



Preparing for active shooter situations

Insights from the 2023 active shooter preparedness survey



Executive summary

Security Management is pleased to join Everbridge in sharing research from the 2023 Active Shooter Preparedness Survey. It's a partnership that has served the security sector well — starting with a baseline in 2016, it's been fascinating to see how security professionals have worked to address the risks associated with one of the most devastating acts they might ever encounter.

Since the 2016-2018 survey, organizations have made great strides in better preparing themselves for active assailant situations. In 2018, 51% of respondents had technology in place to enable communications to impacted employees and constituents during an active shooter incident. That number is now up to 64%.

Additionally, the percentage of organizations that stated they never run active shooter drills has steadily decreased over the years, from 62% in 2018 to just 33% in 2022. These data points not only demonstrate the incredible dedication of security professionals to protecting their people, but also highlight the unfortunate rise in necessity for these vital security measures. The technology, the training, and the drills have undoubtedly saved many, many lives.

The 2022 survey also reaffirms findings from previous years. Security professionals identify a means for effective communication as the most important need during an active shooter situation, just as they did in each survey since 2016. However, providing real-time updates to the organization has now jumped into security professionals' top three challenges and concerns. It seems the ability to effectively maintain communication with your organization during an active assailant situation is growing more important than ever.

While the new survey shows progress, there remains great opportunity for organizations to improve their preparedness. During the 2020 survey, many leaders became laser-focused on remediating the effects of the pandemic. Now that society is moving forward and returning to physical locations, including schools, offices, and government buildings, leaders responded they are more concerned about employee and student safety than two years ago. Yet, nearly 60% of respondents stated they felt less than "somewhat prepared" to handle an active shooter situation. Security professionals must do everything they can to improve their organizations' level of preparedness.

Over the course of the last few years, we have seen organizations prove their ability to endure an unprecedented crisis and emerge more resilient. I believe we should take these lessons and apply them to the current risk landscape we face today. How can we strengthen our resilience against active assailants? My hope is that with this research, leaders can more clearly assess where they should prioritize efforts to better keep the people in their charge safe from harm.

Teresa Anderson
Editor-in-Chief,
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There is great opportunity to strengthen preparedness and resilience

Between 2020 and 2022, the timeframe in which the 2023 Active Shooter Preparedness Survey was conducted, there were 1,927 incidents of mass shootings in the United States. Incidents occurred across all 50 states, resulting in thousands of people harmed and hundreds of people killed. While not nearly as frequent, countries across the globe have also experienced impact from active shooters. While many organizations are diligently working to curb the rise of these situations, these facts show us prevention measures are not enough. Organizations must take proactive measures to reduce the impact of potential incidents.

To better understand the trends around active shooter preparedness, Everbridge consulted with ASIS International. Every two years, ASIS surveys leaders in security and critical event management on their preparedness in responding to active shooter incidents. It's an important undertaking when you consider the breadth, depth, and evolution of the threats that security professionals face.

By gathering information from practitioners, the following research seeks to shed light on the topics and initiatives concerning security professionals tasked with protecting colleagues, customers, vendors, and the general public from active shooter incidents. It shows that while great strides have been made, there is much opportunity to strengthen organizations' preparedness and resilience. It concludes with recommendations for how organizations might continue to improve their active shooter preparedness and expand their protection measures.

Representing nearly **800 emergency preparedness leaders at organizations small and large throughout the world**, the survey offers benchmarks of where the industry has improved and where it might do better.

Key findings

From those questioned, seven key findings were identified about active shooter situations and preparedness:



1: Active shooter situations remain the top security threat.



2: Employee and student safety is more concerning than ever.



3: Confidence in preparation is lacking.



4: Communication is the biggest challenge.



5: Concerns and actions are not 100% aligned.



6: Executive and board level engagement is crucial.

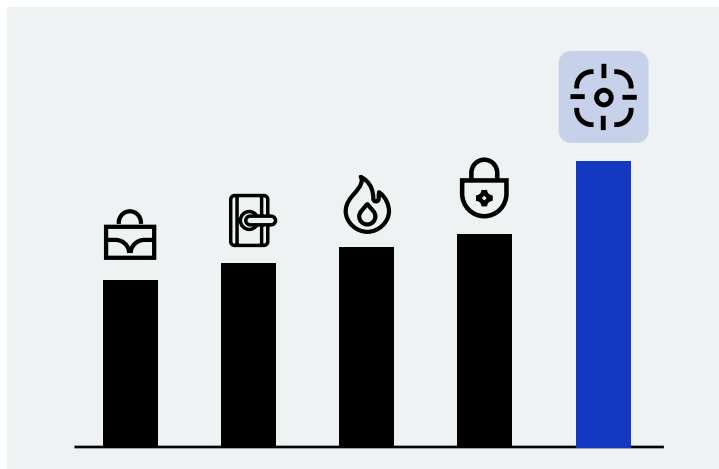


7: There is much room for response improvement.

