



Emergency vehicles stand by outside the Clackamas Town Center in Portland, Ore., Dec., 11, 2013. Thomas Patterson/Statesman-Journal.

“That day was a nightmare, but those of us who work in public safety knew that it was a nightmare that might come true some day – so we prepared for it.”

- Craig Roberts
Clackamas County Sheriff

[excerpt “A Letter from Sheriff Craig Roberts about law enforcement response”]
The Oregonian
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Summary: Regional Active Shooter Preparedness

When armed assailant Jacob Roberts went on a shooting spree at the Clackamas Town Center on December 11, 2012, randomly killing two innocent bystanders and wounding another before taking his own life, the Portland Metropolitan Region added its name to the growing list of cities and metropolitan regions impacted by a mass casualty, active shooter event.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security defines an active shooter as:

“An individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area. In most cases, active shooters use firearms and there is no pattern or method to their selection of victims.”

While the numbers of deaths and injuries resulting from the Clackamas active shooter event was relatively low to others on a [timeline of high profile active shooter events](#), such as the 2012 Aurora, Colorado, cinema shooting (12 killed, 58 injured) and the 2013 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut (26 killed), they all occurred at “soft targets” -- public venues that have limited active security measures or armed personnel to protect the public. And they all had a traumatic effect on their communities and produced important lessons driving changes in preparedness for law enforcement, fire, emergency services, and other first response agencies worldwide.

The Clackamas active shooter event sparked a multi-jurisdictional, multi-discipline – truly [regional response effort](#), with Federal and State assets participating as well, to support the Clackamas law enforcement, fire, emergency services, 911 dispatch and emergency management agencies working on the front lines and/or behind the scenes. As part of that coordinated effort, some of the investments made over the past few years through the Portland Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) grant program

in planning, training, exercising and acquiring specialty gear/equipment showed their value.

Although the Portland region has now been tested by its own active shooting event, the threat of another still exists. Building on a solid foundation of preparedness efforts that occurred before the event, several law enforcement, fire and emergency agencies within our region are applying the lessons from Clackamas and other active shooter events to break out of discipline silos and old response staging patterns, to develop new innovative rapid response models that, for example, integrate fire and EMS personnel on scene more actively working together. Time saved in an active shooter event often means more lives saved.

This issue of the **REDCAP Report** is dedicated to Cindy Yuille and Steven Forsyth, who lost their lives at the Clackamas Town Center; to the first responders who risked their lives managing a dangerous situation, with the aim of minimizing the active shooter’s impact; and to the approximately 10,000 members of the public who were at the mall that day and cooperated under great duress.

Clackamas County Undersheriff and RDPO Steering Committee Chair Dave Kirby, who was on site during the event, helps us look back at the incident, the response effort, and what was learned. He emphasizes the continued need for multi-jurisdictional, multi-disciplinary collaboration on preparedness efforts aimed at saving lives, property, and supporting resiliency throughout the region. Also featured in the issue are examples of the continued active shooter preparation in the region centered on multi-jurisdictional, multi-discipline training and exercising; and developing new models and standards of operation, including the innovative Hillsboro Model of active shooter response, which has gained national acclaim.

Regional Active Shooter Preparation



Innovating Response Models

Between 2000 and 2008, the United States experienced an average of approximately five active shooter incidents every year. Since 2009, this annual average has tripled, with 2013 recording around one dozen events around the country. Moreover, these events appear to be becoming more and more deadly. In the last four years, the number of people shot and killed in active shooter events in the U.S. has risen 150 percent.

These trends have accelerated the evolution among many fire, emergency medical services (EMS), law enforcement and other public safety agencies across the nation to improve response strategies and preparedness planning, training, exercising and equipment acquisition for active shooter events, as well as to integrate and coordinate their efforts.

The tendency for each agency to operate independently within their own 'silo' of expertise has been reinforced by decades of application within the field. In an active shooter event, law enforcement's task was to interrupt the killing cycle and take the suspect into custody. Even before recent increases in active shooter events, the 1999 Columbine shooting revealed that old law enforcement tactics of "isolate, secure, and contain the incident, then call for SWAT" were slow and ineffective. The Columbine response led to emergency medical personnel not being able to enter the scene until an hour after the shooting. This likely led to fatalities that might have otherwise been prevented.

Nowadays, fire, EMS, law enforcement and 911 dispatch recognize their shared roles in carrying out life-saving functions during the critical window known as the "Golden Hour" to initiate care. Responders use this timeframe as the guiding standard in reaching victims during active shooter events and delivering them to the hospital to begin treatment.

