁹ Stop the Bleed teaches individuals simple techniques to help control bleeding until trained personnel arrive.²⁰

PERF learned that PBSO has also taken steps to educate the public about what to do should they be faced with an active attack situation. In May 2017, PBSO’s Crime Prevention Unit streamed a 17 minute presentation on the agency’s Facebook page.²¹ PBSO also has a public preparedness and education presentation on its YouTube channel.²² PERF believes PBSO has made strong efforts to educate the public about what steps to take in an active attack situation, and that PBSO should continue these endeavors.

RESPONSE

Communications and Dispatch

During an active attack incident, local communications centers are flooded with calls, so it is important that communications personnel be prepared to quickly and accurately field incoming information and transmit it to first responders. Since active attack events almost always require a multi-agency response, it is critical that local communications centers have established protocols for interagency coordination. Importantly, all relevant agencies must establish interoperability among their respective radio channels to ensure a timely and coordinated response.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ramadan, Lulu. “Delray police: What would you do during an active-shooter event?” *Palm Beach Post*, 6 Feb 2018.

<https://www.palmbeachpost.com/news/local/delray-police-what-would-you-during-active-shooter-event/T6uxFfooJH8oneJaS9v8LP/> Accessed 7 May 2018

¹⁹ Fairfax County Emergency Information. “Active Violence in the Workplace Preparedness Workshop.” 17 Apr 2018

<https://fairfaxcountyemergency.wordpress.com/2018/04/17/active-violence-in-the-workplace-preparedness-workshop/> Accessed 7 May 2018

²⁰ Fairfax County, Virginia. “Stop the Bleed: Learn How You Can Save a Life.” 9 Aug 2017 <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/news2/stop-the-bleed-learn-how-you-can-save-a-life/> Accessed 7 May 2018

²¹ Brynne, Jillian. “PBSO advises run, hide, and fight in active shooter scenarios.” *CBS12*. <http://cbs12.com/news/local/pbso-advises-run-hide-and-fight-in-active-shooter-scenarios> Accessed 14 May 2018

²² PBSO-Palm Beach County Sheriff’s Office. “Run, Hide, Fight – PBSO’s Active Shooter Training.” Online video. YouTube. YouTube, 26 February 2018.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sYw0WNgbNoc&index=3&list=PLs_iRLlB3JTcEqJShCObQkBxkNK1Didhg&t=0s

Radio Communications and Interoperability

PBSO's communications centers are the primary Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) for the unincorporated areas of Palm Beach County. There are 17 total PSAPs in the county, with separate communications centers for Fire Rescue, the Palm Beach County School District Police Department, and other local municipal police departments. According to PBSO communications personnel, all of these agencies are able to communicate with one another through their "LE Comm" (Law Enforcement Communications) channels.

If PBSO is responding to a real-time active event, it would tune to "LE Comm 1," and other responding agencies in the area would be patched to that channel by telecommunicators at PBSO's communications center. PBSO personnel informed PERF that the primary responding agency to an event utilizes LE Comm 1, and additional responding agencies are patched to that channel as they are dispatched to the scene. The communications center monitors the channels to ensure that no channels are double-booked.



PBSO Communications Center Personnel

From interviews with PBSO's communications personnel, PERF learned that the communications center is included in PBSO training exercises, and that they conduct weekly tests for interoperability with road patrol units. Personnel also reported that dispatch is included in the multi-agency training exercises that are held several times per year, including active shooter scenarios. This demonstrates the agencies' commitment to ensuring coordination between all partners and preparedness in the event of an active attack situation. Additionally, PBSO staff reported that the communications center will be able to receive texts to 911 beginning in June 2018. This will be extremely valuable in the event of an active attack situation such as the one occurring in Parkland, in which individuals may be hiding from a gunman and unable to talk on the phone.

PBSO's communication center appears to have effective protocols in place with regard to interoperability. However, in PERF's interviews with deputies, some expressed concerns about difficulties with getting multiple agencies on the same channel during training exercises. There appeared to be some lack of consensus or understanding at the deputy level with regard to protocols for switching to LE Comm 1 in the event of a multi-agency response. Deputies also expressed that patching of the channels hasn't always been seamless, and that it

can sometimes take several minutes to ensure that all agencies are effectively communicating. PBSO's communications center is aware of this issue and is working toward simplifying the process of switching between channels.

Recommendation: Although communications center personnel appear to be proficient at patching radio channels, deputies could benefit from additional training on how to switch between various channels, to ensure a swift and coordinated response in the event of an active threat. School District Police should be included in this exercise to ensure their ability to communicate with officers and deputies responding from other law enforcement agencies, including PBSO.

Another concern PERF heard in interviews with PBSO personnel is that some areas within schools, private businesses, and shopping malls contain “dead zones” where radio signals are not transmitted. This presents a challenge in an active attack situation, as responding agencies are not able to communicate with one another inside these zones.

Recommendation: PBSO should actively attempt to identify dead zones in schools, businesses, and other locations, and consider installing “repeaters”²³ in these locations to improve communication capabilities. A reporting procedure should be established to identify dead zones, ensure that problems are corrected, and notify employees of the status of these areas for safety reasons.

