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American Medical Response Active Shooter Project Proposal

Matthew Spong

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Abstract

American Medical Response (AMR) Tukwila is the hub of its Western Washington operations. With over 400 employees and multiple customers and guests at any given time, they must have measures in place to ensure the safety and security of those on the premises. In the summer of 2019, AMR Tukwila experienced a possible active shooter incident. While this is a low occurrence event it proves the need for having a plan and procedures in place. Active shooter situations have steadily risen over the years and can happen without warning. This proposal identifies problems and solutions so that AMR Tukwila employees, staff and customers can safely conduct their daily business of serving the community in which they live and work.

Introduction

Active shooter and encounters with hostile persons are two incidents that are occurring more often. Most U.S. government agencies agree upon the definition of these incidents as an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area. “Implicit in this definition is that the subject’s criminal actions involve the use of firearms” (U.S. Department of Justice FBI, 2013). According to *A Study of Active Shooter Incidents in the United States between 2000 and 2013*, there were 160 active shooter incidents during these years, resulting in 1,043 casualties. As stated in that study, there were 11.4 incidents annually in an increasing trend, and 70.0% of the incidents occurred in either a commerce/business or educational environment. To further expand upon this number, the FBI found in subsequent studies the number of incidents as follows: 2014 to 2016 had 20 incidents per year, 2017 saw 30, and 2018 had 27 active shooter incidents.

American Medical Response (AMR) is the largest private ambulance provider in the United States with operations in most of the 50 states. AMR operations covering the majority of western Washington are headquartered out of Tukwila, WA. During the Summer of 2019, the headquarters building (HQ) saw a response by local law enforcement due to a possible active shooter. This incident turned out to be a false alarm, but the event highlights how quickly and unexpectedly this type of incident can happen. In addition, an employee from the Tukwila operations was assaulted outside of a local business, and then the assaulter came to the Tukwila building seeking out the employee; the individual was turned away without further incident.

AMR Tukwila is situated along the Duwamish River in a business park. The operations there houses administrative personnel, vehicle maintenance operations, and the communications center that dispatches AMR ambulances for the contracted coverage area over the majority of western Washington. There are over 400 employees that work out of this building on a rotating basis. The operations center also hosts several local and regional meetings and classes associated with

AMR, providing conference room space for local and regional public safety agencies to conduct meetings and seminars. At various times of the year, this building becomes very busy.

As AMR Tukwila moves forward with identifying gaps in active shooter awareness and response, the organization will be providing a safe and secure environment in which its employees and visitors are able to conduct business and provide continued care for the area they serve.

