

Active Shooter Procedure

Questions & Answers

What is an active shooter?

An active shooter is a person who intends to kill people, often at random, usually in a populated area, using a firearm, knife or other weapon. Active shooter events are unpredictable and evolve very quickly.

Why is our procedure to respond to an active shooter changing?

Escaping yields the greatest chance of survival as opposed to hiding. Active shooter situations often occur in crowded public areas and unfold at random. Sheridan has many open spaces such as lobbies, atriums, cafeterias, and hallways and rooms with glass walls or many windows, where there isn't a place to hide behind a lockable door.

Is Sheridan alone in adopting a “leave-first” protocol?

No. The direction to 'get out' is recommended by Peel and Halton Police, the RCMP, the FBI, and US Homeland Security. This new direction has been adopted by Algonquin, George Brown, Humber, Lambton, Mohawk, University of Calgary, University of Alberta, University of Toronto, McMaster, University of Waterloo, UBC, and many others.

Is the change the result of an incident?

No. Security experts suggest that the updated procedure gives people the best chance of escaping harm.

Why are you promoting this kind of education when the scenario is so unlikely?

While such an event is extremely unlikely, the possibility does exist. It's important to prepare. This material could help to save a life.

What should I do if I see or hear a violent threat happening on campus?

If the emergency notification system hasn't been activated yet, call security at 905-874-4444 or ext. 4444 as soon as it is safe to do so, so they can activate the notification.

How will I know if there is a violent threat?

A message saying “Violence Alert! Violence Alert! Get Out, Hide, Defend” will be broadcasted through speakers on our campuses. Notification will also be sent via the Sheridan Alert mobile app.

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What if I want to evacuate but my classmates/co-workers want to hide?

Everyone must scan and assess their own situation and choose whether to get out or hide according to their circumstances. It's okay if your response is different from your manager, co-worker, professor or classmates.

Are you really suggesting attacking a person who has a gun?

Keep in mind that this is a last resort and only if your life is in imminent danger. People intending to harm typically don't respond to reason. An active shooter almost always continues until something happens to stop them. Nobody will force you to take this step but you should be aware that it's an option.

We were previously instructed to hide during an emergency. Why are you telling me to take action?

Active shooter events are unpredictable, evolve quickly and may be over in a matter of minutes. The police will come but you need to think about how you will help protect yourself before they arrive. When the police come, their first priority will be to stop the attacker, not to evacuate a building. Research and best practice show that getting out is the best course of action, if you can escape safely.

Am I responsible for the decisions of others?

You have a duty to inform your staff about the updated procedure to ensure they understand the direction and have the chance to voice concerns. If there's a question you can't answer, contact the Office of Security.

In an emergency, you're not responsible for the decision of your employees. But as you make your own choice, please encourage others to act.

What do I do if I'm teaching a class when a message goes out alerting an Active Shooter on campus?

Stop teaching immediately and choose whether to get out or hide according to your circumstances. You can tell students what you plan to do. Encourage students to take action and either get out or hide.

Do I need to account for my staff / the students in my class?

No. Supervisors and professors do not need to account for employees or students as everyone will make their own choice as to whether to leave or hide.

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How will I know if it's safe to get out?

When you hear the Active Shooter notification over the loud speakers, scan and assess your situation to determine if the threat is in your immediate vicinity. If possible, look out windows or the door to see what's happening. If you feel it's safe, leave immediately.

I've never heard a gunshot in real life. How will I know if I hear one?

The sound of gunshots can vary. It can sound like a firecracker, a pop, or a loud bang. It might sound different inside and outside. The sound of gunfire on campus will sound out of the ordinary. Listen and look for other clues and if there's any doubt in your mind, treat the situation as if it were real.

As a student, I move around all day. Do I need to have a detailed escape plan for everywhere I go?

No. It's not practical to have a detailed plan for every situation. But you can take a moment in various locations to ask yourself "What if?" Take a mental note of exits and hiding places for the spaces where you spend the bulk of your time. Thinking ahead could make a critical difference in how you react in an emergency when you're under extreme pressure.

In the past, staff in our area sought out students from open areas and brought them into our offices to hide. Should we still be doing this?

Everyone must scan and assess their own situation and do what's best according to their circumstances. If you plan to hide, you can offer your hiding space to others if you feel it's safe to do so. Encourage others around you to take action and make the choice that's right for them. Keep in mind that your first responsibility is to yourself.

I'm an employee with a disability. How can I be prepared for an active shooter situation?

Pre-plan potential exit routes and hiding locations. Understand your options. You may contact beprepared@sheridancollege.ca for individualized workplace emergency response information.

I'm a person with a disability. What should I know about how to respond in an active shooter situation?

Leaving is the first option, but if you can't, then hide. Try to find a room with a door. Turn off the lights and barricade yourself until you hear the all clear message or receive the all clear message. The Sheridan Alert mobile application provides written updates through push notifications on emergency situations on campus. This app can be downloaded at no charge and operates on Apple and Android phones. Notification speakers will flash with strobe lights in HMC B Wing and in selected areas at the Davis and Trafalgar campuses. Finally, please be aware of your surroundings and take cues from those around you.

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In an active shooter situation, will my OneCard still let me into my office or classroom?

Yes. All doors that have swipe card access will have the lock activated. If you normally have access to a room, you'll continue to have access even during an active shooter situation. If you don't normally have access to a room, you won't be able to enter with a OneCard. Rooms that have swipe card access but that are normally unlocked during the day, like Human Resources, will become locked during an active shooter situation.

What do I do once I'm outside?

Once you have safely left your building, find a safe place. You may leave campus and go home. It might be faster to run off campus than wait in a line-up of cars to leave.

How will I know when it's safe to come back?

The 'all clear' message will be broadcasted on loud speakers on the exterior grounds of our campuses. The Sheridan Alert mobile app will also issue an 'all clear' push notification. An email will be sent to all Sheridan email addresses informing people that it's safe to return.