In the Portland Metropolitan Region, collaboration between Hillsboro Police Department Sgt. Craig Allen and Hillsboro Fire Department Engineers Jeff Gurske and Abe Madrigal has led the region in innovating an integrated active shooter response model.

"For over five years now we [Hillsboro] have been exercising and leading drills for active shooter incidents at local facilities improving our model," said Hillsboro Police Department Lt. Henry Reimann.

The "Hillsboro Model", as it is known, has earned national attention identifying how to escort emergency medical services into a predetermined, police-protected 'warm zone,' – an area inside the scene that law enforcement has cleared but not officially declared safe. Inside

the 'warm zone' emergency medical personnel, wearing personal antiballistic garments, begin triage while law enforcement continues the hunt for the active shooter in the 'hot zone'.

Not all jurisdictions within the region implement this particular model. However, many jurisdictions are continuing to perfect their own models enabling emergency medical services to access scenes earlier. Likewise, as active shooter events continue to escalate, jurisdictions are comparing active shooter response models and data from across the nation to adopt the model that best saves lives and applies to local capabilities.

Training & Exercising for Active Shooter Incidents

To establish and refine response protocols for active shooter events, law enforcement, fire, emergency medical services, and 911 dispatch routinely exercise together within and across jurisdictions in the region.

Interagency training is an essential part of the training cycle encouraging cohesion between agencies before events occur. This type of training provides the opportunity for organizations to become familiar with discipline-specific tools, develop an understanding of expectations for one another, and potentially identify gaps in planned protocol leading to correction.

"Ultimately we want to train our responders in the same manner they will deploy and experience active shooters in the field."

- Dr. Jonathon Jui

"The shift we've made is to maintain each agency's roles while understanding where each public safety discipline can intersect to ultimately save lives," according to Dr. Jonathon Jui, medical director of emergency medical services for Multnomah County, professor of emergency medicine at Oregon Health and Science University, and medical director of the Oregon State Police.

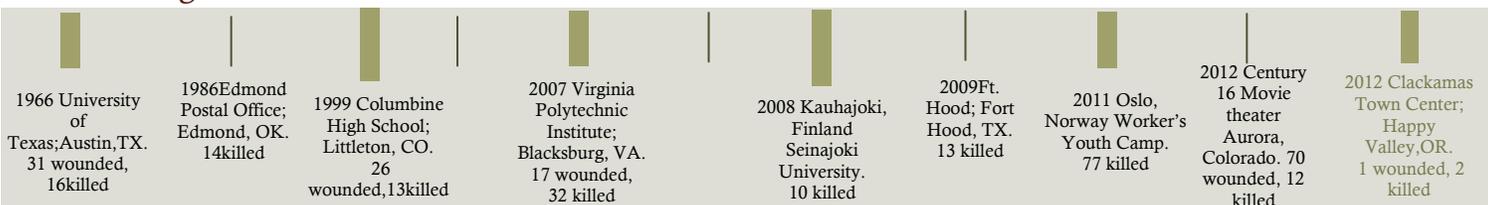
According to Dr. Jui, an additional modification in traditional methods for active shooter training emphasizes the need to be as realistic as possible. "It is important that training exercises mimic the unpredictable nature of active shooter events stressing the response system," he said. "Ultimately we want to train our responders in the same manner they will deploy and experience active shooters in the field."

Creating psychological pressure during exercise using tactics such as role players to act as wounded victims; initiating start times off-site forcing responders to arrive on scene as part of exercise play, and detonating loud explosives or smoke simulates real-world dynamics to mentally prepare responders for what they may experience in the field.

Using Plain Language

During situations of high-stress and multiagency response the need to communicate clearly becomes paramount. The radio communication from the 2012 Aurora Century 16 Theaters active shooter incident highlighted the need for public safety disciplines

Timeline: High Profile Active Shooter Events in U.S. & Abroad



to use common language during incidents since clear communication can be the difference between life and death for victims.

Is a victim *critical* -or- ‘red?’

Where is Incident Command?-or- Who is Incident Command?

To address this challenge within the region, the RDPO Communication work group for Portland Dispatch Center Consortium, is currently working toward the *Plain Language Standard Operating Procedure* (SOP) to enhance the ability of responders to “clearly communicate with each other and coordinate response no matter the size, scope, or complexity of the event.

Based on recommendations from the 2007 TOPOFF exercise and the National Incident Management System, the *Plain Language* SOP recommends that all jurisdictions within the region adopt the use of plain language in lieu of coded language, which can vary across disciplines.