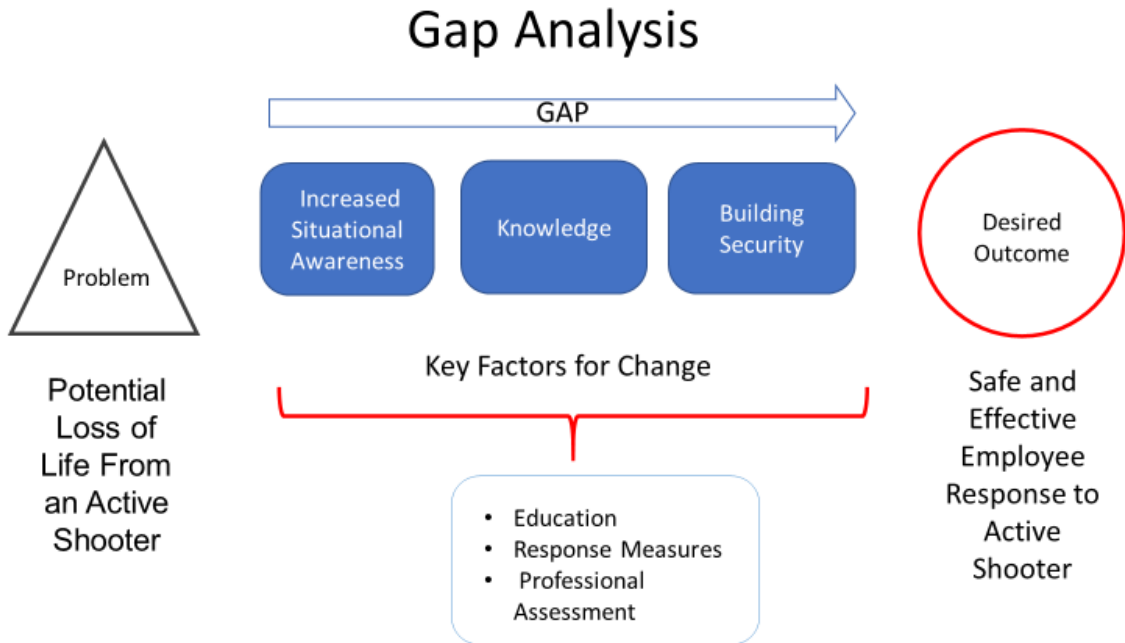
Defining the Problem

AMR Tukwila is the nerve center for AMR operations in Western Washington. The communications center handles close to 900 calls a day that include requests from local and regional hospitals and medical clinics as well as being contracted with multiple Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP) that are the 911 centers for western Washington. The amount of fellow emergency medical services (EMS) providers, hospital staff, and the general public that AMR Tukwila operations center encounters daily is enormous. There is a potential that someone may want to cause harm or commit violent acts against AMR employees, guests, and customers at the Tukwila operations that can result in potential loss of life.

The problem comes from several factors. The staff at AMR are professionals in their specific jobs and careers and, as EMS providers, are focused on their customers. Protecting and preventing further harm and injury to those they treat, and transport means the focus of the operations is external with limited internal focus. AMR Tukwila has had minimal active shooter training and awareness available to employees through its corporate active shooter online training. This training provides a solid general basis for how to respond to an active shooter incident. It is, however, more focused on the response by ambulance personnel to an active shooter incident and does not address the specific needs of the occupants of the business location of AMR Tukwila. The online active shooter training is an optional training and is not mandatory

for employees to complete. Due to these factors and without clear expectations and steps to follow, it is difficult for employees to know exactly what to do in the event of an active shooter incident. By identifying gaps that prevent the desired outcome steps can be taken to achieve the end result of safe and effective employee response to active shooter situations resulting in a safe and secure workplace for employees staff and guests. Figure 1 Gap Analysis identifies these gaps.

Fig. 1. *Gap Analysis*



Analyzing Solutions

There are multiple options for solving the problem that AMR Tukwila faces. The ideal solution should satisfy the project objectives. These objectives when completed will portray the desired outcome for AMR Tukwila.

The project objectives are:

1. A full appraisal of situational awareness by staff and employees
2. An employee and staff base that is educated and trained on how to respond to an active shooter situation at AMR Tukwila
3. Building security and safety through professional threat assessment and implementation of recommended changes

Being able to achieve these objectives and the desired outcomes of safety and security can be addressed through three potential options.

Option 1: Status Quo

This option would not cost any additional time or resources, nor would it cause any disruption to the workflow. It does not, however, solve the overall problem of the potential for loss of life. If employees are not familiar with where to go and actions to be taken during an active shooter incident, their confusion will add to the chaos of an already highly stressful situation. The lack of employee knowledge and training could lead to a disastrous outcome.

Option 2: Focused Training and Awareness

Option 2 would provide for better situational awareness by employees and staff through materials such as posters that can be placed at information bulletin boards throughout the facility. This would better provide AMR Tukwila employees and staff with more information and tools to use to respond to an active shooter situation. This option would see the development and dissemination of educational material and procedures to follow in the event of an active shooter. This option would help individual employees as well as departments at Tukwila to better determine a course of action to take.

The development of educational materials that could be posted throughout the building would help to establish a better sense of awareness. The materials that would be posted would include the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Pathway to Violence flyer (DHS, n.d.). This

information would be helpful in the identification of individuals who may present a threat. The DHS If You See Something Say Something Campaign (n.d.) materials help to remind everyone to stay vigilant regarding their surroundings and to report suspicious activity.

In this option, the original corporate online course would be made mandatory with site-specific information added in for the AMR Tukwila operation. Specifics on the Run, Hide, Fight analogy would be developed for each action. The DHS publication *Active Shooter: How to Respond* (DHS, n.d.) is an excellent resource to be used to base criteria for each action off. The criteria would include:

- Run: This action would include where to run with a predesignated meeting point for all employees fleeing the building.
- Hide: This action would outline hiding places that would be considered better areas to hide with locking doors, no windows or other areas that offer concealment from an active shooter.
- Fight: This action would emphasize the need to commit to actions to stop the shooter.

Providing employees and staff with information to educate them on situational awareness and actions to take will lead to a better-informed workforce with knowledge on what to do should an active shooter situation arise. The use of staff hours to obtain and place the materials throughout the facility makes this option low in cost. Because of the existence of the corporate active shooter training already in place, there is not a need to develop an entirely new online training program.

