

4 BEST PRACTICES FOR

ACTIVE SHOOTER INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

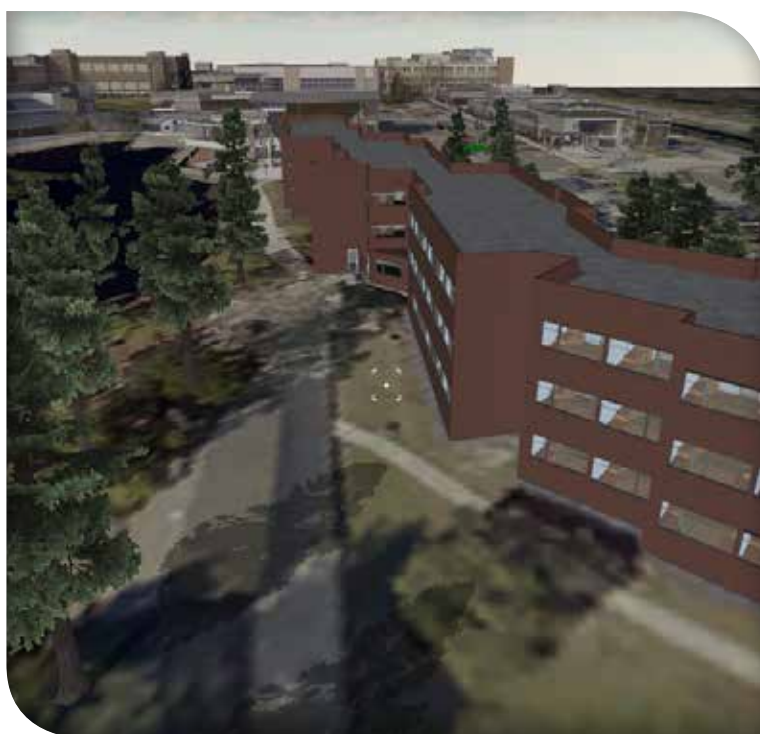


LESSONS LEARNED FROM
10 ACTIVE SHOOTER EXERCISES WITH THE
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA



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Disclaimer: What this report is and is not

All observations and statements contained in this report are based on observation of 10 functional training exercise responses to active shooter incidents at the University of North Florida using live and virtual simulation. Participants in the training were all from the same region and had some degree of familiarity with each others' policies, procedures, and communications. Readers are **CAUTIONED** that the statements contained herein may not be relevant or appropriate for their agency or region. Any new procedure or procedural change should be **validated locally PRIOR TO ADOPTION**. This report is based on the observations and opinions of the senior instructors administering the training exercises. Some pictures in this report are editorial and not from the exer-

cise. This document originally published June 2013 under title "4 Best Practices for Active Assailant Incident Management."

