The popping sounds come seemingly out of nowhere. Your brain attempts to make sense of why firecrackers would be going off at your office in the middle of a workday. Suddenly you realize that those pops aren’t Fourth of July noisemakers, but gunshots.

That scenario erupted in Middleton in September when Anthony Tong walked into the software company WTS Paradigm and shot four of his coworkers. With few warning signs other than reportedly being antisocial, neither the company nor Tong’s co-workers had any idea that he was planning the attack.

Unfortunately, what happened in Middleton is not an anomaly. More people are addressing their real and perceived grievances in violent ways. Before your restaurant becomes a headline, training and pre-planning can help you prepare to survive an active shooter situation or derail a workplace violence incident. The FBI, the Department of Homeland Security and other law enforcement agencies offer steps you can take to minimize the risks of you, your employees or your customers becoming a statistic.

ANATOMY OF A SHOOTER

“An active shooter is someone who actively engages in killing or trying to kill people in an area,” said Brian Anderson, a risk control representative of Society Insurance. “It’s an intent to go after a group of people.” The Fond du Lac-based company is WRA’s endorsed provider of property casualty and workers compensation insurance. Anderson, along with Adam Olijnyk, who is also a risk control representative, offers training on this and other topics to Society’s clients. The two presented a seminar on active shooter preparedness at the 2018 Midwest Foodservice Expo.

Statistics from various sources overwhelmingly identify those most likely to be shooters as male. Shooters have ranged in age from 13 to 88. The majority of them are white. Reasons for the narrow demographic include the fact that men own more guns than women do and men tend to externalize stress, which often shows up in physical aggression.

Women, on the other hand, internalize stress, which manifests itself in depression and anxiety. They are also relationship-oriented; they are known for their propensity to “tend and befriend.”

Men, who are often socialized from childhood to not show emotion or to
be strong and stoic, can find it hard to form lasting relationships with other men. This leaves them lonely and often without healthy outlets for life’s struggles.

What would cause someone to become an active shooter? “It could be many things that augment peoples’ feelings of being or having been treated unfairly,” said Dr. Chad Wetterneck, a licensed clinical psychologist with Rogers Behavioral Health in Oconomowoc. Whether the feelings are actually grounded in reality or fantasy, potential shooters “don’t know how to respond to difficult situations.”

“We've had shooting events based on being turned down by a co-worker or disciplined by a boss,” said Society's Anderson. FBI statistics concur, reporting that some 49 percent of the shootings fell into the categories of interpersonal or workplace conflict. Potential shooters may also not have a social outlet or other ways in their life of being fulfilled.

The result? “A switch flips,” said Wetterneck, who specializes in the treatment of anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) for victims of interpersonal violence, vehicular and industrial accidents and environmental disasters. The individual decides enough is enough and starts to make plans to avenge personal grievances. Another incident or negative experience becomes the last straw and the shooter puts the plan into place.

All data show that having a mental illness does not correlate with becoming violent. According to a Feb. 17, 2018 New York Times article, Dr. Michael Stone, a New York-

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based forensic psychologist noted that in about half of the 200 mass murderers he had studied, the shooters “had no clear evidence of mental illness before the attacks.” However, 16 percent were charged with domestic violence prior to conducting the attack.

The FBI reported that between 2016 and 2017 there were 50 active shooter incidents in 21 states resulting in 943 casualties (excluding the shooters). Of those casualties, 221 were killed and 722 were wounded. Of the 50 incidents, 20 met the definition of “mass killings.” In all 50 cases the shooter was a male who acted alone. Thirteen of the shooters committed suicide while 11 were killed by the police. Police apprehended 18 shooters while citizens stopped eight of them.

**AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION**

The old axiom about an ounce of prevention being worth a pound of cure can make the difference between life and death. The sole objective for those caught in an active shooter situation is to get out of harm’s way.

The average time for law enforcement to respond to a call about a shooting is between four and six minutes—possibly longer in rural areas. About 70 percent of all incidents are finished in five to eight minutes. This means those on site need to keep themselves and others alive until law enforcement arrives.

