ASNE-APME Newsroom Safety Best Practices

Updated: 7-4-2018: In light of the tragic shooting in the Capital Gazette newsroom, here are some safety tips gleaned from numerous journalism and advocacy sources.

Before a dangerous event occurs: Condensed from Poynter.org:

• **Have a secure door that locks.** People can just walk right into most small newsrooms.
• **Update policies about visitors, vendors and other tenants.** Newsrooms should revisit the conditions under which other people can visit the office.
• **Install cameras at each entrance to your newsroom.** This is a way to see visitors before they’re in the building, and could reveal a potential shooter before an attack.
• **Have multi-purpose, accessible emergency exits.** These could be your typical fire exits, but make sure they’re ready for an active shooter situation.
• **Consider launching a GoFundMe.** No one likes asking for money, but if your newsroom is really behind on security or doesn’t have the manpower to make changes by itself, it’s worth a call-to-action.
• **Schedule an active shooter training session.** These short classes, which are free at many police departments around the U.S., teach civilians what to do in case they encounter an active shooter. Media outlets should also schedule a personal safety course that includes self-defense, first aid and surveillance detection.
• **Have an emergency action plan.** Many news organizations have business continuity plans for natural disasters, shootings and other newsroom attacks — and to share them frequently with staff.
• **Consider installing panic buttons.** In an emergency situation, newsroom staff may freeze and forget what they’re supposed to do when an attack occurs.
• **Create a digital threat reporting policy.** As some noted on Twitter after the Capital Gazette attack, journalists regularly receive a barrage of threats online. It’s important for your newsroom to have a policy in place outlining when journalists should report threatening messages to leadership.

In an active-shooter event:
Condensed from Ready.gov:

**During**

• **RUN and escape, if possible.**
• **Getting away from the shooter or shooters is the top priority.**
• **Leave your belongings behind and get away.**

**HIDE, if escape is not possible.**

• **Help others escape, if possible, but evacuate regardless of whether others agree to follow.**
• **Warn and prevent individuals from entering an area where the active shooter may be.**
• **Call 911 when you are safe, and describe shooter, location, and weapons.**
• **Don’t hide in groups – spread out along walls or hide.**
• **Try to communicate with police silently. Use text message or social media to tag your location, or put a sign in a window.**
• **Stay in place until law enforcement gives you the all clear.**
FIGHT as an absolute last resort.

• Commit to your actions; act as aggressively as possible against the shooter.
• Recruit others to ambush the shooter with makeshift weapons like chairs, fire extinguishers, scissors, books, etc.
• Be prepared to cause severe or lethal injury to the shooter.
• Throw items and improvise weapons to distract and disarm the shooter.

After the attack

• Keep hands visible and empty.
• Know that law enforcement’s first task is to end the attack, and they may have to pass injured along the way.
• Officers may be armed with rifles, shotguns, and/or handguns and may use pepper spray.
• Officers will shout commands and may push people to the ground for their safety.
• Follow law enforcement instructions and evacuate in the direction they come from, unless otherwise instructed.
• Take care of yourself first, and then you may be able to help the wounded.
• If the injured are in immediate danger, help get them to safety.
• While you wait for first responder to arrive, provide first aid.
• Turn wounded people onto their sides if they are unconscious and keep them warm.
• Consider seeking professional help to cope with the long-term effects of the trauma.

After an emergency, tips for managers: Condensed from DART Center:

• Be visibly in charge. Visit the newsroom and talk to staff more often.
• Don’t stifle your own honest reactions. Be a leader by showing you can be upset while still being in control of the situation.
• Keep staff informed, even if you don’t have all the answers.
• Consult. Take views, needs into account.
• Be a role model for self-care. Take care of yourself; send reminders to others, too.
• Watch out for people. Acts of courtesy – paying for travel expenses to attend funerals – are often what is remembered.
• Be scrupulously fair. Be seen as transparent and fair, particularly in how assignments, opportunities are allocated.
• Be open to the positives without denying the negatives. The tone to set would be ‘this is bad but we can get through it.’

Other resources:

• Committee to Protect Journalists: Journalist Security Guide
• Active shooter situation tips
• Occupational Safety and Health Administration: Emergency Action Plan
• TrollBusters: Online Pest Control for Journalists