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Core Principles of Threat Management Units
By Michael Breslin



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A 2018 Review**
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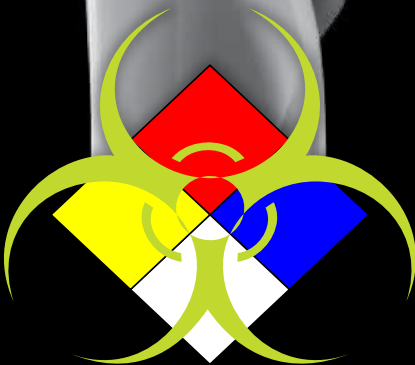
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Hybrid Warfare – Merging Old & New Age Threats

By Catherine L. Feinman



Since the end of the Second World War, nations around the globe have seen the evolution of computers and the internet. The subsequent informational “melting pot” known as the World Wide Web has created a fertile environment for sharing both critical intelligence and fictitious narratives. When state actors leverage their existing conventional military tactics and combine them with ever-evolving cyber technology, this new [hybrid warfare](#) tactic introduces numerous new and increasingly challenging political, psychological, and economic threats.

Defending the homeland requires vigilance from all public and private stakeholders. Modern technology and interconnectivity enable bad actors to infiltrate homes, businesses, government agencies, and critical infrastructure – multiple access points with exponentially devastating scenarios if any or all were breached. Prevention is much more desirable – more cost effective and less time consuming – than responding to cascading consequences. One way to detect and better manage such threats is by using [threat management units](#) to identify risk factors, mitigate threats, and attempt to prevent disaster.

Communities have in the past and will continue in the future to face risks and threats that are specific to their locales. Historical trends and [lessons learned from previous incidents](#) facilitate emergency preparedness planning. However, the introduction of new and emerging threats would require careful consideration of new and potentially more serious consequences – for example, the psychological effects of [active shooter training drills](#) on school children, or the public health implications if communities were not physically, emotionally, and [legally prepared](#) to respond to complex scenarios.

Now imagine these complicated evolving threats were compounded by a military strike, cyberattack, or other unconnected threat. Or, imagine a state actor [deliberately distributing misinformation](#) to instill fear, deflect resources, and instigate an unnecessary (and potentially dangerous) response. Hybrid warfare is not exclusive. It can be launched from anywhere and target anyone. Throughout 2019, the [Preparedness Leadership Council](#) will be addressing this tactic and discussing with subject matter experts how to better prepare for and mitigate a potential threat that permeates through communities and requires the attention of the multidisciplinary emergency and disaster preparedness collective.

Core Principles of Threat Management Units

By Michael Breslin

Homeland security is a complex and ever-evolving challenge whose mitigation necessitates the actions and collaboration of personnel across all branches of government and the private sector. This enhanced complexity presents law enforcement, homeland safety, and security professionals with a myriad of challenges due to an environment overflowing with existential and hybrid threats, technological innovation, interconnectivity, and limited resources.



The risks faced by the public are real and the dangers posed by those intent to do harm seem to occur on a daily basis. The United States is an open society with hard-fought liberties. These freedoms combined with geopolitical and domestic conditions provide a ripe environment for those lone individuals and bad actors intent on causing harm to disrupt this way of life.

The report, [*Mass Attacks in Public Spaces – 2017*](#), published by the United States Secret Service’s National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC) provides valuable information about mass attacks in the United States. The report examines attacks, from January 2017 through December 2017, where three or more were injured in public spaces. During this timeframe, 28 such attacks occurred and resulted in the loss of 147 lives and injury to nearly 700 others.

Threat Management Units

In the absence of enough threat management units (TMUs) and the ongoing debate over homeland safety funding and public safety initiatives, the NTAC report was disseminated to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of State and Local Law Enforcement, Fusion Centers, DHS Protective Security Advisors, International Association of the Chiefs of Police, and the Major County Sheriff’s Association. It provided insights into the targets, locations, and methods of attack. The backgrounds and behaviors of the perpetrators – including history of criminal activity, concerning behaviors, communications, mental health symptoms, stressors, and other factors – were explored and presented by the NTAC report.

