

Active Attacker

Assess your situation. Consider your options. Take action.

Run / Escape:

Getting out is the best option if you can escape safely. If you hear something that could be gunshots or any violent incident unfolding and you have a clear path to an exit, do not wait. Leave immediately. If you can, point out the exit to others who are not familiar with the space.

Hide:

If you can determine where the situation is happening, or if it is too late to escape safely, hide. Get behind a lockable door if you can. Barricade the door use large heavy items if they are available. Improvise with any object you can to prevent someone from entering. Turn off lights, hide from view and silence your phone. Be prepared to stay there until police come to you or you hear the “all-clear” message from the University via the UWindsor Alert System, the Safe Lancer app or email.

Fight:

You would only defend as a last resort and only if your life is in danger. People intending to harm typically do not respond to reason. Attempt to incapacitate the shooter / attacker. Be as aggressive as you can. Find an object you can use to strike them. No one will force you to take this step, but you should be aware that it is an option. It is your decision.

In summary, being prepared and knowing your options may help save your life, take some time to reflect on spaces where you work or study and think about nearest exits and hiding places. As may be helpful, please have your coworkers or Campus Police assist you in creating and maintaining a plan.

Sensitivity and Support Resources

The University understands that the idea of an active attacker on campus is deeply troubling and has the potential to trigger an emotional or acute response. For this reason, the below reference materials will minimize mention of violent acts, focus on helping people learn how to best help themselves, encourage mediated discussions and mention supports that are available:

- On campus, the University continues to install cameras, lighting and maintain Campus Police patrols.
- Emergency phones exist inside and outside across campus and offer callers a direct line to Campus Police.
- The University continues to offer the [Walk Safe](#) program, where students and employees can request an escort to their car, bus stop or any point on campus.

- The University maintains the [Safe Lancer Mobile app](#) which offers push notifications during emergencies, closures, and violent threats such as an active attacker on campus.
 - The University has a reporting function in the app to gather concerns from our community in the unlikely event of a violent threat on campus, such as an active attacker. Our response procedure has been updated to reflect best practices for avoiding harm.

While the thought of an attack can be an upsetting topic, there are counselling resources available for the campus community:

- If you are upset, talk to someone who you trust about your feelings.
- Employee counselling is available anonymously through: [Employee & Family Assistance Program](#)
- Students can access counselling through: [Student Counselling Centre](#)

Important Facts about Attacks

- Violent attackers' incidents are unpredictable and often last 10 - 15 minutes.
- Incidents are often random in nature and often take place in crowded spaces.
- The primary role of police who arrive is to stop the attacker, not to evacuate a building. You must be prepared to take action to protect yourself.

Safety Planning Considerations

“Protecting yourself doesn’t mean you are turning your back on others.”

Some key considerations when developing your safety plan:

- Supervisors and professors do not need to account for employees and students, as everyone will be responsible for making their own choice about leaving or hiding. However, the choice to help others remains yours.
- Encourage others around you to act and either leave or hide.
- Point out exits to others as you leave campus (if this is the action you have chosen) provided you feel it is safe to do so.

“Canadian schools are safe places, but the possibility of violence exists anywhere in society.”

- Shooting events on Canadian campuses are exceedingly rare.
 - Canada has only had two active shooter situations at a post-secondary campus since 2000.

- While it is extremely unlikely that this will happen at the University of Windsor, creating a safety plan and being informed is a smart and proactive measure.

“We can all help to keep our campuses safe by reporting suspicious behaviour.”

Know the signs that indicate that someone may be in trouble such as behavioural changes, performance changes, social and emotional indicators, or other worrisome activity. To report to Campus Police, reach them by phone at (519)253-3000 x 4444 or 911 from a campus phone, via the Safe Lancer App, or in-person.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is an active shooter?

