

Your choices: Run, hide, fight

ISSUE: What to do in the event of an 'active shooter'

OUR VIEW: EPD provides service by posting video

National headlines of multiple murders over recent weeks have been horrific. Within a two-month period, a nation numbed by gun violence has witnessed the indiscriminate killing and maiming of scores of innocents at the hands of deranged individuals. These mass shootings have taken place in the largest of cities and a smallest of towns.

Oct. 1 brought the killing of 58 and wounding of almost 600 others gathered together to enjoy the Route 91 Harvest country music festival in Las Vegas. Nov. 5 saw the killing of 26 men, women and children gathered for worship inside a small Baptist church in Sutherland Springs, Texas. And only because of the quick thinking of an alert school custodian were school staff and teachers able to lock down Rancho Tehama Elementary School to protect children after five were killed Nov. 14 in Corning, California.

The old and familiar rhetoric was seemingly instantaneous.

It has come as renewed arguments for and against increased gun laws, as debates on the breakdown of mental health services and wailing about the failure of background screening processes continue to be voiced as the dead are mourned.

While each of these issues will have to be dealt with, regardless of which side of the argument you stand one thing is clear. Whether the rampage is delivered by a lone-wolf assailant or comes through the orchestrated planning of a terrorist sleeper cell, the recent occurrences illustrate plainly that evil can happen anywhere at any time.

Preparation, not panic, is the key to survival in such circumstances.

The Department of Homeland Security defines an "active shooter" as someone "actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area." According to FBI statistics, an average of 6.4 active shooter incidents occurred between 2000 and 2006. From 2007 to 2013, the average increased to 16.4 incidents per year, rising to 20 occurrences each year 2014 through 2016.

In its analysis titled "Study of Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Between 2000 and 2013," the FBI found that 70 percent of the 63 incidents in the 14-year period ended in five minutes or less. The report said even when law-enforcement officers responded quickly and were the scene during the shooting, "civilians often had to make life and death decisions, and, therefore, should be engaged in training and discussions on decisions they may face."

Being aware of your surroundings, remaining alert to potential threats and exercising individual responsibility for your safety and that of others around you is critical to personal survival should

the unthinkable happen. Toward this end, the Elizabethtown Police Department has promoted the “Run, Hide, Fight” instructional video on tips to survive an active shooter event.

The video, produced in 2012 in partnership between the Department of Homeland Security, the Houston Police Department and the City of Houston, involves a series of short, dramatic videos depicting a fictional active shooter scenario taking place in a workplace environment. The video breaks down simple, key response and action points under each of the “Run,” “Hide” and “Fight” headings.

Since EPD posting it under the video link on its Facebook social media page, the instructional resource has been viewed some 22,000 times. Local businesses, schools, churches and organizations are encouraged to consider viewing the video and incorporating the information into the emergency preparedness plans each have in place.

It is important to remember that even though active shooter incidents are on the rise, it is highly unlikely any one person will be involved in one during their lifetime.

But vigilance in being educated, knowledgeable and prepared can be lifesaving. EPD is applauded for making the resource available and easily accessible for such purposes.

*This editorial represents a consensus of The News-Enterprise editorial board.*