



RESPONSE GUIDE TO VIOLENT THREATS

ACTIVE SHOOTER AND HOSTAGE SITUATIONS

This information is being shared to guide employees' and students' responses to violent threats. Please become familiar with this guide. In the event of a violent threat, it serves as a quick reference for effective action. This piece is a section of the Emergency Response Guide, which covers a variety of emergency situations and can be found online at www.mercyhurst.edu/about/emergency.

ACTIVE SHOOTER

Active shooter situations evolve quickly and typically require first-arriving law enforcement units to take immediate action to end the danger.

IF YOU ARE INDOORS AND IN DANGER:

If you are indoors and in danger, evacuate, if you can do so safely. Ask anyone you encounter to leave the building immediately. Evacuate to a safe area away from the danger and take protective cover. Stay there until emergency responders provide instructions. When there is an active shooter, **DO NOT** activate the fire alarm to evacuate a building.

All persons **NOT** immediately affected by the situation should take protective cover indoors, staying away from windows and doors.

If you cannot safely evacuate a building, the following guidelines are recommended:

- Go to the nearest room or office.
- Lock and barricade the doors.
- If a door has no lock and opens in, a heavy door wedge can be jammed between the bottom edge of the door and the floor; otherwise look for heavy furniture to barricade the door.
- Turn off lights.
- Close blinds and stay away from windows.
- Cover windows, including windows on doors.
- Turn off radios and computer monitors.
- Stay calm, quiet, and out of sight.
- Take adequate cover/protection (i.e. concrete walls, thick desks, filing cabinets) which can protect you from bullets.
- Silence mobile phones.
- Place signs in exterior windows to identify the location of injured persons after sounds of aggression have ceased.
- Do not open a door. It might be the shooter.
- Remember, a shooter will usually not stop until engaged by an outside force.
- If a fire alarm is activated, do not leave the place of safety unless you see flames or smoke are entering your safe place.
- If you are trapped with a shooter and he/she is not shooting, **DO NOT** draw attention to yourself with sudden body movements, statements, comments, or hostile looks.

IF YOU ARE OUTSIDE:

If you are outdoors and hear gunfire, stay alert and move away from the gunfire. Look for appropriate cover locations. Brick walls, large trees, retaining walls, parked vehicles, and any other object that can stop bullets should be used as cover.

CALL FOR HELP:

If you become aware of an active shooter situation, take the steps necessary to ensure your safety. Immediately call Police & Safety at 814-824-3911 when you can safely do so. Provide the following information:

- Your specific office/room number and building name.
- The number of people at your location.
- The number of people injured and the types of injuries. The assailant(s)' location, number of suspects, race/sex, clothing description, physical features, type of weapons (long-barreled gun or handgun), backpack, shooter's identity (if known), separate explosions from gunfire, etc.

WHEN POLICE ARRIVE:

- When police officers arrive on scene, move toward any police vehicle when it is safe to do so while keeping your hands on top of your head. Do not carry anything in your hands that could be mistaken for a weapon. Do exactly what the police tell you to do.
- If you are still inside the building, DO NOT RUN. Follow all instructions provided. Make no sudden moves that could be interpreted as hostile or threatening.
- Wait for instructions and obey all commands.
- Do not be upset, resist, or argue if a rescuer isn't sure if you are a shooter or a victim.
- Even if you are handcuffed and searched, DO NOT resist. Wait for the confusion to clear.
- You will be taken to a safe area, where proper identification and status will be determined.

HOSTAGE SITUATION

If you hear or see a hostage situation, immediately remove yourself from any danger and notify Police & Safety at 814-824-3911.

- Be prepared to provide the following information: location and room number of incident, number of possible captors, physical description and names of the captors (if possible), number of possible hostages, any weapons the captors may have, your name, your location, and phone number.

IF YOU ARE TAKEN HOSTAGE:

- Remain calm, be polite, and cooperate with your captors.
- DO NOT attempt escape unless there is an extremely good chance of survival. It is safer to be submissive and obey your captors.
- Speak normally. DO NOT complain, avoid being belligerent and comply with all orders and instructions.
- DO NOT draw attention to yourself with sudden body movements, statements, comments, or hostile looks.

- Observe the captors and try to memorize their physical traits, voice patterns, clothing, or other details that can help provide a description later.
- Avoid getting into political or ideological discussions with the captors.
- Try to establish a relationship with your captors and get to know them. Captors are less likely to harm you if they respect you.
- If forced to present terrorist demands to authorities, either in writing or recorded, state clearly that the demands are from your captors. Avoid making a plea on your own behalf.
- Try to stay low to the ground or behind cover. Avoid windows or doors.

IN A RESCUE SITUATION:

- DO NOT RUN. Drop to the floor and remain still. If that is not possible, cross your arms, bow your head, and stand still. Make no sudden moves that a tense rescuer might interpret as hostile or threatening.
- Wait for instructions and obey all instructions you are given.
- Do not be upset, resist, or argue if a rescuer isn't sure if you are a terrorist or a hostage.
- Even if you are handcuffed and searched, DO NOT resist. Just wait for the confusion to clear.
- You will be taken to a safe area, where proper identification and status will be determined.