

# RUN, HIDE, FIGHT. ACTIVE SHOOTER training gains popularity

By Elizabeth Lepro, Staff Writer | July 5, 2016 | Updated: July 6, 2016 1:30 p.m.



Lt. Richard Wilson, of the University of Texas System police gives a presentation Thursday, June 30, 2016 on the UTHSCSA campus about how non-law enforcement people should respond to a so-called active shooter situation. He said his department goal is to having three officers on the scene of an active shooter incident in three minutes.

Photo: William Luther, Staff / San Antonio Express-News

Don't: deny it's happening, hide under a desk, scream.

Do: find an exit, barricade the door or prepare to fight.

These are the most significant pieces of advice Lt. Richard Wilson of the University of Texas Health Science Center Police Department offers to UT staffers who take his active shooter training classes.

All the stories, all the time

Unlock Express News for 99¢

**SUBSCRIBE**

“Don't go into that denial stage,” Wilson said, adding that it's human nature to try to explain away frightening sounds like gunshots in the workplace, but “How often do we set off fireworks here at the Health Science Center?”

The lieutenant has pored through the available data and police reports on prolific mass shootings including Columbine, Virginia Tech and Aurora, studying how law enforcement reacted in each instance. He's now preparing to update his PowerPoint once again with information from the Orlando night club shooting earlier this month.

Columbine High School massacre in 1999, but the protocol has since evolved. Public institutions — especially colleges and universities — are now teaching students and staff members how to prepare for the worst.

The chief of St. Mary's University's Police Department, David Ott, said he's done active shooter training for police officers for the last five years through [Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training](#), research-based active shooter training out of Texas State University.

"Not every one situation is ever going to be the same," Ott said. "We try to instruct our faculty staff and students, we don't want you paranoid, we want you prepared."

According to the FBI, about 24 percent of active shooter situations between 2000 and 2013 occurred in educational institutions. The benefit of an on-campus police force is that it can respond more quickly than city police, officials said.

Texas' campus carry law, set to go into effect in August, has added another element to an active shooter situation — one in which any number of students, faculty and staff might fire back at an attacker. The law has prompted the UT Health Science PD to add a class based on handling a concealed firearm in an active shooter situation.



Locations of Active Shooter Incidents in the US | Graphiq

Julia Wickwire, a 25 year-old employee of the Cancer Therapy and Research Center — where concealed handguns are not permitted — said if she were allowed to have her licensed handgun, she would feel more comfortable at work.

completely, public universities like the University of Texas at San Antonio and UT Health Science, have set specific exclusionary areas.

Students with guns in classrooms could take down an attacker and save the day, said Chris Patten, co-founder of the Tactical Safety Institute, but they could also make the situation worse.

“You’d be surprised how many students say, “Well, Chris, I would go out to my car, grab a gun and go right back in,” Patten said. “I say, why?”

The bottom line, he continued, if you make it out of the building, don’t go back in.

To get into the one-room Tactical Safety Institute, you have to enter through Bracken Guns, a gun shop under the same ownership. Certificates of training dot several long conference tables and an American flag hangs on the wall next to a mounted rifle and a target practice poster in the shape of a person. All along the back wall, numerous military awards and medals line a shelf above barred windows.



Fatalities and Injuries from Mass Shootings in the U.S. | Graphiq

The institute offers both concealed handgun licensing and active shooter training classes. Patten and his partner opened the firearm shop next door after noticing a significant amount of people interested in personal protection after taking classes at Tac-Safe.

Even though Patten said he keeps teaching completely separate from his commercial business, the store sells five to 10 guns after every class. Attendance

that it takes that.”

Active shooter training classes often include building safety assessments. Does a room offer escape options? Do the doors open outwards or inwards, and if they open toward the outside, what nearby object — a rope or a belt, for instance — can people use to keep the door shut and the intruder outside?

The organizations interested in assessments and trainings have broadened beyond just banks and schools, Patten said. In the last three months, he’s been to at least eight churches.

Sure, he added, there hasn’t been a church shooting in San Antonio yet, but “why wait?”

Both the Tactical Safety Institute and the UT Police use a simulated active shooter video in their PowerPoint presentations. The video, made by the Houston Police Department, depicts an office place where employees become trapped in various situations while a shooter — clad in all black with dark sunglasses — calmly peruses the hallways with a 12-gauge shotgun.

The video instructs people in an active shooter situation to either run, hide or fight. The last group of office workers approached by the shooter in the video have no other option but to clobber him with a fire extinguisher and a chair when he comes through the door.

While fighting back is a last resort, and has been criticized as too dangerous, Wilson said it’s better than closing your eyes and hoping not to be noticed.

“Whatever you’re hiding behind, it’s probably not bulletproof. So if you’re seen, expect to be shot,” Wilson said. “He’s not coming in there to reason with you.”

*llepro@express-news.net*

### Sign up for the Required Reading newsletter

Parents, ease your mind. Sign up for the latest updates on the 2020 school year.

Enter your email SIGN UP

By subscribing, you agree to our Terms of use and acknowledge that your information will be used as described in our Privacy Policy.

[RETURN TO TOP](#)

#### ABOUT

- [Our Company](#)
- [Newspaper Delivery Safety Procedures](#)
- [Privacy Notice](#)
- [Your California Privacy Rights](#)
- [Interest Based Ads](#)
- [Terms of Use](#)