[Mitigating Vulnerable Public/Commercial Facilities](#)

With the surge in active shooter events, federal agencies and law enforcement have taken a proactive role teaming up to share data and identify patterns in active shooter events.

The tragedy at Clackamas Town Center in 2012 is just one example in a list of active shooter situations carried out inside a public facility. Commercial facilities are particularly vulnerable due to the very nature of their purpose – unrestricted access to the public.

In 2012, the Department of Homeland Security *Infrastructure Report Series: Shopping Malls*, indicates that the majority of commercial buildings across the country do not have security oriented building design. Multiple unrestricted entryways, unrestricted access to adjacent structures (such as parking garages), and a large network of nonpublic yet accessible maintenance pathways make commercial facilities particularly challenging to protect.

Throughout the Portland region, law enforcement and fire & rescue routinely conduct exercises in public facilities including schools, malls, and other large public facilities to overcome vulnerabilities and encourage responders to become familiar with buildings first-hand during training to build effective response.

[Engaging Relationships & New Partners](#)

Engaging community is a powerful tool to advance response and recovery for active shooter events. Additionally, engaging organizations outside traditional first responders can simultaneously promote preparedness within their own organizational facilities.

Examining the Clackamas Town Center incident, many indirect, non-emergency partners helped to support response and emergency functions. Teams of Public Information Officers provided requests for comment for the Clackamas County Sheriff’s Office as international media sources picked up the story throughout the night. Trimet provided four warming busses for law enforcement facilitating collection of eyewitness interviews. Before the event, private security and law enforcement collaboratively worked to develop an active shooter protocol, which helped save lives during the actual active shooter event.

The importance of developing positive relationships with partners – e.g. hospitals; schools/universities; mental health services; transportation authorities; public works; local non-profits; state/federal agencies, and neighboring responders, before events can make the difference in providing the community the resources they need to prepare for, and recover from an active shooter incident.

Active Shooter Full-Scale Exercise: Clark County, Washington PACE Setter



Click on photo for video of PACE Setter Active Shooter exercise

Components of the [2013 Portland Area Capabilities Exercise \(PACE\) Setter](#) in Clark County, Washington, included an active shooter and mass casualty component at Fort Vancouver National Historic Site. This was done to test active shooter response plans in a multidisciplinary environment and evaluate emergency coordination procedures.

In the wake of the Clackamas Town Center Shooting, participants widely understood the importance of the scenarios being exercised and the underlying realism of exercise play. Players included: Vancouver Fire Department, Vancouver Police Department, Clark County Sheriff’s Office, and Clark Regional Emergency Services Agency (CRESA) 911 Dispatch Operations Division.

The active shooter exercise was replicated three times between May 21-23. This element, while originally planned to increase participation from available responders, allowed players to apply lessons learned from previous days to refine methods.

The 2013 *PACE Setter-WASABE Clark County Participation After Action Report & Improvement Plan* concludes over the three days of exercise law enforcement, fire, and CRESA worked cooperatively under pressure to evaluate existing and developing active shooter protocols.

The wealth of data collected over the three days of exercise will help Clark County to formally evaluate their current active shooter procedure. Next steps for the County will be to move towards developing a multi-agency active shooter response plan that directly addresses tactical response and individual agency expectations for implementation throughout Clark County.

2012 Sandy Hook Elementary; Newton, CT. 26 killed

2013 Washington Navy Yard, Washington D.C. 3 wounded, 12 killed

2013 Nairobi, Kenya Westgate Mall. Over 200 wounded, 61 civilians and 4 police killed

2013 LAX Airport, Los Angeles, CA 3 wounded, 1 killed

One Year Later: Clackamas Town Center

December 11, 2012, at 3:28 pm, a gunman armed with a semi automatic rifle, load-bearing vest, mask, and 145 rounds of ammunition entered the busy Clackamas Town Center in Happy Valley Oregon. That evening the shopping center was reported to have approximately 10,000 people on property.

The shooter walked through the second floor of Macy's to the mall food court. Without warning the gunman opened fire at random sending holiday shoppers and workers fleeing from the mall while others took cover behind structures and hid inside stores.

The first 911 call was received at 3:29 p.m.

One minute and twelve seconds after the first 911 call, Clackamas County Sheriff's units arrived on scene at the parking lot. Thousands of panicked people were running from mall exits.

At 3:30 p.m. dispatch begins to receive calls of victims.

A teenager is encountered outside the mall suffering from a bullet wound to the chest. The teen managed to escape the mall with a friend. The 15-year old will be the only one of three shooting victims to survive.

