



## Fire & Life Safety Council

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### RESPONSE TO ACTIVE SHOOTERS?

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*Bo Mitchell was Police Commissioner of Wilton, CT for 16 years before retiring in February 2001 to found 911 Consulting which creates emergency, disaster recovery, business continuity, crisis communications and pandemic plans, plus preparedness training and exercises for organizations.*

I get asked daily about “RUN, HIDE, FIGHT,” as the response to an active shooter in the workplace.

To start with some facts for context:

- **Workplace shootings are up dramatically.** The U.S. Attorney General reports that 2013, 2014 and 2015 were banner years—four times the number of workplace shootings with one-or-more dead versus the average of the previous five years.
- **Workplaces are two and one half times more likely to have shootings than campuses.** NYPD’s analysis reports workplace shootings represent 71% while campuses represent 29% of the total. Never forget that before you’re a campus, you’re a workplace. They’re all workplaces.
- **Workplace violence of all calibers are on the increase.** Harassment to assault to robbery and rape are much more likely than homicide.
- **NYPD reports that almost all workplace shootings are over in 8 minutes — the vast majority over in 4-5 minutes.**

So, employers must plan and train employees to respond to an Active Shooter before police can deploy. That brings us to RUN, HIDE, FIGHT.

Mother Mitchell always told me, “Bo, for every complex problem, there’s a simple solution—that’s always wrong.” Her wisdom applies here.

The Active Shooter Protocol has changed since Columbine. Police rarely wait for backup. They go into your facility; find the guy with the gun; and kill him.

So, should civilians, too, FIGHT shooters at work? Not as a first step, and really almost never. Very few civilians have the training to successfully FIGHT a shooter.

RUN, HIDE, FIGHT has been the standard response in recent years to workplace and campus violence, including shooters. Yet RUN, HIDE, FIGHT is not a list of choices. It is a continuum of decision making for intended victims.

First, RUN: Police and experts always recommend that civilians get away from the perpetrator as the first and most effective way of achieving safety. RUN is your first decision.

If RUN can’t work, then HIDE. Get “out of sight” with silence (cell phones off); it can mean locking doors and windows and/or covering windows, it can include barricading doors. Complex stuff.

If RUN and HIDE don’t work, then FIGHT. Are you alone? What can be used as weapons? Will turning lights on or off be advantageous? Can you combine with others to FIGHT?

RUN, HIDE, FIGHT involves complex decision making.

Are employers now in the job of training unarmed employees to fight a guy with a gun? Welcome to 2016.

Emergency Insights:

1. Workplace (and campus) violence and Active Shooter are foreseeable circumstances at every workplace in America without exception.
2. The U.S. government has a panoply of studies on the ubiquity and severity of workplace violence. The CDC calls workplace violence “an epidemic.”
3. This is complex stuff. Each employer—campus, corporation and medical facility—shall have site-specific procedures to respond to workplace violence—including Active Shooter—and shall train those procedures to all employees.
4. Employers should collaborate with local police, fire and EMS regarding planning, training, exercises and drills for workplace violence including Active Shooter.
5. No one can ignore this, or delay planning, training and drilling.