ACTIVE SHOOTER INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

WHITE PAPER

PREPARATION. READINESS. EXECUTION.
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The recent high-profile shootings in Kalamazoo, Mich., and San Bernardino, Calif., have shed light on a grim reality: In America, there are more mass shootings annually than there are days in the year. In response, law enforcement agencies are changing the way they train and respond to active shooter incidents to improve effectiveness and save lives.

The alarming statistics went viral on social media following the tragic shootings at the San Bernardino Inland Regional Center on Dec. 2, 2015, which left 14 people dead and 21 wounded. The active shooter incident marked the 355th out of a total of 372 mass shootings in 2015. It was also the worst mass shooting in our country since the 2012 attack at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

Recently, the murder spree in Kalamazoo, Mich., on Feb. 21, 2016, sent further shockwaves throughout the nation. The suspect, identified as an Uber driver, randomly killed four people and critically injured two others during a four-hour rampage. Among the wounded was a 14-year-old girl, who was initially pronounced dead after being shot in the head. It was the 42nd mass shooting that occurred in 2016.

The alarming statistics are based on data from the crowd-sourced Mass Shooting Tracker, which defines a mass shooting as an incident in which at least four people are killed or wounded (including the gunman).

While there was no clear motive for the Kalamazoo incident, the mass shooting in San Bernardino was officially declared an act of terrorism. It took just four minutes for the first police unit to respond to the San Bernardino shooting following the initial 911 emergency call.

The swift and immediate police response reflects the new kind of training and response tactics for active shooter incidents. The fundamental change is that law enforcement officers are training in Immediate Action Rapid Deployment (IARD) tactics. This is a rapid-response tactic where responding officers take immediate action to confront a threat – as opposed to attempting to control a threat.

Law enforcement agencies are also working to strengthen their incident command structures based on lessons learned from previous tragedies, including mass shootings at Columbine High School and the Washington DC Navy Yard.
COLUMBINE SHOOTING: A WAKE-UP CALL PROMPTING CHANGE

The tragic Columbine High School shooting in 1999 was the wake-up call that prompted a quantum shift in training and response for active shooter incidents. The perpetrators – two senior students in a suicide pact – killed 12 students and a teacher in a highly planned attack that also involved bombs and explosive devices. The incident brought about the realization that a much faster police response was needed for active shooter cases.

The responding officers from various Denver-area agencies set up a perimeter around the school to contain the shooters, but they did not enter the building for 30 minutes. This reflected their training at the time, which was based on the concepts of containing the situation and waiting for SWAT team members to arrive, mobilize and respond.

However, “contain and negotiate” tactics are intended for hostage situations – not for active shooter responses, according to the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) publication, The Police Response to Active Shooter Incidents.

Unlike a hostage situation, “active shooters aim to inflict mass casualties as quickly as possible, usually in a matter of minutes. Many active shooters do not target any particular individuals, but rather try to kill as many people as possible,” according to the report.

Under the new rapid-response approach, street officers are being trained to take immediate action, rather than waiting from SWAT teams to arrive. They are trained to run toward the sound of gunshot and remove the threat in order to save lives.

The IARD tactic, therefore, is used during active shooter incidents or other life-threatening situations where delayed deployment could result in death or grievous bodily harm to innocent persons.

VARIATIONS IN ACTIVE SHOOTER RESPONSE

In its report, PERF examined police response to active shooter incidents and changes in officer training from 2000 to 2014. It based its findings on dozens of active shooter policies it received from police and sheriffs’ departments of various sizes. PERF found that there were variations in policies based on the department’s size and conditions (rural vs urban), but noted that the policies are universally “built around the reality that even a one-minute delay in responding may result in multiple additional fatalities.”

An active shooter policy should be carefully tailored “to reduce the inherent confusion that can occur when multiple agencies respond to a quickly changing, extremely violent event,” according to PERF. This will result in a faster, better organized response that can save lives.