Inside, two victims are found dead.

By 3:35 p.m., 17 officers are inside the mall searching for the suspect.

After twenty-two minutes of chaos and terror, police find the gunman dead from a self-inflicted gunshot in the back of a service stairwell.

One year later, the Clackamas Town Center shooting remains one of the largest multi-jurisdictional, multi-discipline regional responses the Portland Metropolitan Region has experienced. Tragedies like Clackamas Town Center illustrate there is a clear need to continue to support regional collaboration and build key capabilities across the preparedness spectrum.

A number of Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI)-funded capabilities were utilized to facilitate response efforts including: tactical dispatchers, training and outfitted gear for SWAT teams, mobile command posts, a [Heavy Squad mass casualty incident unit](#), and a [Heavy Rescues CBRNE unit](#), among other fire and law enforcement assets.

"This was an isolated incident and it used a huge amount of resources," said Clackamas County Undersheriff Dave Kirby. "Can you imagine what a response for a truly regional event like an earthquake would be like?"

The advanced technological capabilities that have been established in the region including computer automated dispatch (CAD), a computer software system streamlining communication to deliver instantaneous information to units in the field, easily connected dispatch personnel with on-scene emergency responders and facilitated communication for additional support needs.

However, events also highlighted the possible benefits of acquiring new technology such as automatic license plate readers for law enforcement to help identify who was still inside the mall. Automatic license plate readers are primarily used by law enforcement in many states to locate stolen vehicles or wanted individuals. While the use of these readers are hotly debated by some, the benefits of having a tool to quickly and efficiently produce thousands of names of possible victims during active shooter incidents at large public facilities would be an invaluable resource.

As Clackamas County continues to recover from this event, a multi-level approach is underway to enhance active shooter preparedness to develop relationships, provide training, and inform policy with a wide network of stakeholders.

Over the past year, Clackamas County Sheriff Craig Roberts has spoken at several national conferences including presenting a safety- training video at an International Council of Shopping Centers. He also received an invitation to a White House conference hosted by former U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, to discuss how to improve response to mass shootings. Chief Roberts has continued to promote awareness and share lessons learned from the Clackamas Town Center event, in the hopes that other cities can avoid, or at least mitigate the impact of, such an event.

While the Clackamas active shooter event was tragic, outcomes could have been more fatal.

"Having the public be aware of what to do in the first moments of an active shooter event is critical," said Undersheriff Kirby.

He added that some credit for low fatalities at Clackamas has to go to incident preparedness efforts at the mall. Just six months prior to the actual event, Clackamas County Sheriff's deputies conducted a training seminar for mall security staff, which staged several active shooter scenarios and developed a set of operational response plans.

After that training seminar, mall security went back to educate retailers and staff on these plans, including procedures for how to respond during an active shooter event. This critical training and education piece allowed the 1.4 million square-foot facility to go on 'lock down,' blocking mall entrances. According to protocol, inside mall stores rolled down security gates and directed customers to move away from doors and take cover.

Encouraging the public to educate themselves and know what to do during an active shooter event is one way to help commemorate the lives of victims lost and those affected by active shooter incidents around the world. It is equally important to encourage the public to be vigilant and report any type of suspicious behavior to authorities.

"What we do know is these types of events will not go away," said Undersheriff Kirby. "It's up to all of us to prepare, and a lot can be done."

Many valuable lessons were learned on December 11, 2012, but none more than understanding the value of routine training and exercise that allowed responders to coordinate a rapid response to save lives that day.

Regional Response for Clackamas Town Center:

- **300** [tracked](#) law enforcement and Fire personnel from **13** neighboring and federal agencies (Clackamas, Canby, Gladstone, Oregon City, Lake Oswego, Milwaukie, West Linn, Portland, Oregon State, Clackamas County Fire #1, Woodburn Interagency Tactical Services Unit, ATF, FBI)
- **28** fire apparatus, regional assets including 1 Heavy Squad UASI Mass Casualty Incident unit, 1 CBRNE unit
- **16** medical transportation units
- **2** neighboring 911 Dispatch centers from City of Portland and Multnomah County handled overflow 911 calls
- Over **33** field response personnel from **7** supporting agencies provided crew and volunteers

Click to learn more about [CBRNE and all hazards capabilities](#) for Fire/EMS used in response during the Clackamas Town Center.



The mission of RDPO is to build and maintain regional disaster preparedness capabilities in the Portland Metropolitan Region through strategic and coordinated planning, training and exercising, and investment in technology and specialized equipment.