

VA STAFF RESPONSE TO AN ACTIVE THREAT EVENT

1. **Purpose:** This appendix provides guidelines for a Medical Center Staff Response to an Active Threat Event on VA Medical Centers Campuses. Individual employee responses may vary on the layout and size of the facility.
2. **Policy:** It is the Policy of the Department Of Veterans Affairs to provide an emergency plan to alert the hospital staff, patients, and visitors, in all cases where it appears that a threat is actively present.
3. **Definitions for the purpose of this policy:**

Active Threat: A person or persons who is actively killing or attempting to kill a large number of people in a confined and populated area. There may be no pattern or method to the selection of victims and the subject's overriding objective appears to be that of mass murder. In most cases Active Threats(s) will use a firearm of some kind, and the majority of past incidents the threat had multiple weapons and stored them in various locations.

Active Threat Suspect: An Active Threat Suspect is any person or persons who has used or threatened to use deadly physical force on others and continues to do so while having unrestricted access to additional medical staff, patients and visitors. It is possible, that an active threat suspect(s) may use a variety of weapons or objects that can cause serious physical injury or death.

4. **Actions to consider for VA Staff in the event of an Active Threat Situation.**

Immediately upon learning of an **Active Threat Event**, the Public Address System should be used to announce there is an "Active Threat Event" on premises. If possible, give the specific location of the event in efforts to keep innocents away from the affected area(s).

If Feasible, Medical Staff should take Immediate Action to move people out of hallways, stairwells, etc. and seek cover (shelter in place); lock wards/doors, safeguard staff, patients and visitors until the "**ALL CLEAR**" signal is given to evacuate the facility. Here are some good tips to remember at your facility.

- A. **Evacuate:** When an Active Threat is **INSIDE** a structure and in your immediate vicinity.

You should:

1. If there is a safe path to escape, attempt to evacuate the area
2. Evacuate whether others agree to or not, as this is a personal choice
3. Leave your belongings behind
4. Help others escape if possible
5. Prevent others from entering the area if possible
6. Call **911** when you are safe to do so

When an Active Threat is **OUTSIDE** a structure to your building.

You should:

1. If possible, lock ALL external doors to prevent the suspect from entering.
2. Shelter in place and away from windows. An internal room with locking door is preferred.
3. If able to do so, find something to defend yourself should the gunman/threat enters your area.
4. Notify the VA Police Department if possible by activating the panic alarm buttons, computer, hospital extension, or call your local law enforcement by dialing **911**.

B. **Evade:** If Evacuation is not possible, find a place to hide & shelter in place.

You should:

1. Remain Calm, Quiet and stay out of sight
2. Turn off all lights, radios, and computer monitors
3. Lock and / or barricade the door with heavy furniture
4. Silence your cell phone or any source of noise
5. Hide behind large object(s)
6. If possible, place signs in exterior windows with location and number of personnel, to include number of injured
7. If possible, render first aid to victims
8. Call **911** when you are safe to do so

Your hiding place should be:

1. Out of sight of the suspect(s) view if possible
2. Provide protection for yourself if shots are fired in your direction
3. Try not to trap or restrict your options for movement

C. **Engage:** As a last resort, and only if your life is in danger,

You should:

1. Choose to attempt to incapacitate the Active Threat(s) if necessary
2. Act with aggression
3. Improvise weapons for protection
4. Commit to your actions

NOTE: It is not mandatory for employees to engage an Active Shooter, this option should only be exercised if the options Evade and Evacuate have been exhausted.