Public sector organizations of all types share commonalities in their respective operational missions (e.g., investigative, protective, emergency preparedness, health and safety capabilities). These organizations share in the collective challenges presented by diminishing financial, personnel, and subject matter expertise resources.

Due to these circumstances, the establishment and enhancement of existing TMUs is a vital component required to successfully identify risk factors, create an environment that reduces

or prevents acts of violence, and mitigate the threats of violence posed to the public. Law enforcement and public safety professionals serve a critical role in the threat management process. The immediate and effective response to all threats against the public and facilities is essential to the successful execution of this grand mission requirement.

TMUs should deliver a comprehensive, coordinated, and multifaceted investigative approach and response to all threat-based intelligence. An effective and wide-ranging threat management process organized through a TMU results in a timely, comprehensive, and factual based recommendation, assessment, and evaluation of the risk of violence toward the public, facilities, or events.

The threat environment has evolved despite numerous successes of public safety professionals in the identification and mitigation of foiled attempts to disrupt and cause harm. Bad actors and lone individuals prepare daily to hone their tradecraft on new ways to inflict maximal damage and instill fear among the populace. Lone offenders, homegrown violent extremists, international



terrorist groups, and transnational criminals pose asymmetrical threats. The internet serves as an available platform for accessing and sharing these severe ideologies, propaganda, and threatening language, which can inspire acts of violence.

Given the number, types, and ways that threats expand, various elements contribute to a successful TMU program. Partnerships and training are two of the most pressing elements that must be continuously reinforced.

Partnerships are crucial because of information sharing, leveraging resources, and best practices. Partnerships create the dependable, trusted relationships needed during a time of crisis. Training reinforces what works and reduces gaps in response actions. Partners have to train with and without each other before a crisis in order to be ready.

Lessons Learned From the Secret Service

Following are some of the lessons learned gathered by the author, a former Secret Service agent, who was tasked with solving complex problems in protecting Americans. The lessons were learned during the preparation required in securing high-profile elected officials and managing protective intelligence units and investigations.

Partnerships combined with training are the heart and foundation of a TMU. The revolving nature of ubiquitous threats demand the development by law enforcement, public, and safety professionals of new nontraditional countermeasures. These countermeasures must be both proactive and comprehensive, utilizing the full complement of their investigative and protective capability and fully exploiting global, national, state, and local resources.

Community partnering. All threat intelligence activity – including investigative, protective, social media monitoring, tracking, and trend analysis of suspicious reports and activity – yields more positive results with a renewed focus on community partnering. Paramount in this tool kit is the need for increased outreach and liaison with internal and external partners. Agency leadership should ensure this initiative is conducted in collaboration, coordination, and integration across their organizations. It should also be done in partnerships within the law enforcement, mental health, and education communities with the public and private sectors in the specific communities they serve as well as in a broader geographical context. With this approach, the TMU establishes a holistic approach to the community.

Community intelligence. The concept of community intelligence as an informational gathering process involving key public and private stakeholders for receipt and dissemination of relevant ground-level information is a tool that should be exploited. Below are some examples of agencies where the professional experience, knowledge, skills, and abilities of their workforce should be fully leveraged and geared toward a singularity of focus. The identification, mitigation, and management of threats toward those whose safety they are charged with safeguarding are very important in the process. With so many places to gather information, the following list is a start:

- State Fusion Centers
- FBI – Joint Terrorism Task Force
- DHS – Office of Intelligence & Analysis
- U.S. Attorney’s and State Attorney’s Office Liaison
- Mental and Community Health Centers
- University and Community College Police
- School Boards & Associations
- Airport Intelligence Liaison
- Homeless Shelters and Community-Based Organizations

Suspicious activity. Each community partner defines “suspicious activity” differently. It is helpful to define and know how every partner defines this term. In the case of building a TMU for the Secret Service, suspicious activity is defined as observed behavior reasonably

indicative of preoperational planning related to terrorism or other criminal activity. Community partnerships can be sustained through information sharing of all types of suspicious activity with all law enforcement, public safety, and private sector stakeholders. The benefits include a more fully engaged interagency collaborative. Guidelines to follow are outlined in the Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting Initiative led by the National Criminal Intelligence Resource Center. A good checklist to read is “[10 Ways to Integrate Suspicious Activity Reporting Into Your Agency’s Operations.](#)”

Individual and shared responsibilities. Law enforcement, public safety and security, government, and private sector agencies have a key role to play in safeguarding the public. However, the role of individuals and their importance in playing an active part in this joint effort cannot be undervalued. The collective goal is the development and enhancement of a TMU with a seamless threat identification and mitigation plan to create a safe and secure environment.