BEST PRACTICE 1

COMMAND

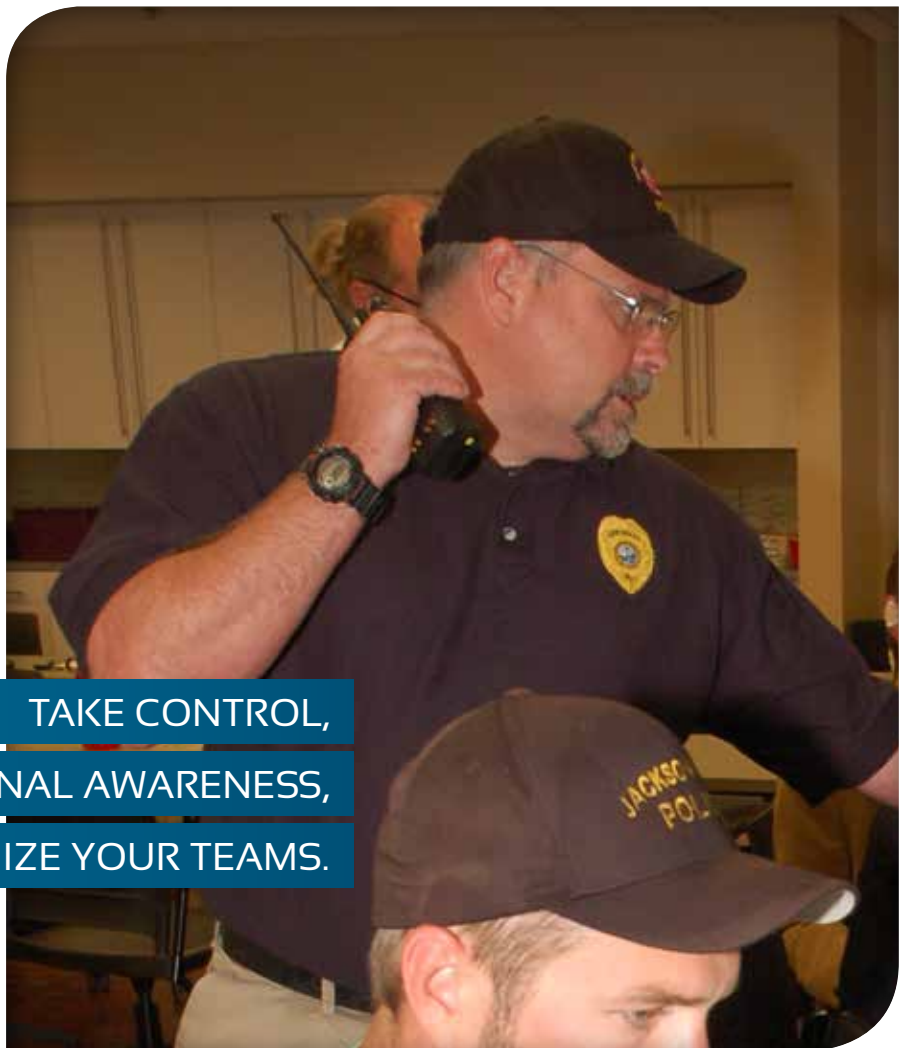
Assume command quickly, get your arms around the incident, and catch up

Recently published guidance suggested there is no time for ICS in the early response to an active shooter incident.

While the believed spirit of that message is valid, it's terribly important to realize failure to manage an active shooter incident early in the response will hamper the effort to save lives and may even have disastrous consequences.

The first arriving law enforcement officers are going to move to contact an active shooter, and the first arriving supervisor is going to begin attempting to organize that effort. Those officers are presumed to be operating in the Danger Zone (a.k.a. Hot Zone to Fire/EMS). The first supervisor is making command decisions about assignments and actions, and is by default in Command of the incident.

Best practice was for the first supervisor to immediately establish Command (e.g. ***"Dispatch, Sgt. 1 establishing Command"***), and begin getting situational awareness of the scene and position of officers. This created a single point of contact for decisions and actions, for example to organize or designate officers on scene as identifiable teams (e.g. Team



TAKE CONTROL,

GET SITUATIONAL AWARENESS,

ORGANIZE YOUR TEAMS.

"The first supervisor is making command decisions about assignments and actions, and is by default in Command."

1, Team 2, or Contact 1, Contact 2, etc.). This early organization was key to managing span of control.

Best practice was for the second arriving supervisor to assume Command and designate the first supervisor as responsible for the Danger Zone and the assigned resources, for example ***“Sgt. 2 to Sgt. 1, I’m assuming Command, you will be Contact Group, tell me what you need.”*** This action enables the first supervisor (e.g. Sgt. 1) with the best situational awareness to continue focusing on the task at hand – get the bad guy. The new Incident Commander (e.g. Sgt. 2) takes a broader view of managing the incident and remaining priorities knowing contacting the shooter is delegated to Sgt. 1 (e.g. Contact Group).



THE 6 IMPERATIVES™

1 Assess Situation and Identify Danger Zone

Determine if the situation is “Active” and the Danger Zone, then tell everyone.