5. What should **YOU DO** when the VA Police or Local Law Enforcement arrive on scene.

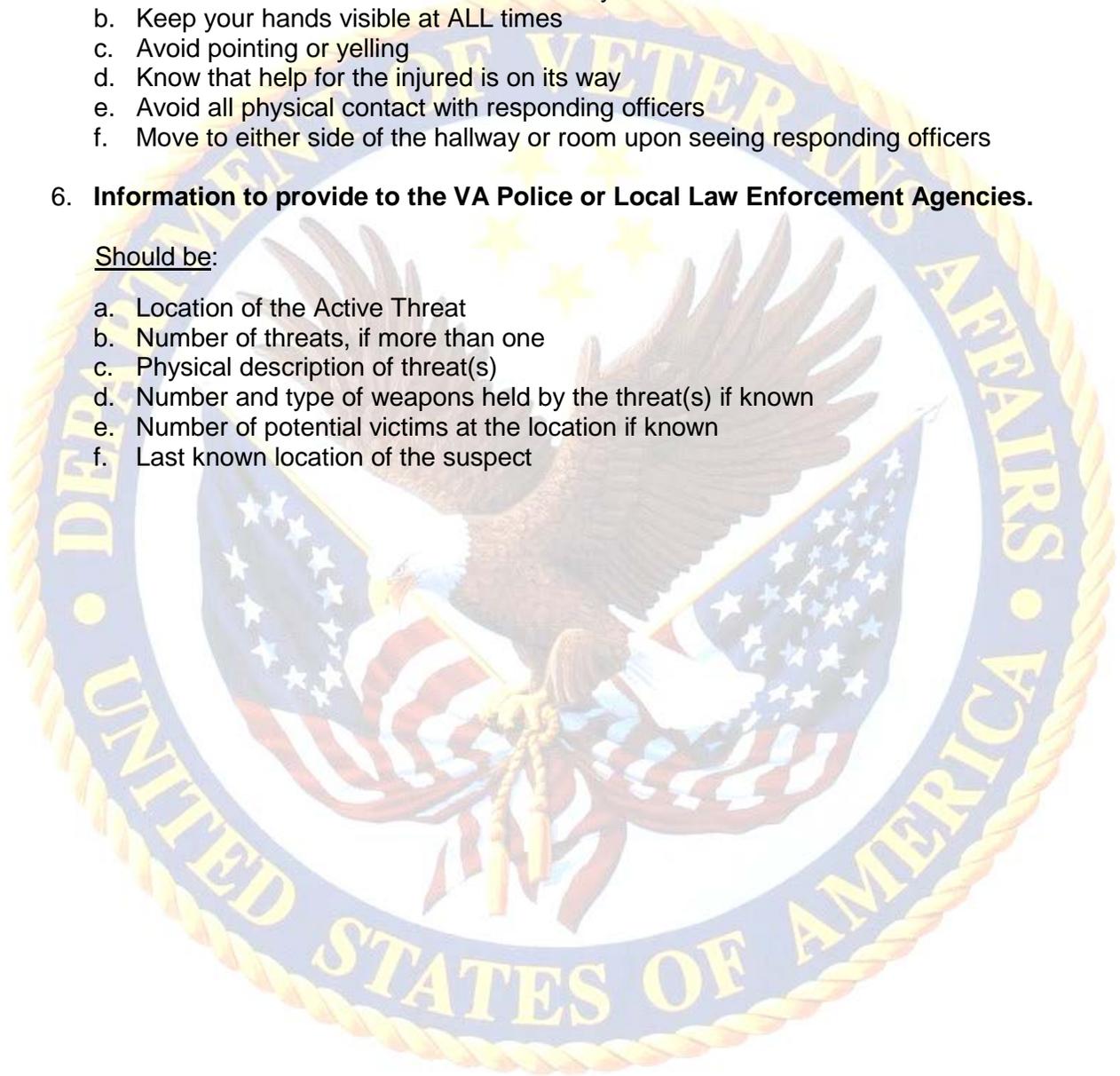
The **GOAL** of the VA Police is to contain the location, control, and if necessary neutralize the threat(s). Here are some good tips to remember at your facility when the VA Police arrive on scene.

- a. Remain calm & follow ALL Instructions by VA Police
- b. Keep your hands visible at ALL times
- c. Avoid pointing or yelling
- d. Know that help for the injured is on its way
- e. Avoid all physical contact with responding officers
- f. Move to either side of the hallway or room upon seeing responding officers

6. Information to provide to the VA Police or Local Law Enforcement Agencies.

Should be:

- a. Location of the Active Threat
- b. Number of threats, if more than one
- c. Physical description of threat(s)
- d. Number and type of weapons held by the threat(s) if known
- e. Number of potential victims at the location if known
- f. Last known location of the suspect



VETERANS AFFAIRS POLICE

DEPARTMENT

Employee Response Checklist

Active Threat Event

Secure immediate area:

- **Lock and barricade doors**
 - Limit entry to the subject looking for victims
- **Turn off lights**
 - Can give the appearance the room is not in use
- **Close blinds**
 - Can provide intelligence to other officers
- **Block windows**
 - Limits visibility to subject
 - Provides intelligence to first responders
- **Turn off radios and computer monitors**
 - Can help reduce visibility inside room
 - Provide intelligence to first responders
- **Keep occupants calm, quiet, and out of Sight**
 - Limits intelligence to subject
- **Keep yourself out of sight and take Adequate Cover / Protection i.e. Concrete Walls, Thick Desks, Filing Cabinets**
 - Provides protection from bullets
- **Silence cell phones**
 - Vibrating phones can give away location
- **Place signs in exterior windows to Identify the location of injured persons**
 - Provide intelligence to first responders
- **Consider the safety of masses vs. the safety of a few**

Un-securing an area:

- **Consider risk before un-securing rooms**
 - Wait for first responders whenever possible!
- **Remember, the threat will not stop until They are engaged by law enforcement**

Contacting Authorities:

- **Attempts to rescue people should only be done when all threats have been neutralized**
- **If doubt exists for the safety of the individuals inside the room, the area should remain secured**
 - **Use Emergency 911**
 - **(Insert) Police nonemergency line**
 - **(Insert) Police email**
 - **Be aware that the 911 system will likely be overwhelmed. Program the VA Police administrative line into cell phone.**
 - **Email may be an option when unable to speak. (Is email monitored by VA police personnel?)**

What to Report:

- **Your specific location - building name and office / room number**
- **Number of people at your specific location**
- **Injuries - number injured, types of injury**
- **Assailant(s), location, number of suspect, race/gender, clothing description, physical features, type of weapons (long gun or hand gun).**