

# What to know in the unlikely event of a mass shooting in your building



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(Zbigniew Bzdak / Chicago Tribune)



**Pamela Dittmer McKuen Contact Reporter** Community Living

Here's a scary thought: Public mass shootings in America have become ever more common. Around the world, shootings have occurred in environments as varied as schools, movie theaters, businesses and homes. Your condo building could be next.

"The odds of getting involved in one are remote, maybe as remote as being struck by lightning," said Bill Leap, vice president of security services at Titan Security Group in Chicago. "But when it happens, you need to understand what

the options are, because there is not a lot of time to think about it. If you think someone will be standing there to tell you what to do, it's not going to happen."

If you find yourself in the middle of a shooting event, your survival may depend on whether or not you have a plan, he said.

Leap was the presenter of a seminar, "Active Shooter Response," hosted by FirstService Residential management company for building employees, managers and board members.

"We've seen some big events in the world in 2015, with the Paris attacks and San Bernardino, coupled with some local unrest here in Chicago," said FirstService Residential President Asa Sherwood. "To date, we have not had any incidents in any of our buildings, but these attacks seem to happen when you least expect them and in places you least expect. That's why it's important to be prepared."

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security defines "active shooter" as "an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area. In most cases, active shooters use firearms."

"Victims are almost always chosen randomly," Leap said. "These events are unpredictable and may evolve quickly."

There are three key responses to surviving an active shooter: Run, hide and fight.

"Your response may not necessarily be in that order, depending on the situation, where you are, the layout of the building and what the circumstances are," Leap said.

**Run:** Removing yourself from harm's way is your priority. Know how to get out of the building. Escape or evacuate, even when others insist on staying. Encourage others to go with you, but don't let them slow you down with

indecision. Leave your belongings behind. When you are out of the line of fire, try to prevent others from going into the danger zone. The more people who call 911, the better.

"Distance and time are your friends," Leap said. "The closer you are to a situation, the harder it is to get out, and the more time it takes to get out."

**Hide:** If you can't get out safely, find a place to hide. Act quickly and quietly. Secure your hiding place the best you can. Turn out lights and lock the doors. Block the door with large pieces of furniture. Silence the ringer on your cellphone. If you can't find a safe room or closet, try to conceal yourself behind large objects that may protect you.

"In a high-rise or a residential community, many people think 'run' first," Leap said. "That might not be the practical thing to do. Residential buildings are very compartmentalized, which is why they stand up against fire very well. The better option may be to hide rather than to run."

**Fight:** Whether you are alone or with a group, if life is at risk, act with aggression. Use whatever you can find nearby as a weapon. Commit to taking the shooter down.

After police arrive, if you are a victim or hiding in a corner, continue to stay quiet. Your silence will help to protect them.

"If you start making noises, and the shooter is not far away, he knows someone is there," Leap said.

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A version of this article appeared in print on February 21, 2016, in the Real Estate section of the Chicago Tribune with the headline "What to do in unlikely event of mass shooting at your site - Community Living"