Stop the Killing

When responding to the scene of an active attack, the first priority should be to neutralize the threat in order to stop the killing. In 2014, PERF analyzed policies and general orders from dozens of police and sheriffs' departments regarding active shooter events.²⁴ Some policies provided that officers who arrive at the scene of an active shooter event can move in to stop the threat without waiting for additional officers to arrive, while others required that first responding officers wait to form a “contact team” prior to moving into the scene. Research by Dr. Pete Blair at ALERRT indicates that the majority of “active attack” incidents are over within five minutes or less, and that the average police response time is about three minutes.²⁵ This means that law enforcement officers generally will have two minutes or less to stop the threat and minimize potential loss of life.

For this reason, Blair says that in “exigent” circumstances (i.e., when there is active killing continuing), ALERRT is moving toward single-officer response. Speed is critical in these situations, which may mean not waiting for additional units to arrive at the scene.

²³ A repeater acts as a link between two radio operators to cover a larger area.

²⁴ Police Executive Research Forum, 2014. *The Police Response to Active Shooter Incidents*.

https://perf.memberclicks.net/assets/docs/Critical_Issues_Series/the%20police%20response%20to%20active%20shooter%20incidents%202014.pdf

²⁵ Blair, J.P., & Schweit, K.W. (2014). *A Study of Active Shooter Incidents, 2000 – 2013*. Washington D.C.: Federal Bureau of Investigation/Department of Justice.

Active Gunfire

Blair recommends that if a responding officer hears active gunfire, the officer should move directly toward the sound of the gunfire to attempt to quickly isolate, distract, or neutralize the attacker. Tactical considerations, such as maintaining formation in teams, may slow down the response, and the first priority when there is active gunfire is to prevent additional people from being killed. Although single-officer entry can be dangerous, Blair's research indicates that in 98% of cases, these incidents involve a single shooter.²⁶ Hearing active gunfire is an indication that the attacker is focused on killing victims, and the first responding deputy is expected to do all that can be done to stop the shooter immediately. Furthermore, officers should keep in mind that in most cases, backup will be arriving quickly, and body armor, ballistic helmets, and shields can be effective protection against a large percentage of these incidents. It is therefore important to use every moment efficiently in these situations in order to save potential victims.²⁷



Dr. J. Pete Blair, Executive Director of the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training Center at Texas State University

Consistent with Blair's research, PBSO currently trains its deputies on solo-entry, and expects that deputies will be prepared to enter alone in the event of an active attack incident.

No Active Gunfire

If active gunfire or other indications of active killing cannot be detected when an officer arrives at the scene, "tactical" considerations may be more appropriate. For example, the officer should move toward the closest building entry to listen for signs of gunfire to reassess the situation in order to make a decision as to how to proceed.

Stop the Dying

Once the threat is neutralized in an active attack situation, responders should shift their focus to stop the dying. This means providing medical assistance to victims who have suffered gunshot wounds or other injuries as quickly as possible. According to Dr. Pete Blair, the median number of people shot in these incidents is four, and two of the people shot typically die. It is commonly thought that people who are injured are much more likely to survive if they can arrive at a hospital within an hour of being shot, and even more likely to survive if they can be given emergency room treatment within 15 minutes. So, it is important to focus on helping people who are injured and getting them to hospitals without delay.²⁸

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT). "Stop the Killing: *Are your tactics obscuring your objectives?*"

²⁸ Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT). "Stop the Dying: *Are you saving lives or wasting time?*"

Statistics on Active Attacks 2000-2016²⁹

242 active attacks occurred in the US from 2000-2016

- An active attack is defined as an “attempted mass murder,” where an individual goes to a location with the intention of hurting many people. In this definition, there is no requirement for injuries or fatalities.
- *Incidents with few injuries/fatalities can provide valuable information on intent and motives*

Various modalities were used in these attacks, and sometimes multiple modalities were used in a single attack³⁰

- Firearms (93%)
- Knives (5%)
- Vehicles (1%)
- Other (1%)
- *Attacks using modalities other than firearms have become more popular in the past few years, but attacks using firearms are still the most common.*

98% of attacks were carried out by a solo attacker

- In the 2% of attacks with multiple attackers, historically, they have always stayed together to operate as a team
- *Once the attacker(s) is/are found, it is likely all attackers have been found.*

In 69% of attacks, the active killing ended in 5 minutes or less

- Average police response time is 3 minutes.
- *With only approximately 2 minutes on scene during the active attack, it is important for law enforcement to move quickly to address the threat.*

The median number of individuals injured in active attacks was 4

- The median number of individuals killed was 2.
- *After the threat is neutralized, the focus should be on providing medical aid to victims as quickly as possible, as opposed to committing too many resources to an anticipated mass casualty.*

²⁹ Blair, J. P., Burns, D., Curnutt, J., Nichols, T. (2013). *Active shooter events and response*. Westborough, MA: Taylor & Francis.; Blair, J.P., & Schweit, K.W. (2014). *A Study of Active Shooter Incidents, 2000 – 2013*. Washington D.C.: Federal Bureau of Investigation/Department of Justice; *Active Shooter Incidents in the United States in 2014 and 2015*, the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) Center at Texas State University and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, D.C. 2016.; *Active Shooter Incidents in the United States in 2016 and 2017*, the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) Center at Texas State University and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, D.C. 2018.