Free resources. The complete leveraging of existing partnerships and capacity by law enforcement and public safety professionals may be accomplished at a minimal cost to the agency. These professionals should build on their trusted partnerships with government and private industry to gain expertise in the realm of threat identification and mitigation. The professional development and immersion of its supervisors and employees in the principles of threat intelligence, investigative principles, and risk management will, in time, permeate the culture and daily practices of the workforce. Law enforcement is increasingly using threat intelligence as a tool for threat mitigation in areas such as school and workplace violence. As such, numerous complimentary resources available – such as associations, newsletters, and alerts – should be tapped.

Threat management units help identify risk factors, create environments that reduce or prevent acts of violence, and mitigate threats of violence to the public.

Multifaceted Training

A robust training program needs to be established in conjunction with a comprehensive outreach program to enhance the skill set and strength of existing partnerships. The establishment of a proactive training methodology is necessary for the conception, development, and execution of public safety planning. The emphasis on training should be addressed by leadership and subsequently reinforced to all civilian, law enforcement, and private sector partners. A multifaceted training program should be developed, consisting of numerous tabletop and dynamic exercises in support of the threat management process.

The tabletop exercises should introduce a range of scenarios that could affect the protected people, facility, or venue. Scenarios should be all encompassing and meant to facilitate responses from law enforcement, fire, medical, emergency management, and legal professionals. The purpose of the training is to ensure a continuity of operations concerning the command and control function, particularly during a multipronged response platform.

A successful training methodology is one that prepares stakeholders for the unforeseen event, despite deficiencies in resources, personnel availability, and time. Professional trainers and those with subject matter expertise can adeptly infuse their professional experience, knowledge, and abilities to complement the skills of a veteran workforce across multiple organizations. A professional training program would help foster a collaborative learning environment to address challenges facing the public safety community.

Training programs focused on mental health, work-life balance, stress and violence indicators, social media monitoring, trend analysis, outreach, and suspicious activity are an integral part of an effective TMU. “The use of TMUs remain the most viable and effective method for recognizing and disrupting planned attacks of targeted violence” (Behavioral Threat Assessment Center, Department of Justice, October 2013).

These lessons learned recommendations incorporate the best practices of information gathering for the expansion of partnerships and training, resulting in improved results and better functioning TMUs. The goal is to expand the reach and effectiveness of law enforcement and public safety agencies’ coverage, capacity, and capability. Implementing these best practices would increase mission effectiveness and improve aptitude to outline and communicate trends in potential violence-related activity, specific threat reporting in the impacted zone, threats to critical infrastructure, and overall situational awareness of intelligence matters with explicit impact on the specific organization.

Michael Breslin is the strategic client relations director for LexisNexis Risk Solutions, government. As strategic client relations director for federal law enforcement, he plays a critical role in further driving the expansion of executive relationships and innovative solutions designed to meet the evolving needs of law enforcement agencies. He has more than 20 years of federal law enforcement experience working with the United States Secret Service and the Department of Homeland Security. Before joining LexisNexis Risk Solutions, he served as deputy assistant director for the Office of Investigations for the Secret Service, where he oversaw the planning and coordination. Throughout his career, he has initiated and managed transnational cyber and financial crime investigations of network intrusions and the theft and safeguarding of data and information from corporate, financial, and government institutions. He helped develop security solutions that protected U.S. and foreign dignitaries and facilities including the U.S. president, vice president, and visiting heads of state. As the special agent in charge of the Criminal Investigative Division of the Secret Service, he led a staff of 153 administrative, professional, technical, and special agents working on counterfeiting, financial, electronic, and cyber crimes. He holds a bachelor of arts from St. John’s University, Queens, New York. He also holds a master of science degree in national security strategy and a graduate certificate in business transformation and decision making from the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, as well as a master of public administration from John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

Preparing for & Responding to Disaster – A 2018 Review

By Christopher Reynolds & Allison G. S. Knox

Fire, wind, and water – a lot of water. The year 2018 delivered all in a series of natural disasters that seemed almost continual. Throughout the year, there was a significant risk to lives and property caused by wildfires in the West, hurricanes in the Southeast, and flooding in numerous locales nationwide.



