



A Few Thoughts on Workplace Safety From Your Security Committee

Security Tip #13: A Call to Action!

Some time ago, your security committee published Security Tip #4 which urged every component of the federal court system to develop—and periodically practice—an active shooter strategy. Regrettably, your security committee has learned that some courts have failed to heed this advice.

As you are undoubtedly aware, an active shooter is typically an unstable person shooting indiscriminately at random individuals with the purpose of killing as many people as possible and often themselves. When an active shooter penetrates the outer security perimeter of your courthouse, there is often no warning and no time for strategic planning. Experience has taught that employees react more calmly when there is a well-defined response plan. Often their lives depend on it.

The United States Marshals Service has developed an active shooter strategy that is widely accepted by both the law enforcement community as well as the security industry. Your Judicial Security Inspector (“JSI”) has been trained to craft a protective plan to suit your physical location including chambers, courthouse, and related offices. At the request of the United States Judicial Conference Committee on Judicial Security, we strongly encourage you to promptly contact your JSI and request assistance in developing an active shooter strategy. Every court should have one. It is equally important that you require your staff to periodically

participate in active shooter drills, and that each of you take part in the training so that you too, over time, instinctively know what action to take.

United States District Judge David R. Herndon, Chairman of the Judicial Conference Committee on Judicial Security, recently noted:

Simply reading about what to do in the event of one of these horrific events cannot possibly substitute for physically practicing and taking part in an exercise that is designed to save lives and mitigate the dangers associated with such an unthinkable occurrence. We have all seen after-event interviews on the news and without exception the persons who were present say they never thought the tragedy in question would happen to them or in their small part of the world. You can't sit back and depend on that kind of assumption. We all have to train, over and over again, for what we hope won't happen but in today's environment, certainly could happen.

Judges should be mindful that they play a leadership role in the operation of their courthouse and have significant responsibility for the lives of courthouse personnel. In the aftermath of a tragic incident, often the toughest task is answering the inevitable question, "what could I have done differently?" Your security committee joins the Judicial Conference Committee on Judicial Security in encouraging every member of the federal judiciary to call their assigned JSI today if you have not done so and arrange for active shooter instruction for their staff.

Remember, your leadership is important—others' lives may depend on it!

Security Committee
Federal Judges Association