³⁰ ALERRT Center at Texas State University. “ALERRT Active Attack Data.” <http://www.activeattackdata.org/allattacks.html>

Since active shooter incidents frequently result in chest wounds, it's important that officers are trained to stop mass hemorrhaging, so that these victims can be transported to the hospital as quickly as possible. Officers should also be trained to apply tourniquets in case of arm or leg injuries, and to maintain airways for patients for transport to the hospital.³¹



Individual First Aid Kit (IFAK)

PBSO has established a unified response for mass casualty events between law enforcement and Fire Rescue, known as “Protective Element Medical” (PEM). PEM teams consist of groups of two Fire Rescue paramedics and four deputies, in which law enforcement provides a security screen around the medics to allow them to move into “warm zones” to provide medical treatment to victims.³² PEM teams are equipped with ballistic helmets and vests for protection, as well as trauma packs to provide assistance to victims.³³ PERF learned from interviews that PBSO holds at least one joint training with Fire Rescue per year to practice the deployment of PEM teams in a mass casualty situation. This response protocol ensures that victims of mass casualty events receive medical attention as quickly as possible.

PBSO also reported that all deputies are equipped with Individual First Aid Kits (IFAKs), and are required to receive training on how to use the kits. The kits include: one Israeli emergency bandage, three rolls of conforming gauze, one hemostatic gauze ribbon, one Asherman Chest Seal, and EMT shears.

Unified Command

In an active attack situation, it is imperative to establish a unified command in order to control the scene and direct other agencies and units that are responding. Since time is of the essence in an active attack incident, the first officer arriving on scene should automatically assume incident command.³⁴ The officer's first priority is to address the threat, but they should also broadcast their assessment of the situation to keep other units updated on what they can see and hear. The first responding officer should also identify how and where other officers should link up with them.

Once officers have entered the building to stop the killing, an officer on the outside of the building should assume command. This “tactical” officer should set a staging area for arriving officers, and begin looking for arriving fire/EMS units. The officer should try to connect with these units as soon as possible to establish unified command and control of the situation.³⁵

³¹ Ibid

³² A “warm zone” is an area designated as a safe zone where contact with the attacker is possible but not probable.

³³ PBSO. “PEM – Unified Supervisor Response”.

³⁴ Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT). “The Importance of Incident Command ”

³⁵ Ibid

PERF learned that if an active attack situation were to occur in Palm Beach County, the agency with primary jurisdiction over the location would be first to be dispatched to the scene and would thus assume command. Other responding agencies would be notified via their respective communications centers to respond to provide assistance, at which point command would likely shift to someone outside the building.

For example, if an active attack situation were to take place at a school in an unincorporated area of Palm Beach County, the School District police officer assigned to that school would likely be the first to respond. This would mean that the school police officer would assume the role of incident commander initially. Because each school in Palm Beach County has, at most, only one or two designated officers assigned to it, PBSO personnel would be next to be dispatched to the scene. This would be accomplished via the school district dispatch coordinating with PBSO dispatch to patch responders from each agency onto the same radio channel. From there, a PBSO Command Duty Officer (CDO) would be dispatched and would assume command from the first responding officer.

According to PBSO personnel and other agencies PERF interviewed, they all participate regularly in multi-agency training exercises to practice the response to these types of situations, and appeared comfortable in establishing a unified command in the event of an active attack incident.

Access to/Familiarity with Schools and Other Buildings

Since PBSO personnel would respond in the event of an active attack incident taking place at a school, it's important that they be familiar with and have access to the various school buildings within the county. PBSO has already taken several steps to ensure an efficient response in the event of an incident taking place at a school.

For example, PBSO personnel reported that deputies now have access to blueprints of local schools, which are available on their Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs). This is helpful, because as deputies are responding to the scene, they may be able to familiarize themselves with the floor plan of the school.

PBSO personnel also reported that they are in the process of gaining access to electric keycards to access school buildings. This has been an issue in the past, as PBSO historically has not had physical keys to access all facilities in the event of an incident occurring after school hours. Immediate access to school buildings will help ensure a rapid response in the event of an active threat.

One concern PERF heard from PBSO was that some school buildings are not easy to identify for deputies who are unfamiliar with the schools. As a possible remedy for this, PBSO has discussed consistent labeling of each school with building numbers so they are easily identifiable, including by aviation units who may be assisting the deployment of responding units. It is critical that deputies are able to quickly identify a school from the outside so that they can respond rapidly in the event of an active attack incident.

Recommendation: The PBSO should coordinate with the school system to ensure that school buildings are appropriately labeled, so that responding agencies that may not be familiar with the buildings are easily able to identify them.

PERF also heard from PBSO that a frequent issue during training exercises is establishing a system for parking on scene so that access to the scene is not obstructed. Personnel reported that their typical protocol is for the first responding officer to select a side of the street to park on when arriving on scene, and that the following responding officers are to park on the same side of the street. However, in conversations with PBSO personnel, it appeared that this system is not always adhered to.