Statistics for disasters that occurred in 2018 underscore the devastation suffered by states and communities throughout the nation. According to global insurers Swiss Re and Munich Re, natural disasters worldwide produced [losses exceeding \\$155 billion](#). The Camp Fire, which decimated Paradise, California, in November – killing more than 90 and destroying more than 20,000 structures – produced [\\$16.5 billion in losses](#). [Hurricanes Michael \(\\$16 billion\) and Florence \(\\$14 billion\) were not far behind](#). The impact of the flooding incidents that affected Texas, the mid-Atlantic, and many other regions throughout the nation, led to 83 deaths in 2018, according to the [National Weather Service](#). Even the 49th and 50th U.S. states were not immune to natural disaster last year, with the Kilauea Volcano eruption in Hawaii in May (more than \$800 million in estimated cost of recovery, according to [Puna County](#)), and a 7.0 magnitude earthquake that struck Anchorage, Alaska, in November (a minimum of \$30 million in estimated damages, according to the [Anchorage city government](#)).

Since the start of 2019, there have been numerous articles and commentary pieces attempting to answer the question, “Why is the nation getting hit with so many, seemingly worsening weather events, year after year?” Climate scientists and long-term forecasters continue to address that question. However, emergency and disaster management (EDM) specialists must answer the “how” and “what next” questions:

- How did the EDM sector perform last year in terms of preparing communities for, and responding to, these serial disasters?
- What should happen next?
- What policies, procedures, and approaches should be put into place to ensure that everything possible is being done to protect lives and property in the coming years?

EDM Performance in 2018

The year 2018 was a busy one for the [Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\)](#) and its innumerable local partners, which responded to 124 federal disaster declarations – including multiple wildfires, mudslides, hurricanes, and tornadoes. The fundamental precept of the nation’s disaster response is that all disasters are local – meaning local and state agencies are literally and figuratively the “first responders,” and serve on the front lines when faced with any significance incident.

Overall, the combined efforts of local, state, and federal emergency management officials in 2018 were commendable, particularly in view of the magnitude of disaster victims, destroyed infrastructure, and the seemingly never-ending recovery needs of communities nationwide. Although disasters are local, the coordination and collaboration among professional responders are anything but local. Following are some examples of how the EDM community responded to 2018's most visible and dangerous disasters.

California Wildfires: Public Education Continues to Be Key

The fast-moving and unpredictable California wildfires strained local and state emergency resources to the breaking point and required multijurisdictional logistics needs. However, an independent review of the work of the men and women in California emergency management suggests that their coordination of hotshot crews, aerial tankers, fire and weather forecasts, mutual aid resources, and evacuation shelters was effective, particularly given the chaotic circumstances.

In the aftermath of any disaster, FEMA – together with local, state, and other federal agencies (such as Homeland Security Department) – critique their efforts to determine what could have been done differently to improve their mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery activities. In the wake of the California wildfires, [familiar themes](#) of the wildland/urban interface, as well as power line maintenance were all scrutinized.

[The critique's conclusion](#): wildfires will continue in California and other arid jurisdictions in the West. The most effective way authorities can help residents prepare for and mitigate wildfire devastation is to educate the public on the importance of maintaining a defensible space between their homes and vegetation. [State forestry officials](#) can also assist greatly in this effort by conducting prescribed burns, which reduce the amount of brush, shrubs, and trees that contribute to fire spread. Although controversy will continue as to whether the frequency and severity of wildfires are the result of global warming or poor forestry maintenance, local, state, and federal investment in public education and in controlled burns constitute two policies that help mitigate against future loss of life and property in and on the edges of Western forests.

Hurricanes Florence & Michael: Collaboration Continues to Improve

Emergency management response to Hurricanes Florence and Michael in 2018 underscores the tremendous progress achieved by responders across federal, state, and local agencies. Key to 2018's success was well-coordinated collaboration between and among government and nonprofit agencies.

