

Safety Guidelines When Encountering Armed Subjects, Active Shooter Situations

Introduction

The following information is not intended to frighten, it is intended to inform and to enhance personal safety. **“Active shooter” is the term used to describe a person who appears to be actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a populated area; in most cases, active shooters use firearm(s) and there is no pattern or method to their selection of victims.** These situations are dynamic and evolve rapidly, demanding immediate deployment of law enforcement resources to stop the shooting and mitigate harm to innocent victims. **This document provides guidance to members of the University community who may be caught in an active shooter situation, and describes what to expect from responding police officers.**

Guidance to faculty, staff, and students:

In general, how you respond to an active shooter will be dictated by the specific circumstances of the encounter, bearing in mind there could be more than one shooter involved in the same situation. **If you find yourself involved in an active shooter situation, try to remain calm and use these guidelines to help you plan a strategy for survival.**

- **If an active shooter is outside your building**, proceed to a room that can be locked if possible, close and lock all the windows and doors, and turn off all the lights; if possible, get everyone down on the floor and ensure that no one is visible from outside the room. One person in the room should call BC Police at 617-552-4444 or 911; you may hear multiple rings but stay on the line until it is answered. Advise the dispatcher of what is taking place, and inform him/her of your location; remain in place until the police, or a campus administrator known to you, gives the “all clear.” *Unfamiliar voices may be the shooter attempting to lure victims from their safe space; do not respond to any voice commands until you can verify with certainty that they are being issued by a police officer.*
- **If an active shooter is in the same building you are**, determine if the room you are in can be locked and if so, follow the same procedure described in the previous paragraph. If your room can’t be locked, determine if there is a nearby location that can be reached safely and secured, or if you can safely exit the building. If you decide to move from your current location, be sure to follow the instructions outlined below. *If the room cannot be locked, barricade the door with heavy furniture such as desks, tables, and bookcases if possible.* If you determine that escape is possible, run and attempt to alert others *as you exit the area/building*. As you exit, warn others from entering the area/building of danger.
- **If an active shooter enters your office or classroom**, try to remain calm. Dial BC Police or 911, if possible, and alert police to the shooter’s location; *if you can’t speak, leave the line open* so the dispatcher can listen to what’s taking place. At times the location of a 911 call can be determined without speaking. **If**

there is absolutely no opportunity for escape or hiding, attempt to shield yourself with any available object (i.e., desk, book bags, computers, etc.) It might be possible to negotiate with the shooter; attempting to overpower the shooter with force involves significant risk and should be considered a very last resort after all other options have been exhausted. If the shooter leaves the area, proceed immediately to a safer place and do not touch anything that was in the vicinity of the shooter.

No matter what the circumstances, if you decide to flee during an active shooting situation, make sure you have an escape route and plan in mind. Do not attempt to carry anything while fleeing; move quickly, keep your hands visible, and follow the instructions of any police officers you may encounter. Do not attempt to remove injured people; instead, leave wounded victims where they are and notify authorities of their location as soon as possible. Do not try to drive off campus until advised it is safe to do so by police or campus administrators; law enforcement authorities will want to speak with you to obtain information.

What to expect from responding police officers:

Police officers responding to an active shooter are trained to proceed immediately to the area in which shots were last heard; their purpose is to stop the shooting as quickly as possible. The first responding officers will normally be in teams of four (4) or possibly fewer; they may be dressed in regular patrol uniforms, or they may be wearing external bullet resistive vests, helmets, and other tactical equipment. The officers may be armed with rifles, shotguns, or handguns, and might be using pepper spray or tear gas to control the situation.

Regardless of how they appear, remain calm, do exactly as the officers tell you, and do not be afraid of them. Do not ask questions, but provide important information (such as the location of the shooter) if you are certain of such information. The police officer's verbal commands will be loud and extremely insistent; do not be offended. Put down any bags or packages you may be carrying and keep your hands visible at all times; if you know where the shooter is, tell the officers. The first officers to arrive will not stop to aid injured people; rescue teams composed of other officers and emergency medical personnel will follow the first officers into secured areas to treat and remove injured persons. Keep in mind that even once you have escaped to a safer location, the entire area is still a crime scene; police will usually not let anyone leave until the situation is fully under control and all witnesses have been identified and questioned. Until you are released, remain at whatever assembly point authorities designate.

If you have questions after reviewing these guidelines, please contact the Boston College Police Department at 617-552-4440 or **617-552-4444 for emergency assistance.**