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LESSON LEARNED

Active Shooter Incidents: Developing Facility Visitor Sheltering Policies

SUMMARY

Building or facility security personnel should consider developing policies for providing sheltering information to facility visitors. This can help ensure that all individuals in the facility can quickly evacuate to pre-designated shelter locations.

DESCRIPTION

On September 25, 2010, the State of Washington Homeland Security Region 3 sponsored and conducted the Courthouse Chaos Active Shooter Drill in conjunction with the Thurston County Emergency Management Agency at the Lewis County Law and Justice Center (LJC) in Chehalis. Fifty-three representatives from three local law enforcement agencies and four legal organizations participated in the drill. The Thurston County Emergency Management Agency conducted the drill to test the county's ability to respond to an active shooter incident at the LJC. In addition, the agency wanted to test the ability of the center's tenants and response personnel to utilize a variety of emergency messaging technologies during the drill. The drill included three scenarios at the center: the first involved an individual brandishing a knife; the second simulated an altercation between two men; and the last included multiple active shooters.

The State of Washington Homeland Security Region III spans approximately 6,942 square miles and includes the counties of Grays Harbor, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, and Thurston. The region had a population of 476,805 in 2010.

The city of Chehalis, Washington, had a population of 7,057 in 2000. The Lewis County Law and Justice Center facility houses the Lewis County District Court, Lewis County Superior Court, Lewis County Prosecutor's Office, and the Lewis County Clerk's Office.

During the active shooter drill, LJC employees evacuated to courthouse shelter locations. Security personnel provided *ad hoc* direction to shelters to some visitors but failed to provide any information to other visitors. As a result, these visitors took independent actions to seek shelter in courtrooms, hallways, restrooms, and stairwells. The after-action report (AAR) notes that had this been an actual incident, this could have impeded response operations of law enforcement personnel and potentially endangered the visitors. The AAR recommends that LJC security personnel develop policies for sheltering public visitors. This should include creating procedures to inform the public where to shelter, developing a checklist for security personnel focusing on what to do during an incident, and assigning responsibility for implementing sheltering tasks.

Building or facility security personnel should consider developing policies for providing sheltering information to facility visitors. This can help ensure that all individuals in the facility can quickly evacuate to pre-designated shelter locations.

CITATION

Homeland Security Region 3, Washington. *Courthouse Chaos Active Shooter Drill (CCD) After-Action Report Improvement Plan (AAR/IP)*. 21 Dec 2010.

<https://www.llis.dhs.gov/docdetails/details.do?contentID=48533>

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