Option 3: Comprehensive Security Approach

This option best prepares the employees and staff of AMR Tukwila for an active shooter situation. Through a comprehensive approach, the safety and security of employees, staff, guests, and customers will be ensured. This option will have four phases to it and will expand upon

information and knowledge that is already in place as well as incorporating the information from Option 2. The phases are:

1. Phase 1: Education, Training, and Procedure
2. Phase 2: Exercise and External Training
3. Phase 3: Building Security
4. Phase 4: Ongoing Evaluation

Phase 1: Education, Training, and Procedure would incorporate everything that was presented in Option 2 and expand upon it. Awareness education and training will occur through the DHS Pathways to Violence flyers and through the DHS See Something, Say Something Campaign. The development of online site-specific training would be in addition to or incorporated with the AMR corporate online training. The procedure would include the actions to be taken as outlined in the run, hide, fight sequence. This would also include the steps to be followed by the communications center. When meeting with the manager of communications, she indicated the desire for steps to be in place for the communications center (personal interview, November 11, 2019). These steps include notification of law enforcement, mass notification to the facility using a “code word” using the overhead paging system, and notification of leadership through a pre-established email group.

Phase 2: Exercise and External Training would see AMR Tukwila employees and staff through the execution of a physical walkthrough exercise. This exercise would be developed in partnership with local law enforcement. Connecting with law enforcement will ensure that all necessary procedures are identified and utilized, and the knowledge of on-scene law enforcement’s expectations are addressed. This partnership planning will help to provide additional insight and knowledge used to fine-tune plans and procedures.

Phase 3: Building Security the building will undergo a threat and vulnerability assessment by a professional from either the private sector or from a Regional Protective Security Advisor (PSA) from DHS. In addition, the implementation of a badge system is an item that needs to be carefully considered. The signing of a visitor log is one step to ensure accountability in the event of an emergency such as an active shooter, but it does not help to address security once someone has entered the building past the front desk. Ensuring that badges are worn at all times will help to identify individuals that should not be on the premises. Healthcare and Public Health Coordinating Council's (2017) document *Active Shooter Planning and Response* discusses the importance of requiring all staff to properly display an acceptable identification badge. This should also be extended to guests and customers who enter the facility. Implementing the use of badges for all combined with the threat and vulnerability assessment will ensure that the building is secure.

Phase 4: Ongoing Evaluation would bring the entire process full circle. Identifying incidents that happen either in the community or with other AMR facilities and performing a case review would help provide ongoing education and training to ensure vigilance and situational awareness. This would lead back to Phase 1 in education and training.

The comprehensive phased approach will provide for the entire safety and security of the AMR Tukwila facility. By combining education and awareness training, the development and implementation of an exercise, building security, and ongoing evaluation, AMR employees, staff, and guests will feel much safer and will be able to go about their daily duties with peace of mind.

Solution Evaluation

These options all have pros and cons. It is important to compare them to ensure the best possible fit for the AMR Tukwila facility (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Solution Evaluation*

Option	Scope of Planning	Timeline	Cost	Advantage / Disadvantage
1. Status Quo	No scope needed	No timeline	No cost	No-cost option/employees, staff, and guests will not feel safe and secure
2. New Training	Requires minimal planning	3-4 months	Low cost	Provides a sense of safety/security is low
3. Comprehensive Security Plan	Requires a moderate to high amount of planning	9-12 months	Moderate to high cost	Staff and visitors feel safe and secure, allowing them to perform duties to the best of abilities / highest cost option

Recommendations

The best option for AMR Tukwila to solve the problem that it is faced with during an active shooter situation is Option 3. By implementing the comprehensive security approach, AMR Tukwila will be ensuring the safety and security of its employees, staff, and guests. This option ensures that employees and staff can respond to the best of their abilities and make correct decisions in a high-stress situation. Educating the entire work community, including administrative personnel, field personnel, and communications personnel will ensure that everyone is on the same page.

This option covers multiple modalities of learning. The classroom portion will present information that is relevant to the AMR Tukwila location and provide up-to-date information. It will allow employees to develop situational awareness and vigilance. Through the development of procedures, everyone will be on the same page and know what to do in a potentially life-threatening situation. It will be developed using established templates and guides to fine-tune exact actions and procedures to follow during an incident. The *Active Shooter/ Hostile Event (ASHE) Guide* (InterAgency Board, 2016) is an excellent resource to be used. Combining this with the *Active Shooter: How to Respond* (DHS, n.d.) and the Healthcare and Public Health Coordinating Council's (2017) *Active Shooter Planning and Response* guide will prove a combination of resources to come up with the perfect criteria for actions to be taken.