PERF added that many department’s policies emphasize that “stopping the shooter must be an absolute top priority, and that rescuing or providing medical assistance to victims is a secondary priority to be addressed only after the shooter or shooters have been neutralized.”
SAN BERNARDINO RESPONSE: SWIFT AND PROFESSIONAL

At San Bernardino, the two perpetrators had fled the scene before police arrived. The first responding officers arrived almost simultaneously; another officer arrived two minutes later and together they entered the building and began to evacuate the survivors.

Luckily, the San Bernardino SWAT team was conducting its monthly training exercise a few miles away from the scene at the time of the attack “and was able to arrive quickly, already wearing protective gear,” according to The Wall Street Journal. Upon locating the suspects a few hours later, the officers raced to confront the killers in their black SUV with the support of BearCat armored personnel carriers. After the SUV stopped, the perpetrators were killed after exchanging fire with police from inside their vehicle.

Ultimately, about 300 officers and agents from multiple agencies responded to the active shooter event, including the FBI. Seven police agencies were involved in the final shootout, with 23 officers firing a combined total of approximately 380 rounds. FBI’s investigation later revealed that the perpetrators were “homegrown violent extremists” and that the male shooter was a public health employee.

Law enforcement experts and the community praised the San Bernardino Police Department, San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department and other agencies for the way they handled the incident, according to the Los Angeles Times article, “Police Tactics in San Bernardino Rampage win High Praise from Experts.”

The Los Angeles Times reported that the San Bernardino officers “did what they were supposed to do: come to the location, get together with a team of three, four or five officers and make entry,” said San Marino Police Chief John Incontro, a former LAPD captain who oversaw the department’s SWAT team. “The goal is to find the suspect and stop the threat.”
WASHINGTON NAVY YARD SHOOTING: LESSONS LEARNED

The swift and coordinated response effort at San Bernardino is indicative of lessons learned from previous active shooter tragedies in the U.S. One such incident at the Washington Navy Yard in Washington DC, brought home the need for multi-agency coordination and a Unified Command. During this mass shooting on Sept. 16, 2013, a lone gunman methodically killed 12 people in Building 197 before being killed by police.

Hundreds of police, fire, and emergency medical personnel from several different agencies responded to the Navy Yard after receiving news of the shooting. “Officers relied upon their training, experience, and instincts to run into an unfamiliar and massive building, towards the gunshots and certain danger,” according to the After Action Report detailing lessons learned.

The D.C. Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) report analyzed 35 issues with the agency’s response to the incident — noting that “there were a variety of challenges that impacted the detailed, orderly, and efficient demobilization of personnel and resources.”

Among its findings, the report said officers from various agencies were operating on different radio channels and unable to communicate. There was also no single, overarching staging area, making it difficult to track and manage all personnel and assets. When the responding officers arrived, they also had difficulty finding the location of the building in which the shooting was taking place. They eventually found Building 197 after moving towards the direction where people were fleeing from.
In the After Action Review of the incident, MPD Chief Cathy Lanier outlined the challenges that the MDP and other agencies faced, including:

**BUILDING STRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENT**
- Complex, “maze-like” layout with thousands of cubicles and office areas, and extremely narrow hallways

**INCIDENT COMMAND**
- While most of the critical roles were established early in the response, there were various branches and functions that were not clearly or effectively established
- Not all responding agencies reported to Incident Command

**UNIFIED COMMAND**
- Too many command buses diluted agency representation
- Insufficient representation of all key agencies in Unified Command

**COMMUNICATIONS**
- Some officers had a difficult time transmitting vital information over radio channels. There were numerous people transmitting on the main channel.

**SELF-DISPATCHING OFFICERS & ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRACKING OF PERSONNEL**
- Numerous officers responded to scene; many in plainclothes. In addition, there were some personnel who did not have their credentials or badge conspicuously displayed.
- Difficult to determine who entered the building and who may have discharged their weapon
- Concern for Blue-on-Blue Engagements (“friendly fire”)
- 100+ officers formed several active shooter teams and entered the building during the initial search

**DETERMINING WHO WAS IN CHARGE OF BASE**
- Several different Navy command officials were on-site and responsible for different buildings at the Navy Yard
- Unable to gain rapid access to floor plans, CCTV, decision makers, etc.