Recommendation: PBSO should ensure that all staff are familiar with agency protocols regarding parking at the scene of an incident, and consider institutionalizing these practices in policy. These parking protocols should also be practiced during multi-agency training exercises.

THE AFTERMATH OF AN ACTIVE ATTACK

PBSO takes many steps to prevent and prepare for an active attack incident. The planning also takes into consideration the aftermath that follows one of these events. This section highlights considerations related to short-term aftermath and long-term aftermath for PBSO to consider if an active attack incident were to occur.

Recovery

Once all injured victims are removed from the scene of an active attack incident, the focus should shift to the recovery phase. PBSO recently updated its Mass Casualty/Mass Fatality Plan (MCI/MFI), which provides guidance on response to a mass casualty event and outlines the roles and responsibilities for each responding agency.

For example, PBSO responsibilities during the recovery phase include: initiating a crime scene log, providing scene security at designated locations, performing crime scene investigations as appropriate, assisting with traffic and crowd control, and coordinating medical and death notifications as requested. PBSO's Violent Crimes Division (VCD) is responsible for conducting identification of victims, with assistance from the Medical Examiner's Office, and coordinating notifications of the next of kin. The Department of Health is responsible for continuous assessment of community resources such as hospitals, funeral homes, and morgues, as well as coordination of victim tracking.³⁶

Recommendation: PBSO should ensure that all personnel and other relevant agencies remain familiar with the Mass Casualty Plan, and incorporate roles and responsibilities outlined in the plan into multi-agency training exercises.

Family Reunification and Assistance

Following an active attack incident, it may be necessary for a Family Reception Center (FRC) or a Family Assistance and Survivor Care Center (FASCC) to be established. The FRC serves as a short-term/temporary location for survivors to be reunited with family members. In the event that a FASCC is established, it will take the role of the FRC and deliver continued services.

³⁶ PBSO. Emergency Operations Plan. Mass Casualty/Mass Fatality Plan Appendix I.

PBSO's process and procedure for opening the FRC and FASCC are detailed in PBSO's Mass Casualty Incident (MCI)/Mass Fatality Incident (MFI) Plan. The plan states that the FRC is to be established by a Uniformed Operations Commander and operational within four to six hours of an incident. Furthermore, the plan indicates that the PBSO Public Information Officer (PIO) is responsible for disseminating the location of the FRC so families will go to that location instead of the scene of the incident.³⁷

Based on PBSO's MCI/MFI Family Assistance Center Plan, a FASCC will be established for Level 3 and above MCIs/MFIs (i.e., more than 20 victims). The Palm Beach County Community Services Department will be the overall lead agency responsible for the management of the FASCC, and should establish the FASCC within 12 hours of the incident. In the event a FASCC is established, the PBSO will be the agency responsible for the following: victim identification, notification and referrals (including death notifications), decedent affairs, and security.³⁸

Recommendation: Individuals who experience an active attack event may leave their personal belongings, which could include their identification and cellular phones.³⁹ Therefore, PBSO will need to consider how to assist survivors with contacting their families, as well as making sure they are disseminating information regarding deceased victims to the correct families.

Recommendation: PBSO and partner agencies should consider assigning a victim advocate to each victim's family. The victim advocate could assist with linking families to counseling services, and assisting with travel plans and funeral arrangements.

Crime Scene Processing

Following an active attack incident, it is vital that evidence is collected and preserved, especially in the event that the attacker is captured alive and will be charged and prosecuted. Processing a crime scene is a time-consuming activity, and it is imperative that scene not be contaminated until investigators can document and photograph the scene and collect critical evidence.⁴⁰ Some PBSO personnel explained to PERF that they were concerned about deputies being aware of proper protocols for maintaining and preserving a crime scene.

Recommendation: PBSO should use roll-call training to remind deputies of the proper protocols that apply to crime scene maintenance and preservation during an active attack. Deputies should be reminded to sign the crime scene log and that they are not to eat, drink, smoke, chew tobacco, use the telephone, spit, adjust the room temperature, reposition items, or litter within the established boundaries of a crime scene.⁴¹ In addition, deputies should be reminded that an active attack crime scene will involve other law enforcement and non-law enforcement personnel from many agencies. These individuals may not be

³⁷ PBSO. Emergency Operations Plan. "Family Assistance Center Attachment to Mass Casualty/Mass Fatality Plan Appendix I."

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Metropolitan Police Department. 2014. "After Action Report Washington Navy Yard September 16, 2013: Internal Review of the Metropolitan Police Department Washington, D.C." p. 49. <https://www.policefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Washington-Navy-Yard-After-Action-Report.pdf>

⁴⁰ National Institute of Standards and Technology. 2013. "Crime Scene Investigation: A Guide for Law Enforcement." <https://www.nist.gov/sites/default/files/documents/forensics/Crime-Scene-Investigation.pdf>

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 5.

familiar with crime scene preservation and processing. Deputies must ensure that they properly control crime scene access to ensure scene preservation.