Hurricane Florence was a devastating flooding event, rapidly dropping up to three feet of rain on parts of North and South Carolina. In response, FEMA, working with state and local emergency response agencies and personnel, performed well, with [FEMA Integration Teams](#) (FITs) in position prior to the disaster. The North Carolina FIT meant FEMA was able to access needed communications equipment, coordinate rescue personnel, and provide related aid much more quickly than in previous disasters. With Wilmington, North Carolina, becoming a veritable island, cut off by water, such access was essential. The other element that set the response to Hurricane Florence apart from previous disaster responses was the involvement and contributions of nonprofit agencies in North and South Carolina. World Central Kitchen,

the relief-providing nonprofit founded by Chef Jose Andres, served more than [250,000 meals](#) to North Carolina evacuees and emergency responders after the storm hit.

During Hurricane Michael, which struck the Florida panhandle and Georgia with tremendous force about a month after Hurricane Florence, safety concerns and property damage caused by the storm's Category 5 winds was the principal focus. In the storm's immediate aftermath, [FEMA reported](#) it had 3,000 employees in the field who worked with Florida,



Georgia, and Alabama state and local emergency responders to conduct dozens of evacuations, hundreds of rescues, and thousands of shelter-in-place wellness checks. Longer term, recovery efforts – particularly in Florida's panhandle, where property damage was estimated at \$5 billion – have been challenged by “[anemic nonprofit and corporate financial support](#),” and the presence of [20 million cubic tons of debris](#).

In the wake of Hurricanes Florence and Michael, emergency managers and state officials across the southeastern United States were concerned about the determination of many residents in the most affected areas to “ride out the storm.” Refusing to leave their homes in the face of mandatory evacuation orders created additional response challenges.

Next Steps

Although 2018 may have *felt* as if the natural disasters affecting the United States were more severe than in previous years, the collective EDM response community – at the federal, state, and local levels – met the challenge. In the years since Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the EDM community has gleaned many lessons, which have raised the standard for disaster coordination and management.

Part of what makes the U.S. EDM community successful is its forward thinking and continued improvement of capabilities to prepare for, mitigate the damage of, respond to, and recover from disasters that seem to leave few areas of the country unscathed – and, as seen in 2018, even fewer months in any year unaffected. As the EDM community seeks to build on its best practices, it should call on political leaders to forward and support policies and practices that will help communities.

Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018 (Signed Into Law on 5 October 2018)

This legislation, signed into law as Hurricane Michael was bearing down on the southeastern United States, directs FEMA to pre-stage incident command teams, logistics resources, and urban search and rescue teams directly into an anticipated disaster-stricken area. Previously, FEMA efforts were reactive, and directed resources only following a federal disaster declaration.

The Disaster Recovery Reform Act changes the paradigm by not only focusing FEMA on immediate aid and response, but by focusing the federal agency on efforts to mitigate problems and allow affected individuals to benefit from multiple forms of assistance. The new law also requires communities receiving FEMA disaster assistance to set aside a portion of the funding that will be dedicated to mitigation efforts to protect against future events.

Like any new federal law, details are critical – how regulations and policies are implemented will make the difference between smooth coordination and chaos. The EDM community at the local and state levels – particularly in regions of the United States that tend to experience natural disasters with more frequency – should heed progress on this front. As experts most familiar with local conditions and challenges, the thoughts, perspectives, and advice of the EDM community are essential when planning for future disasters.

National Politics

As this article was being completed, the federal government – including FEMA – was just getting back to work, following a 34-day partial federal shutdown. As the government was being shuttered, President [Donald Trump threatened to withhold FEMA recovery funds](#) in the wake of 2018's wildfires, charging that California has mismanaged its forests and wildfire mitigation efforts – a decision derided by many as politically motivated.

Such charges are not unprecedented, and may or may not be merited. According to [Daniel Vock and Jim Malewitz of the Pew Charitable Trust](#), between 1991 and 2011, presidents approved more than 85% of governors' disaster requests, which means that almost 15% of requests went unfunded. During that time, Democratic presidents denied requests from Republican governors 53 times and Democratic governors 44 times. Republican presidents turned down requests from fellow Republicans 49 times and from Democrats 43 times – a “score” which makes it difficult to assert a uniformly political motive.