Organizations like the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security, the Madison Police Department and the Dane County Sheriff’s Department all have protocols and training materials that will improve people’s chances of getting out alive. The Madison Police Department employs ALERRT, a training model developed at Texas State University. ALERRT, an acronym for Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training, has been used for training 130,000 law enforcement and fire officials across the country.

ALERRT’s strategy is to have those caught in an active shooter event Avoid, Deny and Defend (ADD). The

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**WHERE TO TURN FOR HELP**

**Active Shooter Training**

Contact your local police department to see if they offer training.

For example, in Madison, Shawn Engel, the CRASE (Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events) Coordinator Sergeant, can be reached at 608-395-8675. Cityofmadison.com/police/safety/commTrainings/crase.cfm

Dane County Sheriff’s Department provides active shooting/workplace violence training. Contact Josalyn Longley, emergency preparedness coordinator at 608-977-1300. Danesheriff.com

Other cities and counties who have offered active shooter training to businesses include: Green Bay, Mequon, Middleton Racine County and Rock County.

**Downloadable resources:**


Visit the Department of Homeland Security website for a variety of resources including:

- Active shooter booklet
- Active shooter pocket card
- Recovery guide
- Active shooter preparedness resources (in English, Spanish, Chinese and 6 other languages)
dhs.gov/human-resources-or-security-professional

**Websites for organizations referenced in article**

ALERRT (advanced law enforcement rapid response training): alerrt.org

ALICE (alert, lockdown, inform, counter, evacuate) Training: AliceTraining.com

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**ACTIVE SHOOTER RESPONSE**

LEARN HOW TO SURVIVE A SHOOTING EVENT

RUN  HIDE  FIGHT
strategy starts with trying to avoid the attacker if you can. If you can’t avoid, then deny the attacker access to you and others. This can mean getting out of sight, closing and locking doors or putting up a barricade. If none of those are options, you have a legal right to defend yourself. According to Dr. Peter Blair, ALERRT’s executive director, one out of every six events ends because victims at the scene defended themselves.

In addition to various training materials, ALERRT has also created CRASE—Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events—in response to businesses and communities asking for ways to protect themselves, their employees and their businesses. Sgt. Shawn Engel of the Madison Police Department heads a team that uses CRASE to conduct active shooter training in Dane County. Because 55 percent of the incidents start and stop before police even arrive, Engel urges people to develop situational awareness.

Take time to look at your environment. Pause a bit and think about things on the front end. If you do that, you’ll perform much better under stress.

In a high stress environment, your body does not react as you would expect; rather it goes through three phases. The first phase is denial—think firecrackers instead of gunshots. “We minimize what is going on around us until there’s overwhelming evidence to the contrary,” said Engel. He encourages people to pause long enough to figure out what the environment is telling them; quickly determine what they’re seeing, continued on page 26
smelling and hearing. “If it doesn’t make sense for your environment, it’s bad and it’s going to get worse,” he said.

The second phase is deliberation or what to do with the information your senses have collected. Do you stand your ground, run or advance and take on the shooter? Noise and movement can also throw a shooter off. Phase three is taking some sort of decisive action.

The Madison Police Department has added ALERRT’s first aid and defensive tactics components to their training. First aid addresses how to stop the blood flow with tourniquets or pack wounds with sterile materials. The defensive tactics component identifies target areas of the body that are the most sensitive to go after—and it’s not where most people think. A pen to the eye is much more effective in disabling a shooter than a knee to the groin. “If you’re highly motivated, you can overcome pain, but not dysfunction,” said Engel. Restaurants, with kitchens full of coffee pots, dishes, knives, hot liquids and frozen foods have many makeshift weapons available. The objective is to make the shooter switch from an offensive mindset to a defensive one. “In this type of situation we don’t want to fight fair,” said Engel. “Civilians can overcome one shooter with numbers,” a technique called “swarming.”