Recommendation: Because investigating an active attack incident will likely include the collection of digital evidence from the suspect’s personal electronic devices (e.g., smart phone, personal computer, tablets, etc.), it is important that PBSO and other law enforcement entities develop a plan for collecting and preserving digital evidence. The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) has developed “federated testing tools” to provide forensic labs with a mechanism to determine if the lab’s digital forensic software has the ability to copy and preserve digital evidence that could be used in court.⁴²

Recommendation: PBSO will need to consider how survivors and victims’ families can retrieve their property once the crime scene is fully processed and released. Those who are at the scene when the incident occurs will likely leave their belongings so they may elude the attacker and will be instructed to leave belongings as law enforcement evacuates survivors from the scene. This was found to be the case during the Washington, D.C. Navy Yard and the Las Vegas active shooter incidents.^{43,44} PBSO should work with partner agencies to determine and establish protocols that will be followed to return personal property to survivors and to victims’ families following a mass casualty incident.

After-Action Report

After an active attack, it will be necessary for an After Action Report (AAR) to be completed. “The purpose of an [AAR] is to analyze the management or response to an incident, exercise, or event by identifying strengths to be maintained and built upon, as well as identifying potential areas of improvement.”⁴⁵ AARs are completed following most mass casualty/fatality incidents, and PBSO will be expected to complete an AAR if the agency responds and manages an active attack situation.

PBSO personnel told PERF that the current “after action” consists of a verbal debriefing immediately following an incident to identify areas for improvement, but this process may not be documented formally.

Recommendation: PBSO should formally document its after-action analysis following large-scale, critical incidents. This should allow for a thorough description of the event, and the actions that PBSO took to respond to and manage the situation. In providing a detailed description of the event, PBSO can

⁴² National Institute of Standards and Technology. 2017. “New NIST Forensic Tests Help Ensure High-Quality Copies of Digital Evidence.” <https://www.nist.gov/news-events/news/2017/12/new-nist-forensic-tests-help-ensure-high-quality-copies-digital-evidence>

⁴³ Metropolitan Police Department. 2014. “After Action Report Washington Navy Yard September 16, 2013: Internal Review of the Metropolitan Police Department Washington, D.C.” p. 49. <https://www.policefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Washington-Navy-Yard-After-Action-Report.pdf>

⁴⁴ As the events of the Las Vegas active shooter incident unfolded, dozens of cellular phones, purses, and other personal items were left at the scene. In the days that followed the incident, the FBI was responsible for cleaning and categorizing the property. Because so many items were left, the scene was divided into four sections and released the property from only one section at a time. (Bernstein, Sharon. 2017. “Las Vegas Concertgoers Claim Personal Items Left After Massacre.” Reuters. October 8. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lasvegas-shooting/las-vegas-concertgoers-claim-personal-items-left-after-massacre-idUSKBN1CD100>

⁴⁵ University of Houston – Office of Emergency Management. “After Action Report” <http://www.uh.edu/emergency-management/planning-and-response/after-action-report/>

identify practices that were strong and areas where improvements could be made. An AAR following an active attack situation in Palm Beach County could also serve as a “lessons learned” document for other agencies.

Public Information and Media

Following an active attack event, it will become necessary to release information to the public at the appropriate time. For example, the PBSO PIO will need to coordinate with personnel on scene to get information regarding family reunification and other assistance. This is essential information that not only serves to reunite survivors and their families, but also will help keep people from going to the scene. This information should be released as soon as the location is confirmed, and the Family Reunification Center is established.

During and after an active attack, the PBSO PIO will be contacted immediately and constantly by news media and the public asking for information. PBSO understands that it is not required to answer media requests until prepared to do so. In a critical incident, the Sheriff is responsible for all press conferences and contacts with the media. The Sheriff is keenly aware of the importance of getting facts and details correct, and that incorrect information can be difficult to correct. PBSO’s Sheriff makes a point to gather all relevant information and speak to the media after he has had time to prepare. At the same time, it is important to collect information promptly and share it without unnecessary delay, because misinformation spreads more quickly if there is a vacuum of authoritative information.

Naming the Suspect

Many individuals who carry out active killing attacks have a desire for notoriety and fame.⁴⁶ Data have shown that mass killing attacks in the United States occur in clusters that are similar to contagious disease outbreaks. This occurs because attackers are often influenced by their predecessors.⁴⁷ Studies have shown that this contagion effect does not occur for crimes that do not receive as much news coverage as mass killing attacks. Thus, there is a growing concern that continuous news coverage of mass attacks and the attackers’ identity can encourage future acts of violence by unstable persons.⁴⁸

Because of this, several campaigns have been started to encourage the news media and law enforcement agencies to mention the suspect’s name less often and instead to focus on the victims.