2 Establish Command

Take Command and get situational awareness. Command is mobile (eg. a working command).

3 Establish Staging

Establish one Staging area (for all units, all disciplines) in a safe area well removed from the Danger Zone.

4 Establish Perimeters

Assign a leader to Inner Perimeter, delegate task, and assign resources. Do the same for Outer Perimeter.

5 Request Resources

Make request(s) for law enforcement, fire, EMS, and specialty resources. Consider requesting EOC activation.

6 Maintain Accountability

To prevent a blue-on-blue confrontation, you must know who and where units are at all times.



• *Communications and interoperability problems can often be solved quickly by dispatch -- if requested.*

BEST PRACTICE 2

STAGING



Establish one staging area, early, in a safe location

Simply put, the importance of utilizing Staging early in the response cannot be overstated. In every single case where responding units were not directed to Staging after the first 6 to 8 officers arrived, the Incident Commander ended up rapidly overwhelmed and lost situational awareness. Valuable time was lost regrouping, reorganizing the scene, and redirecting resources to needed tasks.

There are three critical elements to utilizing staging effectively in an Active Shooter response. First, establish Staging early in the response in a safe location well clear of the incident. For example, “Command to Dispatch, all incoming units to Staging at 1st and Broadway.” Do NOT wait until Command is overloaded with resources and has lost situational awareness as well as span of control.

Second, have only one (1) staging area. Do not allow separate staging areas for law enforcement and Fire/EMS. Separate staging areas will simply add to confusion and communication problems. No purpose is served by separate staging areas.

Third, assign a Staging Officer. Many fire departments have a policy directing the first resource arriving in Staging to become the Staging Officer, but this is less common in law enforcement. Command may also direct the assignment when establishing staging, for example ***“Command to Dispatch, all incoming units to Staging at 1st and Broadway. First unit to assume Staging.”***

While some might suggest early Staging delays the response, in practice it improves the response, communication, and span of control. Consider the task of establishing an inner perimeter, for example ***“Command to Staging, assign a supervisor to be Inner***



THESE

TIPS WILL HELP YOU

TREMENDOUSLY



If you have more than one Staging area, fix it. Immediately.

Perimeter and assign 7 units to them.”
“Staging copies, Sgt. 3 will be Inner Perimeter, assigning resources now.” The task of Inner Perimeter is assigned with resources, and Command only has to communicate with one person, “Inner Perimeter.”

A noteworthy consideration is assigning the Staging Officer function to the fire

Staging must organize and log units arriving at Staging and deploying into the scene.

department. Many fire service agencies utilize Staging on a regular basis, and as a result are comfortable and proficient with the responsibilities. This was observed to work well when it occurred in the exercises.



“I don’t know how to do Staging.” “Do you know the difference between a police car, an ambulance, and a fire truck?” “Yes.” “Good, you’re qualified.

Keep a running list of who’s in Staging. I’ll call you when I need resources. Maintain a minimum of 12 officers, 4 ambulances, and 2 fire trucks. Call Dispatch direct when you need more.”

-- overheard between an IC and an officer during an exercise



RESPONSIBILITY OF STAGING AREA

Organize incoming units. Log agency, unit ID, type, and time. Keep Command informed of total numbers (e.g. “6 ambulances,” not unit IDs like “Amb 1, Amb 2, etc”). When making assignments, units should be told (1) where they’re going, (2) who they’re reporting to, and (3) their assigned radio channel. Solve radio and interoperability problems in Staging.

BEST PRACTICE 3

BRANCHES



BUILD
FROM THE
BOTTOM UP

Don't rush into Unified Command, Branch it out instead



As the incident is unfolding, it was significantly more effective to build out the ICS organization from the bottom up and not the top down. As identified previously, the first supervisor establishes Command directly managing the first officers on the scene in the Danger Zone. The next arriving supervisor then assumes Command and assigns the initial IC to manage the Contact Group. The new IC is focused on identifying the hazard areas and establishing perimeters.