On the other hand, in 2015, President Barack Obama rejected Florida Governor Rick Scott's request for a federal disaster declaration for severe flooding that occurred in Tampa Bay. Prior to that, FEMA rejected Scott's requests for federal assistance for two hurricanes and a flooding incident near Pensacola. Both decisions were seen by many as the result of “[bad blood](#)” between the president and the governor.

The interplay between federal, state, and local budgets and political interests is not new and often overshadows disaster response and recovery efforts. What is needed is bipartisan agreement that EDM must become a “politics-free zone,” at least insofar as recovery from recent disasters is concerned. In terms of planning/preparation and mitigation efforts, politics is inevitable. However, those politics should be infused with the mantra that “we're all in this together, and should help one another,” regardless of the location of past/future disasters, and the political leanings of decision makers. The EDM community – particularly in the wake of its high performance against the 2018 disasters – deserves no less. At the same time, the EDM community needs to address its political challenges with the same degree of professionalism and unity that marked its response to the devastating fire, wind, and water in 2018.

Christopher Reynolds (pictured above), EdD, CEM, is dean and vice president of Academic Outreach & Program Development at American Military University and American Public University, and a certified emergency manager with more than 40 years of experience.

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Approach the Bench – Preparing Judges for Disasters & Emergencies

Underpinning any public health emergency response is a complex legal and regulatory framework. Understanding the interplay between the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government is key to ensure policies and actions are based on solid legal footing. This podcast examines the role of the judicial branch and explores how the Tribal Legal Preparedness Project at the University of Pittsburgh Center for Public Health Practice is working to enhance the legal preparedness of tribal nations. There are 573 federally recognized Indian tribes across 35 states in the United States. These tribal governments are sovereign entities and operate within their own authority to create and enforce their own laws, including those that would be used to respond to public health emergencies.

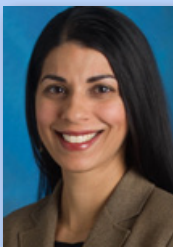
Legal preparedness is a vital component of emergency preparedness for all jurisdictions, including sovereign tribal nations. For example, in an infectious disease outbreak, tribal nations may need to quarantine their members. If laws, policies, and procedures are not in place, that process can be complicated, particularly if jurisdictional issues arise due to the location of the tribal member. This can also lead to delays in protecting public health.

In this podcast, Domestic Preparedness Advisor and attorney Andrew Roszak discusses the importance of enhancing legal preparedness capacity before disasters. He is joined by Tina Batra Hershey, JD, MPH, who is an assistant professor in the Department of Health Policy and Management at the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health, an adjunct professor at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, and the associate director of law and policy at the Center for Public Health Practice.

[Click](#) to listen.



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Uncharted Waters: Volunteers & Active Shooters

By Andrew Altizer & Barrett Cappetto

Universities often use volunteers to provide assistance in helping keep campuses safe and prepared. Most facilities on campus rely on volunteer crisis managers, crisis coordinators, fire wardens, or similarly named individuals to help with various emergency preparedness and response efforts – especially with evacuations. Some larger, or specialized facilities, have full-time building managers or engineers, who have emergency preparedness and limited response responsibilities. Additional volunteers can also fill such gaps with expanding roles and responsibilities.



Typically, people assigned additional duties associated with emergency preparedness and response are asked to assist with keeping other tenants informed on potential hazards, assist with evacuations, and provide updated information during emergencies. Although most universities have professional emergency preparedness staff, they also rely on volunteer staff as force multipliers to assist during various emergencies. Such volunteers provide critical information and training that lay the foundation for baseline mitigation efforts across campus. These same volunteers establish important relationship with key campus safety stakeholders.

Active Shooters

Volunteers could also serve in assisting with active shooter emergencies. Organizations like Community Emergency Response Teams ([CERT](#)) and the new Citizen Corps [Until Help Arrives](#) initiative are quick to point out that such volunteers should not become engaged in any activities that are hazardous. However, it is worth exploring what volunteers can do in active shooter situations, rather than focus on what volunteers should not do. Looking at the active shooter scenario, it is important to tackle the volunteer role from each emergency preparedness phase. It is also imperative for volunteers to understand that their role in the response phase of an active shooter situation depends on professional first responder agreement and training provided, and are specific and limited in nature. Everyone, especially volunteers, should understand that there is no obligation to respond in a manner that puts them in danger.