For example, family members of victims from the Aurora movie theater shooting have asked the media to limit how often they name a mass attacker and disseminate his or her photos, and to refuse to broadcast any manifestos or writings of the attacker, in a campaign called No Notoriety.⁴⁹ Similarly, ALERRT, along with the FBI and the I Love U Guys Foundation, encourage media to shift their focus from the suspects to the victims, survivors, and heroes through the Don’t Name Them campaign.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Bushman, Brad J. “Narcissism, Fame Seeking, and Mass Shootings.” *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 62, no. 2, 2018, pp. 229-241, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0002764217739660>

⁴⁷ Handwerk, Brian. “Shootings and mass Murders Seem to Be Contagious.” *Smithsonian Magazine*, 2 Jul 2015. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/shootings-and-mass-murders-seem-be-contagious-180955804/> Accessed 8 May 2018

⁴⁸ Towers, Sherry; Gomez-Lievano, Andres; Kahn, Maryam; Mubayi, Anuj; and Castillo-Chavez, Carlos. “Contagion in Mass Killings and School Shootings.” *PLoS ONE*, vol . 10, no. 7, 2015

⁴⁹ No Notoriety. “No Notoriety Challenge to the Media.” <https://nonotoriety.com/>

⁵⁰ ALERRT Center at Texas State University. “Don’t Name Them.” <http://www.dontnamethem.org/>

Social Media

Social media is a quick and effective way to reach a large number of individuals with important information. PBSO's social media accounts are well updated and comprehensive, which is an important aspect of interacting with the public. In the aftermath of an active attack, rumors and false stories may proliferate online. PBSO should be prepared for questions about incorrect accounts online and during press conferences. PBSO should be aware of the information that is spreading.

PBSO should continue to use social media to release urgent information (e.g., the location of the FRC) as they have done during other critical incidents. This will allow traditional media outlets to broadcast the information as well. Additionally, PBSO social media can be used to dispel rumors circulating about the incident, spread its messages, and provide accurate updates to the community.

PBSO should also consider the following recommendations for releasing information to the public and handling media requests following an active attack incident:

Recommendation: PBSO should review, update, and share with agency leaders its plan to manage requests for information following an active attack event. PBSO will likely be inundated with requests for information, and while the agency does a good job handling requests for information on a day-to-day basis, it is necessary to review those plans and practices to determine which requests for information will be a priority for PBSO in the wake of an active attack event.

Recommendation: PBSO should assign a media liaison to each of the victims' families. This was an action taken by Chief Dan Oates following the Aurora, CO movie theater shooting. The media liaison served as a point of contact for media outlets to arrange potential interviews with victims' families until the families were able to decide if they wished to speak out, who would be their spokesperson, and when they would talk to the media. Appointing media liaisons helped to minimize inquiries made directly by the media to family members.

Wellness/Employee Assistance

PBSO acknowledges that deputies have a high risk of developing stress-related issues as a result of a critical incident like a mass attack. According to PBSO's MCI/MFI plan, a critical incident stress debriefing should be established, and the Behavioral Services Division and Employee Assistance Program will be involved as necessary. Specifically, the BSD is responsible for providing crisis intervention psychological services to first responders, assessing the psychological well-being of first responders, and communicating with first responders' family members about the event and the well-being of the responder. The fact that PBSO recognizes the emotional toll associated with working during a mass casualty incident demonstrates the agency's concern with deputy wellness.

PBSO currently makes it mandatory for each deputy involved in a critical incident be provided administrative leave until that deputy is able to meet with the department-provided psychologist. Deputies would return to duty with the recommendation of the psychologist and approval of the agency.

Recommendation: The PBSO’s policy requiring all deputies involved in a critical incident to meet with the department psychologist prior to returning to work is a best practice in policing. A mandatory meeting can help ensure that deputies obtain any assistance they need, while preventing any stigma associated with seeking mental health care. To improve this practice, the PBSO should initiate the practice of a follow-up appointment with the department psychologist, approximately six months from the original visit, to ensure the mental health and well-being of the officer is being addressed.

Lessons from Newtown and Aurora: Managing Additional Challenges

Active attack events are horrific and complex, and law enforcement agencies are continuously working to train and prepare for such an event. Agencies prepare for all stages of the attack, including focusing on their intelligence gathering and information-sharing in order to prevent incidents; bringing together fire personnel, emergency medical services, and telecommunicators to train and gain familiarity with one another and rescue strategies; and honing their media strategy to protect victims, their families, and the investigation. However, there are some aspects of an active killer event that even the most well-prepared agency may not think to prepare for, especially regarding the aftermath of an event.

Retired Newtown, CT Police Chief Michael Kehoe and Miami Beach, FL Police Chief (former Aurora, CO Police Chief) Dan Oates experienced tragedies in their communities and shared the following lessons about aspects of the aftermath of these events:

Establish a system to sort through gifts and mail coming to victims’ families. In Newtown after the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in 2012, police had to open a warehouse to sort through and secure the mail coming to the police department and victims’ families. Over 250,000 pieces of mail were collected and sorted through this facility. Gifts poured in from people across the country. Often, stuffed animals and other gifts came in multiples—one for each victim—totaling 26 of each item. Nearly 60,000 teddy bears were delivered to Newtown. Due to the volume of items coming in, the police department had to assign an individual to manage these operations. Law enforcement agencies should formulate a plan to manage incoming mail, packages, and gifts in the aftermath of an active killer event, to ensure they have the space and resources to dedicate to the management of this influx of gifts and messages.

Plan how and when to take down memorials. Makeshift memorials with flowers, candles, posters, and other items often are built spontaneously by community members to show support for victims and their families, and law enforcement agencies are expected to protect these memorials. It is important to plan when and how the memorial will be taken down. Law enforcement agencies should consult with the victims’ families on the best manner in which to do this. Additionally, any items the families do not claim should be carefully retrieved and archived.

