

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](https://www.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](https://www.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.

- Get out of the shooter's view, stay quiet.
- Silence all electronic devices and make sure they won't vibrate.
- Lock and block doors, close blinds, and turn off lights.

- 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](#)