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**National Institutes of Health  
Office of Research Services  
Division of Occupational  
Health and Safety**  
Providing a safe and healthy environment for employees, patients and visitors.

*“Safe science and good science go hand-in-hand.”*

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**Be prepared for an active shooter**

An active shooter is an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined or other populated area. Being prepared can help you deal with an active shooter situation, both mentally and physically.

**Recognize potential for violence**

Most incidents of workplace violence don't involve an active shooter, but you should be able to recognize when a violent situation may develop.



Consider that the source of the violence is often a current or former employee, or an acquaintance of a current or former employee.

People typically do not just “snap,” but display indicators of potentially violent behavior over time. If these behaviors are recognized, they can often be managed and treated. Alert your supervisor or CIVIL at 301-402-4845 if you believe an employee or coworker exhibits potentially violent behaviors. Common motives for active shooters include anger, revenge, ideology, and untreated mental illness.

Some examples of potentially violent behaviors include the following:

- Increased use of alcohol and/or illegal drugs;

- Unexplained increase in absenteeism;
- Noticeable decrease in attention to appearance and hygiene;
- Depression/withdrawal;
- Resistance and overreaction to changes in policy and procedures;
- Repeated violations of company policies;
- Severe mood swings;
- Noticeably unstable, emotional responses;
- Explosive outbursts of anger or rage without provocation;
- Comments about suicide or “putting things in order”;
- Paranoid behavior or comments (“everybody is against me”);
- Increasing talk of problems at home or severe financial problems;
- Escalation of domestic problems into the workplace (angry phone calls or visitors);
- Talk of previous incidents of violence;
- Empathy with individuals committing violence; or
- Increase in unsolicited comments about firearms, other dangerous weapons, and violent crimes.

**Characteristics**

Active shooter situations are unpredictable and evolve quickly.

*(continued on page 2)*

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# Be prepared for an active shooter *(continued from page 1)*

Law enforcement is usually required to end an active shooter situation.

Your initial reactions may include confusion, disbelief, shock, and panic.

During the time before law enforcement arrives on the scene, you will need to decide the best actions you can take to avoid injury.

## Responding

When you hear gunfire, you must quickly determine the most reasonable way to protect your own life. The Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Emergency Management Agency recommend the following responses (in order of preference):

1. Evacuate;
2. Hide out;
3. Take aggressive action.



## Evacuation

Your best option is to get out of the shooter's area. It's a good practice, wherever you are, to take note of the two nearest exits and be aware of your environment and any possible dangers.

If there is an accessible escape path, attempt to evacuate the premises. Be sure to:

- Have an escape route and plan in mind;
- Evacuate regardless of whether others agree to follow;
- Leave your belongings behind;
- Help others escape, if possible;
- Prevent individuals from entering an area where the active shooter may be;
- Keep your hands visible;
- Follow the instructions of any police officers;
- Avoid moving wounded people; and
- Call 911 when you are safe.

## Hide

If evacuation isn't possible, find a place to hide where the active shooter is less likely to find you. To prevent an active shooter from entering your hiding place, lock the door and blockade it with heavy furniture.

Your hiding place should:

- Be out of the active shooter's view;

- Provide protection if shots are fired in your direction (i.e., an office with a closed and locked door); and
- Not trap you or restrict your options for movement.

If the active shooter is nearby:

- Turn off sources of noise (i.e., cell phones, radios, televisions);
- Hide behind large items (i.e., cabinets, desks); and
- Remain quiet.

If evacuation and hiding out are not possible:

- Remain calm;
- Dial 911, if possible, to alert police to the active shooter's location; and
- Leave the line open and allow the dispatcher to listen if you cannot speak.

## Fight

As a last resort, and only when your life is in imminent danger, attempt to disrupt and/or incapacitate the active shooter by:

- Acting as aggressively as possible against him/her;
- Throwing items, yelling, and improvising weapons; and
- Working together with other victims to incapacitate the shooter.

It's very important to fully commit to your actions.

## When law enforcement arrives

Law enforcement's purpose is to stop the active shooter as soon as possible. Responding officers probably don't know who the shooter is or how many perpetrators are involved. It's important for you to be recognized as a victim.

When law enforcement arrives:

- Remain calm, and follow officers' instructions;
- Put down any items in your hands (i.e., bags, jackets, phones);
- Immediately raise hands and spread fingers;
- Keep hands visible at all times;
- Avoid making quick movements toward officers such as holding on to them for safety;
- Avoid pointing, screaming, and/or yelling; and
- Do not stop to ask officers for help or direction when evacuating, just proceed in the direction from which officers are entering.