A higher ranking supervisor arrives, gets a quick briefing and assumes command, now assigning the second IC as Law Enforcement Branch. Next, the IC assigns a Fire/EMS chief to be Medical Branch. The IC then builds out the ICS organizational structure as

20-30 Minutes

The "Top Down" approach took 20-30 minutes longer to achieve the same benchmarks as the "Bottom Up" approach.

ACTIVE SHOOTER
OUTCOMES

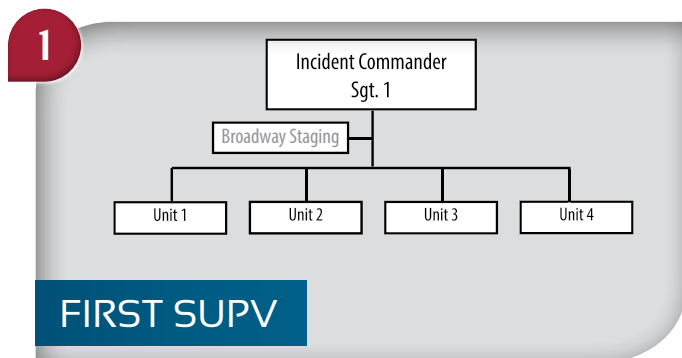
**Commits Suicide
Surrenders
Subdued
Shot
Leaves Scene**

needed to support the incident, remaining as a single Incident Commander until transitioning to Unified Command. A new group of (higher ranking) supervisors stands up Unified Command, and the IC becomes the Operations Section Chief reporting to Unified Command.

These steps were key to maximizing use of supervisors who had the best situational awareness of a particular element of the incident.

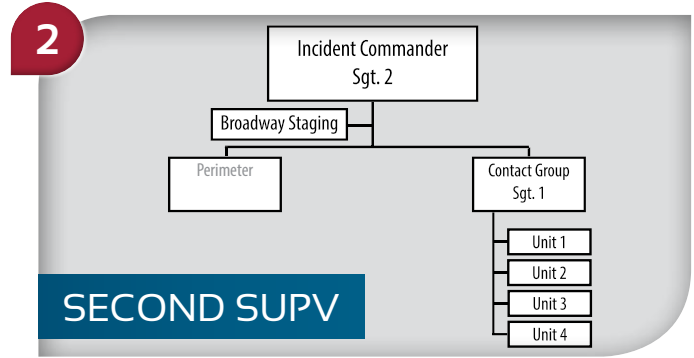
There was a very significant performance difference between the two models. The “Top Down” model managed the incident by building out from the top down (e.g. early Unified Command, early assignment of Operations and Deputy Operations, etc.). The “Bottom Up” model managed the incident by building the ICS structure from the bottom up (as described above). The “Top Down” approach took 20-30 minutes longer to achieve the same benchmarks as the “Bottom Up” approach.

A number of the instructors were surprised by this observed Best Practice. It was believed rapidly transitioning to a Unified Command (e.g. law enforcement, fire, and EMS) early in the incident would produce a faster and more organized response, but that was not observed. It's believed there were two primary contributors to the observed behavior. First, Unified Command is by nature a committee of leaders discussing potential actions and objectives, which led to a slower pace of decision-making during a rapidly unfolding incident. Secondly (and perhaps a bigger factor), was the ramp-up time to gain situational awareness for each supervisor assigned an ICS function when building out the incident leadership from the top down. There was a very strong tendency for managers to get into the weeds of the incident and/or get tunnel vision on specific tasks.



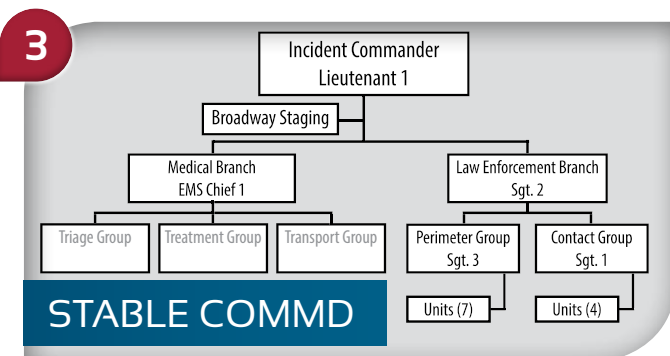
First supervisor takes command, sets staging

“Dispatch, Sgt. 1 establishing Command. All incoming units to Staging at 1st and Broadway, first unit to assume Staging.”



