

# When under attack, plan is key

Training helps emergency responders prepare for shootings

By Esteban Parra  
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One never knows when a mass shooting will occur.

But experts who routinely train for such incidents like Wednesday's Fort Hood, Texas, shooting say having a plan increases the chances of survival. This can be anything from having an escape plan, a hiding spot or, as a last resort, a plan for fighting back.

"Having a plan, practicing that plan and loving your plan to act could very well save your life when that moment strikes as it will always be when you least expect it," said Adam Ringle, president of Townsend-based Adam Ringle Consulting LLC. The company specializes in emergency planning and preparedness.

"The tragic event that occurred in Texas illustrates the need for us to be vigilant and why we train as hard as we do to be the best we can be," said Ringle, who is a master sergeant with the Wilmington police department. The program is not affiliated in any way with the police department, however.

"We never know when that moment will come, but unfortunately we keep being reminded over and over again that it is not a question of if it will happen in our backyard, our mall or school, simply a question of when."

Last month Ringle spent a Saturday teaching a group of people how to be prepared for an incident in which someone is on the loose shooting at others. Those attending learned the history of such incidents, situational awareness and about developing a plan on what to do in the case of an active shooter.

While plans are created to fit different environments, Ringle said the core values are the same. "Everybody still needs to know that you need to have a plan," Ringle said. "You need to run, hide or fight and you need to actually develop a plan."

Attending Ringle's course last month were several Sussex County paramedics who paid their own way. The day-long class was held at Christiana Hospital's John H. Ammon Medical Education Center and was taught by Ringle along with current and former police officers and a nurse.

Along with being taught the same preparedness lessons businesses and others receive from Ringle's company, the paramedics were also given examples of what law enforcement go through during a scenario where a shooter is on the loose.

"We talk a lot about the need to change the current way EMS thinks and even stuff as simple as to have more portable equipment to carry on their person for these types of responses and maybe they should have body armor on their ambulances," Ringle said. "We try to get them forward thinking and make newer and



Wilmington police Inspector Sean Finnerty instructs medics Brittany Anderson (left) Heather Corrado and Shawn Evans during training designed to integrate police and medics during active shooter scenarios on March 22. DANIEL SATO/THE NEWS JOURNAL



Paramedics from Sussex County and Christiana Hospital take part in training designed to integrate police and medics during active shooter scenarios during a session at Christiana Hospital's John H. Ammon Medical Education Center March 22.

better plans."

Currently, medics have to wait until police clear a building and deal with the shooter before they can begin their work. Ringle can see a time when officers and paramedics work simultaneously during such an incident.

Greg Eyler, a Sussex EMS member who took the course, said the classes help close some of the gaps that exist between the different agencies. "The goal is to provide immediate care," he said.

Shawn Evans, with the Millville Volunteer Fire Company, said the course was a

good start in integrating what all first responders do.

"It's usually been a separate thing in the past where police do their thing and EMS and fire does their thing," he said. "Now they're trying to integrate them together to make it a more positive outcome."

During the course, Evans questioned why it would not be better to treat injured individuals on the scene if the shooter was somewhere else in the building. Trainers explained that officers are trained to go after and stop the shooter



Watch video of medics training for an active shooter scenario

first. That's not to say, that first-aid could not be left behind with the injured.

"It's a new paragon for all of us," Evans said, adding his EMS training gives him different perspective from law enforcement. "They have their operation, we have ours. But it's nice to integrate."

"We encourage the Run, Hide and Fight to survive an active shooter event," State Police spokesman Sgt. Paul G. Shavack said. The state's Department of Safety and Homeland Security has explanation videos of the run, hide and fight program online at <http://dshs.delaware.gov/activeShooter.shtml>.

"It's not meant to spread paranoia, but it's meant to instill vigilance," Shavack said.

Cpl. Mark Ivey, a spokesman with Wilmington police, said these preparedness techniques should be practiced like other emergency drills.

"People need to feel comfortable knowing where your exits are, knowing what to do in that situation," he said.

It's also important people know how they should react when officers arrive at an active shooting scene. Because an officer does not know who the shooter is, it is important people don't run at police officers and they should make sure to have their hands in a visible position.

"It's important people realize that those officers don't know who is involved," he said. "So you very well could be a suspect."

Contact Esteban Parra at (302) 324-2295, [eparra@delawareonline.com](mailto:eparra@delawareonline.com) or Twitter @eparra3.