Be aware of fundraising fraud. Fundraising efforts online through social media and crowd-funding sites will begin immediately after the event. Many of these will be legitimate efforts, and crowd-funding sites

often have mechanisms in place to monitor campaigns to prevent scams. However, there will be fraudsters attempting to take advantage of victims, their families, and willing donors. In Parkland, FL, imposters on Twitter posed as victims and victims' families, asking for money.⁵¹ Law enforcement agencies should be aware and prepare victims and victims' families for this possibility. Additionally, agencies should work with the appropriate entities to inform the public of any official and sponsored donation funds, as well as how to avoid scams.

Donations will also come in directly to the police department and/or local government. Law enforcement agencies should encourage and coordinate with local government to set up a fund through a reputable non-profit charity in order to manage and appropriately direct these funds. This fund should be independent of the law enforcement agency, so the agency has no involvement with the fund.

Anticipate internet deniers, conspiracy theorists, and harassers. Internet deniers and conspiracy theorists will spring up quickly, even as soon as the first full day of the event. Some of these individuals will contact media with false accounts of what occurred. Conspiracy theorists will also begin spreading false information.⁵² And, as victims are identified, these individuals will contact families, which can cause additional victimization and suffering. Law enforcement agencies should work with victim advocates and victims' families to prepare for this.

Other harassers will focus on the city or town where an active attack incident occurred. In Newtown, calls were received to hospitals and schools in the days immediately following the event. On the first day classes resumed and students returned to schools, a threat was called in to one of the schools, leading to the school being placed into lockdown. Law enforcement agencies need to be prepared to handle these other investigations that will arise from harassers across the country or even worldwide.

Prepare for food donations for first responders. Food donations will also come in to first responders from restaurants and other well-wishers. Law enforcement agencies should create a system to record who is making donations as they come in, to ensure they can be thanked later. Additionally, law enforcement agencies should be prepared to deliver food to officers and deputies working long-term crime scenes, memorials, and other sites related to the event. If available, law enforcement agencies can utilize community volunteers to carry out food deliveries.

Use assistance from state, county, and federal law enforcement agencies, and conserve local resources. There is a nearly endless list of things that need to happen in the aftermath of an active killer event. The local/lead law enforcement agency will be faced with a torrent of demands related to the incident as well as with normal day-to-day duties and calls. After an event occurs, law enforcement agencies should reach out to county and state law enforcement partners, as well as federal law enforcement partners at the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF). These agencies should be given as much work as they are willing and able to handle, so the local law

⁵¹Huriash, Lisa J. and Geggis, Anne. "Impostors on social media exploit Parkland shooting victims and families." *SunSentinel*, 20 Apr. 2018 <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/local/broward/parkland/florida-school-shooting/fl-sb-twitter-fake-accounts-victims-20180417-story.html> Accessed 7 May 2018.

⁵²Criss, Doug. "The mass shooting conspiracy theories that just won't go away (and why they should)." *CNN*, 21 Feb. 2018. <https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/21/us/mass-shootings-conspiracy-theories-trnd/index.html> Accessed 7 May 2018

enforcement agency can conserve resources to handle other priorities. For example, these agencies can assist with following up on forensic and investigative leads while the local law enforcement agency is handling demands like funerals, crime scene processing, and normal day-to-day duties.

CONCLUSION

In March 2018, Sheriff Ric Bradshaw of the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office (PBSO) asked the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) conduct a review of the agency's current policies and practices to determine if PBSO has taken the appropriate steps to prevent and prepare for an active attack incident. Overall, PBSO is extremely well prepared to handle these types of incidents. PBSO has provided deputies with effective equipment, put command personnel in place to oversee and lead critical incidents, trained investigators, partnered mental health professionals with highly trained deputies, and established relationships with many local, state and federal response partners. By requesting this review, PBSO Sheriff Ric Bradshaw took active steps to strengthen the agency's response and to ensure the safety and security of the citizens of Palm Beach County.

PERF found that PBSO had recognized the need to prepare for an active attack incident prior to, and in the wake of, the February 2018 active shooter attack at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL. PBSO personnel acknowledged consistency issues within General Order (G.O.) 500.02 ("Responding to Active Aggressive Deadly Behavior"), and are in the process of updating the policy to ensure it is consistent with agency expectations regarding single-deputy entry. New language will reflect the agency's philosophy and training recognizing that the first priority in an active attack is to neutralize the threat in order to stop the killing.

PERF learned that PBSO is a well-equipped agency and distributes an array of protective gear to its deputies that will allow them to respond to a dangerous active attack situation. PBSO has taken steps to educate the public about what to do in an active attack situation through presentations distributed through the agency's Facebook page and YouTube channels. PBSO has collaborated with other county and municipal agencies to train for active attacker incidents and continues to do so.