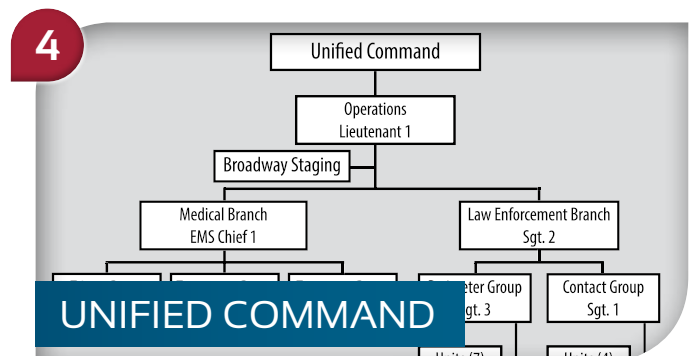
Second supervisor assumes IC, sets Contact Group

“Sgt. 2 to Sgt. 1, I’m assuming Command, you will be Contact Group, tell me what you need.”



Higher rank assumes IC, sets Branches

Lieutenant 1 gets a verbal briefing from Sgt. 2, then assumes Command. The IC (Lt. 1) assigns Sgt. 2 to Law Enforcement Branch, then assigns Medical Branch to a fire/EMS Chief.



ADD Unified Command to top of existing ICS Org

When top ranking officials arrive, form a Unified Command that inserts ABOVE the existing Command structure. Transition to Unified Command making the former IC the Operations Chief.

BEST PRACTICE 4

RESCUE



Plan ahead for rescue of injured and evacuation of victims

Maximizing the rescue effort means early coordination of many elements before they are needed. One of the most important issues observed was clarifying the terminology of “victim” and “injured.” Law enforcement used “victim” to mean anyone involved in the incident including uninjured. Fire/EMS interpreted “victim” to mean “injured,” which was a much larger number than the actual number of injured.

Assignment of a Medical Branch enabled the supervisor controlling EMS resources to begin discussions and planning with Law Enforcement Branch. As described in Best Practice 3 above, this benchmark (actual discussion and planning taking place) was achieved earlier when the ICS structure was built from the bottom up. The benchmark was reached much later in the exercise when the ICS structure was built from the top down, generally when the situation became static and it was time to treat the injured.

TRIAGE

Triage Group: Identify the severity (sorting), number, and location of INJURED persons. Ribbon or tag patients.

How injured and victims will be moved?

Will the injured be left where they lie or moved? Will law enforcement move victims or fire/EMS? Are there enough resources?

1

Where will they be moved to?

Move victims to a casualty collection point(s) outside the Danger Zone or secure a *relatively safe* area(s) inside the Danger Zone?

2

How many locations for injured and victims?

How spread out is the incident? Can all victims be moved to one casualty collection point? Space for Treatment and access for Transport?

3

Where/when/how will fire/EMS contact the injured?

Who will decide? Has the plan been shared? Is fire/EMS willing to commit resources to casualty collection points in the Danger Zone?

4

TREATMENT

Treatment Group: In a safe area near Transport, render stabilizing treatment and apply triage tags to injured persons.

TRANSPORT

Transport Group: Moves injured persons based on severity to appropriate medical facilities by air or ground ambulances.

THESE
TIPS WILL HELP YOU
TREMENDOUSLY



*How will the injured be moved?
Carrying injured rapidly fatigues manpower.*

5

Where will triage be located?

Will fire/EMS triage victims where they lie? Is there more than one location? Is the area safe or in the Danger Zone?