**DEMOBILIZATION**
- Difficulty tracking and managing the orderly and efficient demobilization of all personnel and resources

**WITNESS MANAGEMENT AND INVESTIGATIVE RESPONSE**
- Thousands of potential witnesses
- Difficulty coordinating with multiple agencies directly involved in the response, as well as those agencies in supporting roles or impacted by incident.

The PERF report noted that “Like other critical incidents, active shooting incidents typically generate a great deal of incorrect information as they are happening. One of the biggest challenges for responding agencies and incident commanders is to quickly organize the collection of information so incorrect reports can be sorted out for after action reviews.”

To help ensure a more collaborative response effort, the After Action Review recommended that “personnel from different agencies should receive standardized training, which results in a consistent understanding of tactics, communication, and approach ... Collaborative training is also an opportunity to highlight the importance of a coordinated response by all involved.”
The complexities involved in an active shooter response are enormous, yet the objective is very simple: “You have to stop the threat – find the source of the problem and stop it – with the goal of not getting killed or shot yourself and ensuring your partners don’t get killed or wounded,” said Sgt. Don Parker, who retired from the San Diego Sheriff’s Department in 2015 after a distinguished 26-year law enforcement career.

Stopping the threat is one of three primary facets involved in an active shooter response, Sgt. Parker explained. The second facet is coordination – ensuring there is a unified command, real-time communications and situational awareness in the midst of the chaos. It all begins with preparation and readiness – the administrative side that involves daily team management and effective training.

“Officers have to be prepared. You can’t just run into an active shooter situation like a bunch of kids playing paintball. You’re dealing with a complex situation where a human being has gone crazy and shooting randomly or with a purpose. There’s a huge potential for friendly fire and multiple, simultaneous threats – especially explosive devices,” Sgt. Parker said.

The third aspect of an active shooter event is the aftermath – the paperwork – the documentation required for the reports and After Action Reviews. The investigators must sort out witness reports, evidence collected and track all events that occurred – quickly and accurately.

“If evidence is not well documented, bad guys will walk. If procedures are not followed, careers can be ruined. Jurisdictions have to be prepared for both criminal and civil cases. There’s just no way around it,” said Sgt. Parker. “In an incident where people get killed or wounded, you can guarantee that someone is going to get sued – the responding agency, the jurisdiction or individuals themselves.”

**FRONT-LINE EXPERIENCE**

Sgt. Parker should know because he’s had plenty of boots-on-the-ground experience during his successful law enforcement career. He’s responded to active shooter events on the front lines as a SWAT/SED team member, including the Granite Hills High School shooting in 2001. He has also managed numerous, large scale multi-agency Command Posts in leadership roles including Search and Rescue (SAR) Operations, Critical Incident Management, Large-Scale Disaster Response and Emergency Services.
In fact, Sgt. Parker was instrumental in introducing Mission Manager to the San Diego Sheriff’s Department in collaboration with the software developer in 2011. He used Mission Manager extensively while serving as the department’s SAR coordinator/incident commander, where he led a 240-member team in approximately 50 missions per year. Today, Sgt. Parker is a law enforcement consultant for several organizations, including Mission Manager, Inc.

“I don’t know of any better tool in the digital world than Mission Manager that can effectively deal with all critical facets of an active shooter event,” said Sgt. Parker.

A UNIFIED COMMAND STRUCTURE

There is a tremendous need for a coordinated effort among all agencies to ensure a rapid, safe and effective response during mass shootings. These horrific events typically involve first responders from multiple jurisdictions and agencies, including law enforcement, fire departments, EMS and emergency management. Therefore, planning and interagency cooperation is paramount to ensure that the “right hand is talking to the left.”

“You need good communications with a clear incident command structure so you can move out and stop the threat,” Sgt. Parker explained. “You need to establish a staging area where responding agencies can collaborate and respond to media inquiries … because in our society, the public wants to have information NOW. NOW. NOW. They may not get it NOW, but agencies should be prepared to have that information ready.”