Once you have reached a safe location or an assembly point, you will likely be held in that area until the situation is under control. Do not leave until law enforcement authorities have instructed you to do so.

# Safety focus: Fire safety while sleeping

When you think of fire safety for your home, you think about smoke detectors, eliminating fire hazards, safe ways to escape, and an assembly point where everyone will meet outside. But there's something else you may have been wondering about: Should you sleep with your bedroom door opened or closed?

It's a straightforward question, but the answer isn't quite so clear-cut. Many variables, including where people sleep in their homes and the location of their smoke alarms, make it challenging to craft a one size-fits-all answer.

In an effort to reflect the latest information, the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) Educational Messages Advisory Committee (EMAC) recently modified its messaging around sleeping with a door closed.

The updated message for sleeping with the door closed states, "A closed door may slow the spread of smoke, heat, and fire. Install smoke alarms in every sleeping room and outside each separate sleeping area. For the best protection, make sure all smoke alarms are interconnected."

"NFPA and others have long acknowledged that closing a door can impact the spread of fire, but the primary message has been and continues to be to make sure you have working smoke alarms in your home, giving you early warning of a fire," said Lorraine Carli, NFPA's vice president of Outreach and Advocacy.

According to Carli, new research shows that fires burn faster today as a result of the way newer homes are built and the contents in homes.

Carli emphasized that you may have as little as two minutes to escape a home fire, compared to seven to eight minutes years ago. "Today's furnishings and open floor plans create scenarios that burn much more quickly than previous structures and their contents."

## Escape plan

NFPA says that most home fires result from cooking, smoking, electrical problems, heating equipment, and arson — and fire can spread quickly. Being prepared, and having an escape plan, can mean the difference between escaping safely from a fire or having a fire end in tragedy.

NFPA says to have two ways out and urges everyone to take the following actions:

- Use the grid available from NFPA ([www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/Campaigns/Fire-Prevention-Week](http://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/Campaigns/Fire-Prevention-Week)) to draw a map of your home, and indicate two exits from each room along with a path to the outside from each exit.
- Conduct home fire drills at least twice a year, with one at night and the other during the day. Practice using different exit routes.
- Show children how to escape by themselves, in case an adult is not available to help them.
- Close doors behind you as you make your way out of the house to slow the spread of the fire.
- Designate an outside meeting place that is a safe distance away from your home. The meeting place should be something that will not move, such as a neighbor's house, a tree, or a light pole.
- Remind everyone to stay outside after they make their escape. Never go back inside a burning building.

**Hear the **BEEP** where you **SLEEP****

**Every Bedroom Needs a Working Smoke Alarm!**

Half of home fire deaths happen between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m., when most people are asleep.

Install smoke alarms in every bedroom, outside each separate sleeping area, and on every level of the home, including the basement. Larger homes may need more alarms.

For the best protection, install interconnected smoke alarms in your home. When one sounds, they all sound.

Test alarms at least once a month by pushing the test button.

Replace all smoke alarms when they are 10 years old or if they do not sound when tested.

Some people, especially children and older adults, may need help to wake up. Make sure someone will wake them if the smoke alarm sounds.

When the smoke alarm sounds, get outside and stay outside. Go to your outside meeting place.

Call the fire department from a cellphone or a neighbor's phone. Stay outside until the fire department says it's safe to go back inside.

[www.usfa.fema.gov](http://www.usfa.fema.gov)  
[www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org)

Fire is Everyone's Fight. NFPA

Source: U.S. Fire Administration

NIH, OD, ORS, DOHS  
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 13 South Drive, MSC 5760  
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## Smoking top cause of preventable death

*"If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything."*

Mark Twain



**Quitting smoking reduces the risk of developing cancer and dying from disease.**

The number of people who smoke cigarettes is declining, but smoking remains the leading cause of preventable disease and death in the United States.

In 2015, about 15 percent of adults in the U.S. smoked cigarettes, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This is a decrease from 2005, when almost 21 percent of adults smoked. However, smoking is linked to 1 in 5 deaths each year.

- Smoking causes cancer of the lung, esophagus, larynx, mouth, throat, kidney, bladder, liver, pancreas, stomach, cervix, colon, and rectum. It also contributes to heart disease, stroke, and a type of lung disease called chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).
- There are 69 chemicals in cigarette smoke that can cause cancer.
- Quitting smoking reduces the risk of developing cancer and dying from the disease.

### Kicking the habit

Building a quit plan can help a person stop smoking. A person can begin by:

- Setting a quit date;
- Listing reasons for quitting;
- Identifying smoking triggers;
- Getting rid of smoking reminders; and
- Getting ready to resist cravings.

More tips on quitting smoking are available from [smokefree.gov](http://smokefree.gov).