In addition to identifying the strong aspects of PBSO's prevention and preparedness, PERF also found areas where PBSO could make some improvements. For example, PBSO has strong informal relationships with several municipal police agencies, especially with regard to information and intelligence sharing. However, these relationships should be formalized through memoranda of understanding (MOUs), so that roles and expectations for PBSO and partner agencies are clearly defined. It is especially important that the Palm Beach County School District Police Department maintain a formal relationship with PBSO. While information sharing between Palm Beach County School District Police Department and PBSO has increased following the Parkland shooting, it is a real possibility that these efforts could diminish over time. That cannot happen if the current arrangement is to be sustained. If it is not possible for the collaboration and information-sharing efforts to continue, then Palm Beach County officials should consider a consolidation of agencies or appoint PBSO and/or other municipal law enforcement agencies as the consistent law enforcement presence in the schools.

Finally, PERF has provided PBSO with guidance about policies on lone-deputy responses to an active attacker, and identified details PBSO should plan for in the aftermath of a mass casualty attack.

Through the commissioning of this review, PBSO has demonstrated a commitment to examining its strengths and weaknesses so that the agency can be prepared to respond to and prevent mass casualty attacks. PBSO's willingness to review its policies and practices and take immediate steps to improve them demonstrate the agency's dedication to ensuring the public safety of Palm Beach County residents. The agency's commitment to multi-agency training, state-of-the-art equipment, and strong partnerships and information-sharing make PBSO a leader in preparedness for active attack incidents. During the course of this project, PERF briefed PBSO on identified areas for improvement, and PBSO is already taking active steps to implement PERF's recommendations. With these continued improvements, PBSO will become a model for the country.

Appendix A: Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act

On March 9, 2018, Florida Governor Rick Scott signed SB 7026,⁵³ the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act.⁵⁴ This legislation establishes safeguards and creates resources with the ultimate goal of increasing safety in schools.⁵⁵

The Act covers many topics related to issues that have emerged in Parkland and other mass shootings. Four of the major areas covered in the Act are mental health, firearm safety, school safety, and funding.⁵⁶

Mental Health

Changes in law designed to keep firearms out of the hands of individuals suffering from mental illness include:

- Authorization of law enforcement officers to take an individual into custody under the Baker Act and seize and hold a firearm or ammunition for 24 hours after the individual is released; and
- Creation of a process for law enforcement agencies to petition a court for a risk protection order. These orders temporarily prevent access to firearms for individuals deemed at risk of harming themselves or others.

Firearm Safety

SB 7026 strengthens Florida's background check system by adding additional requirements for firearms purchases:

- The law requires at least a three-day waiting period for all firearms. If the background check for a firearm takes longer than three days, the waiting period is extended until the background check is completed. Exceptions are provided for certain individuals (e.g., concealed weapons permit holders);
- The law prohibits individuals under 21 years of age from purchasing firearms; and
- The law bans bump-fire stocks (devices that allow semi-automatic weapons to fire at nearly the same rate as a fully automatic machine gun⁵⁷).

School Safety

Provisions of the new law to increase school safety include:

- Requiring each school board to work with law enforcement agencies to assign at least one "safe-school officer" at each school. Safe-school officers can be a school resource officer, a school safety officer, or a school guardian;
- Requiring school districts to designate school safety specialists who are responsible for ensuring that the district's policies and procedures are compliant with state law, and that training and resources are

⁵³ Florida Senate. *Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 7026*. Chapter No. 2018-3. <http://laws.flrules.org/2018/3>

⁵⁴ Office of Florida Governor Rick Scott. *Gov. Rick Scott Signs Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act*. 9 Mar 2018. <https://www.flgov.com/2018/03/09/gov-rick-scott-signs-marjory-stoneman-douglas-high-school-public-safety-act/>

⁵⁵ The Florida Senate. *Senate Passes Marjory Stoneman Douglass High School Public Safety Act*. 5 Mar 2018. <https://www.flsenate.gov/Media/PressRelease/Show/2877>

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷Donnelly, Grace. "What You Need to Know About Bump Stock Gun Accessories." *Fortune*, 21 Feb 2018. <http://fortune.com/2018/02/21/bump-stocks-ban-las-vegas-shooting/>

available to schools. The specialists also are tasked with serving as the liaison with public safety agencies and conducting a school security risk assessment;

- Requiring school districts to create a multi-disciplinary threat assessment team at each school to coordinate resources, as well as assessment and intervention with individuals who may pose a threat to the safety of schools; and
- Creating an allocation to assist school districts in establishing or expanding mental health care at schools.

Funding

Through this act, \$400 million is appropriated to support implementation of the provisions of the bill. Areas where this money will be spent include:

- More than \$69 million for mental health assistance;
- \$98 million to create a grant program to improve and harden physical security at schools; and
- \$18.3 million to the Department of Children and Families to create additional mobile crisis teams.

This act includes many changes to the operations and available resources of schools, school districts, and law enforcement agencies. PBSO and other Florida law enforcement agencies should thoroughly review this legislation and update policies and practices accordingly. For example, agencies are now able to petition the court for a risk protection order to continue holding an individual's firearms. Law enforcement agencies should review the process for obtaining this risk protection order and should create procedures that reflect the requirements. These new procedures should be provided to the entire agency, and all officers and deputies should be given instruction in how to carry them out.

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West Palm Beach Police Department

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