Volunteers in Each Emergency Preparedness Phase

Mitigation – Volunteers should encourage other tenants to complete training, especially a [Civilian Response to Active Shooter](#) class. A volunteer with a specific area of responsibility (office area, floor or facility) should establish a baseline of activity and look for anomalies, and then know how and to whom to report anything out of the normal. Volunteers should educate other tenants to make sure they know at least two exits in the case of emergency evacuation. Volunteers should know their campus police, and encourage those police to visit both to establish relationships and to serve as a deterrent.

Preparedness – Volunteers should consider various scenarios to give them a better chance of surviving and assisting others. Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) at Texas State encourages “scripting” in its training program. The military often describes “What if” scenarios as “wargaming.” Such scenarios may seem fruitless until shots are actually fired! Volunteers knowing the details of their facilities – floor plans, alarm panels, fire extinguisher and AED locations, etc. – are significant assets in any emergency. However, in an active shooter situation, it is even more important to know about door locks and evacuation routes.

Response – This is a difficult phase to address. Under no circumstance should volunteers feel obligated to respond in a manner that puts them in danger. However, if they choose to do so, it should be at their discretion based on their comfort levels and levels of training. Possible ways that volunteers may respond include assisting with evacuations, providing first responders with critical information (e.g., location of the shooter, location of victims, egress routes, location of barricaded tenants), and providing help with evacuated people based on information from the first responders (e.g., asking people to move to a certain location). Again, depending on the level of training of volunteers, they may also assist with first aid and bleeding control measures. Volunteer may provide lifesaving aid until emergency services arrive.

For patients experiencing life-threatening injuries, there is little that people can do to make a situation worse, but a lot they can do to make it better.

Recovery – Once the scene is secure, volunteers can play additional roles. Having a continuity of operations plan (COOP) provides organizations an opportunity to start getting back to normal operations. Some organizations have professional business continuity staff, whereas others assign such tasks as additional duties – or perhaps, another volunteer role. Regardless, the time to work on COOP is well before the emergency.

Volunteer Action Plan

Volunteers are encouraged to complete and embrace Citizen Corps’ *Until Help Arrives* initiative. This awareness-level training is aimed at normalizing the fact that disasters do happen and, most importantly, they can happen anywhere. The overarching theme is: each person can play a role no matter what the situation. For patients experiencing life-threatening injuries, there is little that people can do to make a situation worse, but a lot they can do to make it better. For example, injuries like an arterial bleed will kill within as little as three minutes, but something as simple as direct pressure can extend that time in anticipation of the arrival of professional first responders.

The training exposes the [diffusion of responsibility phenomenon](#). It is not calling everyday citizens to jump out of their car on a busy interstate to respond to a car accident, but rather to call 911 if they see an accident when no professional first responders are on scene. To the untrained person, they might think someone else has already called 911. However, as those in the public safety world know all too well, incidents often occur when nobody calls for professional help.

Applying this phenomenon with campus volunteers is useful simply because they are there. During an active shooter event, they will be there at that time as well. Equipping campus volunteers with the physical and mental tools to assist with the threat can significantly enhance the survivability for those involved in the shooting. Something as simple as knowing to call



the campus police emergency line as opposed to 911, locking down the office door as soon as they hear shots, and reminding those in their immediate areas of the [Run-Hide-Fight](#) (or [Avoid-Deny-Defend](#)) mantra can save lives. It is important to note that volunteers should not be trained to leave their areas and enter active scenes. However, they should know how to help themselves and others if the active scene should be where they already are.

There is no shortage of tasks to be done after an active shooter event. Something as major as next-of-kin notification to picking up family members from the airport who have flown in to be with their injured children. Although not all tasks are appropriate for volunteers, they can be assigned in accordance with their experience, level of training, skillsets, and commitment. Professional emergency responders are often overwhelmed during and after critical events. When appropriate, they can always use extra help.

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