6

Where will transport (loading zone) be located?

Outside the Danger Zone, access and space near the Treatment area are needed for ambulances to park, load, and turn around.

7

Will air transport be used, and if so will they land?

Air transport can be life saving, but there are minimum landing zone space requirements. Who will control the landing zone?

8

Where will uninjured victims be moved?

Uninjured victims must be managed and corralled to support rescue efforts, investigative needs, accountability, and ultimately reunification.



The military needed all-terrain stretchers usable by a single rescuer. Several variants are on the market now. The stretcher pictured deploys quickly, is lightweight, and folds compact for storage.

INSTRUCTORS

SR. CONSULTANT

RON OTTERBACHER

RON OTTERBACHER retired from the Orange County Sheriff's Office where he served for 28 years. Ron rose through the ranks to the position of Division Chief where he commanded the Uniform Patrol Division, Special Investigations Division, and Operational Services Division. He also served as one of the agency's High Risk Incident Commanders as well as an Operations Section Chief for the Region 5 RDSTF Incident Management Team. He is a Senior Consultant for C3 Pathways, a public safety consulting, training, and exercise firm.

He has a Master's Degree in Criminal Justice and a graduate from the Senior Management Institute for Police, Southern Police Institute Command Officer's Development Course and the DEA Drug Unit Commander's Academy. Ron spent 15 years as a Tactical Operator and SWAT Medic. Prior to his career at the Orange County Sheriff's Office, he was a Paramedic for the Pine Castle Fire Department and the Orange County Fire Department.



SR. CONSULTANT

DOUGLAS FENDER

DOUGLAS "DOUG" FENDER retired as a Special Agent / Senior Special Agent Bomb Technician from the Federal Bureau of Investigation after 22 years of service. He provided primary internal technical advice and operational response on bombings matters for which the FBI has jurisdiction. Doug conducted criminal investigations from inception to judicial proceedings related to bombing and terrorism matters. He served as a vital resource on technical issues, terrorism intelligence briefings, and bomb squad training initiatives. He filled a critical role in the established, tiered national response to weapons of mass destruction, serving as the conduit to request national federal assets.

Doug has a Master of Science Degree in Criminal Justice from Radford University as well as a Bachelor of Science majoring in Political Science. He also served as a Magistrate in the 27th Judicial District for the Commonwealth of Virginia from 1985 to 1990.



SR. CONSULTANT

DAVID AGAN

DAVID "DAVE" AGAN retired as a Battalion Chief/Paramedic following 32 years in the fire service. He is a Senior Consultant for C3 Pathways, a public safety consulting, training, and exercise firm. He graduated Summa Cum Laude from Kaplan University with BS in Fire and Emergency Management. He is a firefighter, paramedic, and fire instructor I; a contributing author and is expert in simulation training for fire, EMS, MCI, ICS and disaster response.

During the last ten years of active service, David was the incident commander of over 1400 multiple unit incidents. Since his retirement, he has conducted dozens of incident management classes and conducted HSEEP compliant functional and full-scale exercises.



CHIEF CONSULTANT

WILLIAM GODFREY

WILLIAM "BILL" GODFREY retired as Chief of the Deltona (FL) Fire Department after 25 years in the fire service. He is chief consultant for C3 Pathways, a public safety consulting, training, and exercise firm. He has an MBA with additional degrees in public administration and EMS management. He is a paramedic, firefighter, and fire instructor III; a former planning manager for USAR FL-TF4; an author, software developer, inventor, and an expert in simulation training, fire training, mass casualty incidents, incident command, and disaster response.

Bill served as incident manager on multi-alarm fires, mass casualty incidents (including 400+ victims), hazmat, and natural disasters. In addition to developing numerous simulation systems and dozens of 2D and 3D simulations, Bill has conducted hundreds of incident management classes using multiplayer simulation as well as using simulation to conduct HSEEP compliant functional and full scale exercises.



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(407) 490-1300 • info@c3pathways.com • www.c3pathways.com
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