The exercise and external training will allow for the employees and staff to put into practice what they have learned and help to solidify the actions that need to be taken. This will also foster a sense of community and safety while interfacing with other responders. The building security phase will allow for the identification of any weak spots that will need to be addressed. The measures that are already in place will help provide a strong basis for any fixes that may need to be done. The ongoing assessment phase will allow for continued monitoring of the safety and security of the AMR Tukwila location. It will continue to foster the situational awareness and vigilance that needs to be maintained by all employees and staff.

Next Steps

Below is a suggested timeline based on the recommendations and Options 3. Members of the safety committee are an excellent resource to use to implement the steps listed so long as they are overseen by the designated project manager.

1. January 2020: Establish if DHS building assessment is possible
2. February 2020: Contact private agency regarding building assessment if needed
3. April 2020: Placement of flyers and posters in key locations in the building

4. June 2020: Establish Run, Hide, Fight criteria, solidify Communications Procedures, implement any recommendations from assessments

Conclusion

AMR Tukwila is the hub of operations in Western Washington. With over 400 employees coming and going out of one facility, it is imperative they have a comprehensive plan in place to be able to respond effectively to an active shooter situation. The objectives for AMR Tukwila are that there is a full appraisal of situational awareness by staff and employees, employees and staff that are educated and trained on how to respond to an active shooter incident, and that there is an increase in building safety and security through the implementation of professional threat analysis recommendations. To be able to achieve these objectives, AMR Tukwila should develop a comprehensive approach to ensure employee safety and security and to prevent loss of life from an active shooter. Option three is the best option for AMR to be able to accomplish that goal. This comprehensive approach will ensure employee awareness, education, training, and continued awareness and education. This option could allow AMR to develop working relationships with other first responder organizations. Not only will AMR be ensuring the safety and security of its employees, staff, and guests, it could influence other AMR operations to do the same.

Closing Statement

I have studied and researched active shooter incidents, their outcomes, and the best practices used to prevent and respond to them to come to the recommended solutions. By far the lack of awareness, procedures, training and up-to-date security measures are the biggest issues at hand. By taking steps forward to educate and train the staff and employees at the AMR Tukwila location, AMR will be ensuring that everyone will be able to perform at their best knowing they are safe and secure.

Thank You,

Matthew Spong

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Appendix A

Active Shooter Proposal For American Medical Response

Project Plan

Matthew Spong

12/8/19

Project Goal: Preventing the loss of life from an active shooter incident through ongoing education and training.

Background: During the Summer of 2019 the Tukwila operations had a possible active shooter incident. Although it may be hard to discern there is an increase in active shooter incidents across the United States. American Medical Response is the largest private ambulance provider in the United States and is at the forefront of saving lives. Loss of life at an AMR operation due to an active shooter incident would have devastating effects on the operation and its employees on a personal level.

Project Objectives:

1. A full appraisal of situational awareness by staff
 - 1.1 Educate staff on active shooter statistics
 - 1.1.1 Posters at work-Cost will be that of staff hours to produce the posters that will be flyers for bulletin boards along with the cost of paper.
 - 1.1.2. Review of incidents that are of concern to staff and guest safety-Cost will be that of staff hours to review incidents. The venue for this could be the safety committee.
2. Education and Training
 - 2.1. Education
 - 2.1.1. Develop Knowledge of how to respond appropriately to an active shooter incident

2.1.2. Existing active shooter online course-There is no cost for this item, it is already in place.

2.1.3. Implement Run, Hide Fight procedures from the Department of Homeland Security (2008) *Active Shooter-How to Respond* and Healthcare and Public Health Sector Coordinating Council (2017) *Active Shooter Planning and Response*-The cost would be in staff hours develop an SOP.

2.2 Training

2.2.1. Exercise

2.2.2. Collaboration with Tukwila Police and Valleycom-The cost for this would include an increase in staff hours to meet and collaborate. This will also cost staff hours regarding participation in the exercise.

3. Building security threat and vulnerability assessment

3.1 Professional building assessment

3.1.1. Assessment performed by the Department of Homeland Security-The cost would be in staff hours to perform a walkthrough with the assessor.

3.1.2. Assessment performed by private agency-Requesting quotes from reputable companies will cost staff hours and ultimately a dollar amount

Research and Resources:

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Evaluation and Metric: An annual review of procedures with a ten-question quiz requiring an 80% to pass for employees. Conduct a case study review of incidents that occurred that would be considered a threat to the employees, guests, and customers at the Tukwila location. This case study review would determine if updates to procedures or the facility and security measures are needed.