“With Mission Manager, you can see a common operating picture of the event as it unfolds – you will know exactly where everyone is, where they’re going and where they’ve been,” according to Sgt. Parker. “You can also keep track of volunteers, witnesses and evidence with Mission Manager.”

THE REPORTING PROCESS

In his incident commander roles, Sgt. Parker understands the importance of having complete, accurate reports that are immediately available.

“In the world of law enforcement, documenting the events is extremely critical – whether responding to a burglary at a house or an active shooter event – because there’s going to be extremely high levels of scrutiny placed upon the jurisdiction that responded,” he said.

“Everyone in the world wants to dissect the event. They want to know what went right and what went wrong. Officers have to justify their use of force. People are going to ask: Why did you shoot that guy? Why did you run around the corner, or go past a person who was wounded and bleeding on the ground? Those are the things that will be brought up in an After Action Review or courtroom proceeding,” Sgt. Parker explained.

“This is why Mission Manager is such a valuable tool – one of the reasons I worked to bring it into the Sheriff’s Department,” he continued. “As long as you document all aspects of the event as they’re happening, the reporting process becomes automatic. You no longer have to reconstruct the events after the fact. Just click a button and it’s all done for you.”
Unfortunately, there have been many lessons learned at active shooter events involving multi-agency responses that had a diluted unified command structure, as noted during the Washington DC Navy Shipyard shooting.

**REVISITING THE NAVY SHIPYARD SHOOTING**

As mentioned earlier, the DC Metropolitan Police Department’s After Action Review noted that “there were a variety of challenges that impacted the detailed, orderly, and efficient demobilization of personnel and resources.” Although most of the critical roles were established early in the response, not all responding agencies reported to Incident Command. There was no overarching staging area because too many command buses undermined a unified command structure.

Numerous officers responded to the scene in plainclothes, and it was difficult to determine who entered the building – a maze-like structure with no accessible floor plan – nor could they determine who may have discharged their weapon. As a result, it was difficult to track and manage the orderly and efficient demobilization of all personnel and resources.

Add to this the thousands of potential witnesses. It was enormously challenging for the responding agencies and incident commanders to quickly organize the collection of information and weed out the incorrect reports.

**MEETING THE CHALLENGES WITH MISSION MANAGER**

Mission Manager incident management software can help meet the myriad of challenges that agencies face during active shooter incidents like the Navy Shipyard shooting. The cloud-based software tracks and integrates all aspects of the incident: It expedites the response effort, brings clarity to the unified command and automates the reporting process.

Mission Manager speeds the response effort through its three-way callout system (SMS text, email and phone). Since administrators have instant access to their members’ contact information, training and certifications – which are kept up-to-date in Mission Manager’s database – qualified teams can be deployed at a moment’s notice.

> “Mission Manager comes into play immediately with the callouts,” said Sgt. Parker. “It allows you to quickly activate your personnel and give them as much information as possible within a short period of time.”

“You provide the suspect(s) information/description, the location of the staging area, the safe route of approach and the communications plan,” he continued. “Then you track responding personnel, set up your Immediate Action (IA) teams, and have them move out to stop the threat.”

As an event unfolds, Mission Manager provides a common operating picture on multiple devices. Events are logged and tracked in real time on mission maps, including witness reports and evidence. Afterwards, incident commanders can quickly export accurate, timely reports needed for legal compliance.

By automating these processes during an active shooter event – or any crisis – public safety agencies will save time and money. But more importantly they will save lives.
Although mass shootings are rare occurrences for individual communities, they are sadly a disturbing trend across America. As a result, there has been an increased demand for incident management software tools like Mission Manager, which can help agencies prepare for and respond to these tragic incidents.

Based on the principles of Preparation, Readiness and Execution, cloud-based Mission Manager lays the foundation for the well-coordinated response needed to save lives.

Designed to be used as a daily tool, Mission Manager provides a simple solution to ensure all team member and equipment data is kept current. This speeds response times, because administrators can quickly determine who is qualified to deploy. In the field, the web-based software acts as an online Incident Command center, providing a common operational picture on multiple devices in disparate locations. This helps ensure a Unified Command.