Using the above findings, organizations can begin to assess their own strengths and weaknesses and learn how to become better prepared and more resilient going forward. The next few pages provide more detail on each finding.

Active shooter situations remain top security threat.

Organizations identified active shooter threats within their top three security concerns more than any other security threat they are preparing for this year. After active shooter threats, organizations are most concerned about preparing for workplace violence, theft of physical property, cybercrime, and natural disasters.



Employee and student safety is more concerning than ever.

Executives and security decisions makers are more concerned about safety than they were two years ago. Additionally, at least 50% of organizations responded that they have encountered a situation in the last five years which required them to activate preparation plans.



Confidence in preparation is lacking.

While 68% of organizations stated they have specific communications plans in place for active shooter events, far fewer are confident in their ability to properly respond should an incident occur.

When asked **how prepared your organization is for an active shooter event**, the majority stated they were only



Not at all prepared	A little bit prepared	Somewhat prepared	Quite a bit prepared	Very much prepared
11%	22%	36%	22%	6%

Communication is the biggest challenge.

During a location-specific active shooter incident, over 60% of organizations identified “communicating with people in an impacted building” to be among to be among their biggest challenges or concerns. How can organizations boost confidence in their capabilities? It seems that fortifying communications is the answer.

The biggest challenges and concerns during a location-specific active shooter incident:

#1	Communicating with people in an impacted building
#2	Locating people who may be in an impacted building
#3	Providing real-time safety updates across the organization

Concerns and actions are not 100% aligned.

The top challenge and concern for organizations is communication, yet most efforts are being put into employee training and physical security. While training and on-site security are highly valuable, organizations might boost their confidence, preparedness, and resilience by reprioritizing investments in communications. This also shows that organizations have a major area of opportunity to better utilize technology and automation in their preparedness efforts.

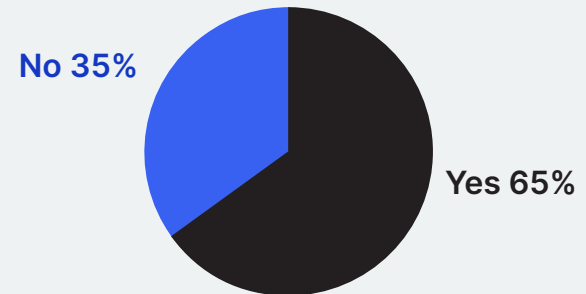
What steps have you taken to improve your preparedness for an active shooter or workplace violence incident (select all that apply)?

67%	Conducted active shooter training/education for employees
49%	Increased on-site security
38%	Invested in communication technology
67%	Invested in risk/threat intelligence technology
14%	Other (please specify)

Executive and board level engagement is crucial.

Organizations are beginning to see that active shooter preparedness is not just the job of the CSO or Director of Security. However, there is room for improvement. Over 30% of organizations stated that preparedness for an active shooter situation is not discussed within the executive or board level at all. Engaging all levels in these discussions increases the chances of implementing the right technology and creating standardized plans across the organization.

Is preparedness for an active shooter situation a topic that is discussed at your organization's executive team or board level?



There is room for response improvement.

Over 50% of organizations said it would take minutes to notify all employees, students, or residents of an active shooter event within their facility or campus, yet only 36% stated that is their ideal state. Most organizations would prefer to notify everyone in just seconds. Introducing automation can help many organizations go from minutes to seconds when alerting their students or populations.

Only **16%**

of organizations could reach their people **in seconds.**

53%

of organizations could reach their people **in minutes.**



Technology can help.

While this year's survey demonstrates that progress is being made and best practices are gaining traction, most organizations have an immense opportunity to improve their resilience and better protect their people from active assailant situations. Specifically, organizations can improve their preparedness by implementing the right communications technology. Capabilities such as targeted alerting, two-way communications, and automated multi-channel messages are already helping organizations more confidently address their concerns around keeping people informed, in real-time, should an incident occur.

The rise in active shooter situations is a reality. By using this important research, organizations can identify what areas of their security operations may need to be addressed. Most importantly, organizations can begin to understand the vital role of technology in helping strengthen resilience against active shooter threats.



Request a [demo](#) to see how Everbridge can help your organization better prepare for active shooter threats.





About Everbridge

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