**“BEFORE SO MANY EVENTS, THERE’S LEAKAGE, PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OF THE EVENT.”**

— Deputy Josalyn Longley
Dane County Sheriff’s Department
Emergency Preparedness Coordinator

### TRAIN FOR THE WORST

The Dane County Sheriff’s Department has partnered with the ALICE Training Institute to help train people to respond to violence. Developed by a Texas law enforcement officer, ALICE stands for Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter and Evacuate. The training teaches people to use “option-based, proactive, survival strategies to prepare for active shooter events.” The Sheriff’s Department also trains citizens using CRASE.

“It’s all about ‘having a plan,’” said Deputy Josalyn Longley, the Sheriff’s Department Emergency Preparedness Coordinator. Because most of the active shooter events were finished in five to eight minutes, “we are truly not the first responders. People who are there are actually the first ones.”

As part of the training, Longley encourages people to do mental scripting. Think about options if something happens. For example, running away might not be safe, so hiding or getting out of a shooter’s view is the preferred choice. When entering a building, be aware of the exits.

This pre-planning can overcome the “lizard brain,” the fight, flight or freeze response, said Society’s Anderson. During training, he and Olijnyk teach a technique called “combat breathing” as a way to gain some control over the uncontrollable. Participants are instructed to breathe in for three seconds, hold the breath for two seconds, exhale through the mouth for three seconds and hold for two seconds before repeating the process. This helps reduce pulse rates and stress levels.

Experts often advise, “if you see something, say something.” Longley says, “Before so many events, there’s leakage/prior knowledge of the event.” “A substantial number of people will do broadcasting,” added ALERRT’s Blair. “They will talk to others about their anger and about launching an attack.” Occasionally they will write letters to newspapers, talk to friends or post something on social media.

“We always encourage people to speak out,” said Society’s Anderson. “If you see unusual behavior, bring it to the attention of authorities.” This includes suspicious behavior or something out of...
People want to identify [certain types of] people as assailants,” said Longley, but she cautions, it’s not the person, “it’s the behavior.”

“It’s important to take it seriously,” said Blair. “The idea is not to come down [on the individual] with legal sanctions, but to get people help.”

Once law enforcement arrives, they will detain everyone until they figure out who did the shooting. Society’s Anderson reminds his clients to remain calm and follow all instructions.

Surviving Trauma

For survivors of active shooting incidents, “being there is a trauma,” said Wetterneck. The brains of those involved start believing that “the world is much more dangerous than before and the person needs to be aware of it,” he said. “The brain’s limbic system goes into hyper-alert and begins processing things that are ambiguous as dangerous. The survival system is turned on all the time, not just when it’s needed.” This evolutionary response was necessary in the Stone Age saving you from becoming a big cat’s dinner. In the Knowledge Age, it can interfere with relationships, work, even enjoying life.

There’s a tendency to avoid the place, the people or the activity where the incident happened because it’s now associated with danger. Some way of processing the event needs to occur after the incident to avoid developing PTSD. The brain must learn new patterns to overcome the pattern put in place during the shooting.

To protect your restaurant from the unthinkable, Society’s Anderson and law enforcement professionals encourage operators to pre-plan. Do a safety audit. Invite your local law enforcement and fire department to do a walk through. “If something happens, they will be able to clear the building in a methodical fashion,” said Anderson. On a side note: operators should definitely know what jurisdiction their business is in. Experts recommend that you do a background check on new hires. This will help prevent workplace violence by identifying those with histories of violent crime or domestic violence.

Make sure everyone from the busser to the manager has a clear understanding of what steps to take if a worst case scenario occurs. Arrange for a meeting place different from one you’d use for a fire drill. Communicate these steps to employees. Get past the denial that this can never happen to you; at the same time don’t live your life in fear. There’s a low probability of it happening to you or someone you love, but it’s important to develop procedures to prepare for the worst.

“People are not helpless,” said ALERRT’s Blair. “What you do does matter.” WR