An active shooter is a person who intends to kill people at random by using a firearm, usually in a populated area. However, an attacker may be armed with other weapons, such as a knife. The University would also activate the Active Attacker Response to any event where a person on campus intends to kill people at random, regardless of the type of weapon. Active / shooter / attacker events are unpredictable and evolve very quickly. Regardless of the weapon presented, the University’s response to this type of incident is similar. It is critical that during the first few minutes before the police arrive that individuals take action to help protect themselves.

Why is our procedure to violent threats changing?

Escaping the situation yields the greatest chance of survival as opposed to hiding. Active shooter or attacker situations often occur in crowded public areas and unfold at random. The University has many open spaces such as lobbies, atriums, cafeteria, and hallways and rooms with glass walls and many windows, where there isn’t a place to hide behind a lockable door.

Is the University of Windsor alone in adopting the “leave first” protocol?

No. The direction to “get out” is recommended by Windsor Police and the RCMP. This new direction has been adopted by Algonquin, George Brown, Humber, Lambton, Mohawk, University of Calgary, University of Alberta, University of Toronto, McMaster, University of Waterloo, UBC and many others.

Is this change the result of an incident?

No. Security experts suggest that the updated procedure gives people the best chance of escaping harm.

Why are you promoting this kind of education when the scenario is so unlikely?

While such an event is extremely unlikely, the possibility does exist and the consequences unimaginable. It’s important to prepare. This knowledge and approach could help to save your life.

What should I do if I see or hear a violent threat happening on campus?

If the emergency notification system has not been activated yet, call Campus Police as soon as it is possible and safe to do so.

How will I know if there is a violent threat?

A message saying, “run, get out, hide, fight” including the most information possible will be broadcast through UWindsor Alert. A notification will also be sent via the Safe Lancer mobile app and campus social media.

What if I want to evacuate but my coworkers/classmates want to hide?

Everyone must scan and assess their own situation and choose whether to get out or hide according to their circumstances. It is okay if your response is different from your manager, co-worker, professor, or classmates.

Are you really suggesting attacking a person who has a gun or another weapon?

Keep in mind that this is the last resort, and only if your life is in imminent danger. For example, if you are trapped in a room with no way out and confronted by an active shooter or attacker.

Previously we were instructed to lockdown and hide during an active shooter incident. Why are you telling me to take action?

- Active shooter events are unpredictable, evolve quickly and are typically over in a matter of minutes. The police will come but you need to think about how you will help protect yourself before they arrive.
- When the police come, their priority will be to stop the attacker, not to evacuate a building.

What is my responsibility as a manager?

You have a duty to inform your staff about the updated procedure to ensure they understand the direction and have the chance to voice concerns. If there is a question you cannot answer, contact the Campus Emergency Preparedness Coordinator at ext. 8442

What if I am teaching a class when an active shooter / attacker is on campus?

Stop teaching immediately and choose whether to get out or hide according to your circumstances. You can tell students what you plan to do. Encourage students to take action and either get out, hide or fight.

Do I need to account for my staff or the students in my class?

No. Supervisors and professors do not need to account for employees or students, as everyone will make their own choice as to whether to leave or hide.

How will I know if it is safe to get out?

When you hear the Active Attacker notification called, scan and assess your situation to determine if the threat is in your immediate vicinity. If possible, look out windows or the door to see what is happening. If you feel it is safe, leave immediately.

I have mobility issues what should I do?

Leaving is the first option, but if you can't, hide. Try to find a room with a door. Turn off the lights and barricade yourself until you hear the "all-clear" message.

What do I do once I'm outside?

Once you have safely left your building, find a safe place. You may leave campus and go home. It might be faster to run off campus than wait in a lineup of cars to leave.

How will I know when it is safe to come back?

The "all-clear" message will be broadcast via UWindsor Alert and the Safe Lancer App as well as official UWindsor social media and websites. An email will be sent to all UWindsor email addresses informing recipients that it is safe to return. However, depending on the situation, the University may suspend certain operations and provide updates as quickly as they can.