Every event is captured and logged in Mission Manager’s highly secure database – providing a second-by-second account of the incident – making the reporting process easy. Rather than re-tracing the chain of the events with pen-and-paper, administrators can quickly produce reports with a click of a button.

Mission Manager is an unprecedented one-stop solution for active shooter preparation and response. It also ensures your reports are timely and accurate. Here’s how:

**PERSONNEL & ASSET MANAGEMENT**

Personnel data is kept current in a team member roster so administrators know who is ready and qualified to respond. Personnel data, including contact information, training, certifications and personal gear, may be managed by members themselves.

Equipment and asset records are kept up-to-date, including maintenance records, photos and descriptions of the equipment. This enables administrators to quickly identify which assets/vehicles are available for the mission.

**DOCUMENT LIBRARY**

Floor plans and evacuation plans for potential targets, including school campuses, government buildings and airports, are stored in the document library. Checklists of incident objectives are created in advance and uploaded into Mission Manager when the need arises.
3 TRAINING
Active shooter training drills can be organized using calendars with automated RSVPs. Individual training classes and certifications are documented/logged in the personnel roster for future reference if needed in a potential courtroom hearing. This also expedites callouts of qualified personnel.

4 CALLOUTS
Immediate/rapid personnel notification is achieved using SMS text, voice and email (or all three simultaneously).

5 STAGING / UNIFIED COMMAND
ICS positions are identified and filled by responding staff. Positions are also noted in Mission Manager’s team member functions. The Command Post location is established and indicated on Mission Manager’s maps. All responding agencies as well as local dignitaries and the media may be given staging locations.

6 PERSONNEL ACCOUNTABILITY / TROOP MOVEMENT
With automated check in/out features, newly arrived outside resources are rapidly logged in. They are now part of the pool of personnel available for this event, and are easily tracked using Mission Manager’s member function. Their special skills and operational capabilities are also noted and tracked.

Teams are created with a drag-and-drop function. As teams deploy, they can be tracked on the map that has been created for the mission. Any new members logged into the mission may be retained as part of your permanent database for future deployments.

7 COMMON OPERATING PICTURE ON MAPS
Real-time maps of pertinent locations/information may be displayed on a large screen TV inside or outside the mobile command vehicle. The maps can be viewed by staff, Command staff, government officials – and sometimes the media and families – as the commander deems appropriate. Officials and other responding agencies can also view the mission events in real time on their own devices, irrespective of their physical location.

8 REAL-TIME COMMUNICATIONS
Pertinent messages are sent out to team members using Mission Manager’s messaging function, including changes in the operation, locations of team members and suspect(s), new areas to respond to, etc. All incoming and outgoing messages are captured in the communications log for post-mission reports. All messaging is secure and cannot be picked up by radio/police scanners.

9 CRIME SCENE MANAGEMENT
Crime scene elements, including photos and clues, are noted and tracked in Mission Manager as the investigative portions of the incident take shape. Victim and witness information are also tracked.

10 REPORTING
Complete, accurate details of the operation are quickly retrieved and exported as NIMS / ICS compliant reports for briefings, after action reviews and legal compliance. Reports can include the entire spectrum of important data that accompanies a critical incident, such as mapping feeds, crime scene information, evidence collected, witness statements, cooperating agencies, and the number of responding personnel and victims.
PERSONNEL & ASSET MANAGEMENT
- Track all your personnel contact information, including training, certifications and expirations, and medical information
- Organize events, request RSVP’s and sign up for events with team calendar
- Print standard ICS forms, such as team assignments, mission status, logs, etc.
- Maintain records for your gear, equipment and vehicles
- Customize login access levels for all your personnel
- Upload your team’s documents; control who can see and edit them
- Generate personnel timekeeping and detailed mission time reports

REAL-TIME MISSION MANAGEMENT
- Track your deployed personnel in real time on maps
- Create, assign and track team member tasks
- Collect personnel responding status for missions
- Track “clues” with automated tools and locate them on your mission maps automatically
- Drag-and-drop your available personnel in standard ICS positions or on team assignments
- Send your team real-time messages via emails, SMS text and voice phone calls – or all three simultaneously