ESCAPE. HIDE. TELL. Trainer's guide

Protecting our crowded places from attack

police.govt.nz/crowdedplaces

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

Table of contents

Using this guide 3

Training checklist 3

Trainer's guide 4

Your role 4

Types of attacks 5

Know what to do 6

ESCAPE **6**

HIDE **7**

TELL **8**

Working with Police and emergency responders 9

What next 9

Summary 10

Further resources 10

© Crown copyright 2025, New Zealand Police | Creative Commons licence CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

Using this guide

Knowing what to do during an active armed offender attack in a crowded place can save lives.

This trainer's guide is designed for those who own, operate or work in a crowded place to deliver training to team members on how to keep themselves and others safe in the event of an active armed offender's attack.

It is recommended that this guide should be understood by all staff members (permanent, casual, security, special event, volunteers and services).

These conversations can be unsettling and confronting, especially for younger audiences. Please be considerate of your audience before starting any conversation. Conversations should be age appropriate.

It is recommended that this guidance should be used as an extension of your organisation's existing emergency training.

Training checklist

By the end of the training, you should be able to tick off that you have covered the six learning objectives below with your staff/team.

- ☑ Understand that a crowded place can be of particular interest to attackers.
- ☑ Know what forms an active armed offender attack could take and what this looks like in their setting.
- ☑ Know that the correct response is ESCAPE HIDE TELL
  - ESCAPE means move quickly and quietly away from danger, but only if it is safe to do so.
  - HIDE means stay out of sight and silence your phone.
  - TELL means call the Police by dialling 111 when it is safe.
- ☑ Know how to work with Police and emergency responders.
- ☑ Know how to respond to various scenarios in their given context/s and how these fit in with other existing emergency training.
- ☑ Know where to go for further information and help.

Trainer's guide

This guide is designed to be delivered at a team meeting or training session.

It can be adapted depending on the time available, but it is suggested an hour is a suitable amount of time to cover this thoroughly. Follow up/refresher training is recommended.

There are suggested prompts at the end of each section, designed to start discussion and reinforce learning.

Your role

We need everyone to know how they should respond to an active armed offender attack – just as we know how to respond in a fire, in an earthquake, or getting safety information on a plane.

Most New Zealanders know what to do in an earthquake: Drop, Cover and Hold. That's what we are aiming for here, we want people to remember three words as an automatic response to an active armed offender attack: ESCAPE. HIDE. TELL.

An active armed offender is an attacker using simple, easy to access weapons such as bladed or blunt objects, firearms or vehicles who may try to hurt as many people as they can in the shortest amount of time. They often target crowded places, such as shopping centres, entertainment venues and transport hubs.

New Zealand is not immune to terrorist attacks or other attacks on crowded places. They have happened before and more than likely will happen again.

In the event of an attack or similar incident, what you do matters. Knowing the right action to take can save lives.

This training is intended to give you the information to keep yourself safe as well as helping our clients/customers/patrons where possible.

Talking about these topics can be unsettling and confronting. Attacks are beyond our control and take us by surprise but thinking about the actions we should take ahead of time will help ensure you are better equipped if you are caught in an attack.

There are three key actions to remember:

ESCAPE HIDE TELL

Prompt: Discuss in small groups and share back with the wider group.

What do you remember about the reaction to events such as the March 15 terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain (places of worship), Manchester arena bombing, supermarket attacks in Auckland and Dunedin, or Bondi mall stabbings in Sydney? Though these events are rare, have you considered something similar happening in our community or workplace?

Types of attacks

Attacks can take many forms.

How you respond in a knife attack may be very different to how you would respond if an explosive device has gone off, or if someone was using a vehicle to try and harm people.

Thinking ahead of time about what you should do for different types of attacks, may help you to react quickly if you ever find yourself in these situations.

Below are some of the most common types of attacks. There are also 'mixed mode' attacks that use a combination of the attack types.

Active armed offender attacks

These involve an offender or multiple offenders actively harming or trying to kill people.

When most people think of these types of attacks they think of guns or knives. But they can also include other everyday items such as a bottle, screwdriver, baseball bat—any object that someone could use to harm you.

They evolve rapidly so the first responders may be security guards, or general duties police in the area.

Many active armed offenders will continue to attempt to harm victims until confronted by law enforcement.

Hostile vehicle attack

A hostile vehicle is one whose driver is determined to cause injury or death to people, disrupt business or effect publicity for a cause.

These attacks most often occur in places where vehicle access is restricted, such as pedestrian only areas.

A hostile vehicle may carry an explosive device or the vehicle itself, travelling at speed, may present the primary danger. A hostile vehicle attack is often the first phase of a planned attack. Once the vehicle is stopped, the offender may exit the vehicle with a weapon to continue the attack

The most likely targets of hostile vehicles are spaces occupied by large groups at a particular time.

Hostile vehicles may be parked containing some kind of explosive or enter a restricted area through tailgating, duress or deception.

Improvised explosive attacks

These attacks use explosives such as homemade bombs or other devices, to kill as many people as possible.

These types of attacks can include suicide bombings and happen in open spaces as well as indoors.

There can also be a risk of a second device in the vicinity.

Prompt: Discuss as a group.

Are some of these types of attacks more likely than others, given our context?

KNOW WHAT TO DO

ESCAPE

Move quickly and quietly away from danger, but only if it is safe to do so.

In the event of an attack, if you see a safe way out, leave the area immediately.

- Move quickly and quietly away from danger, but only if it is safe to do so.
- Take your mobile phone with you if you can, but do not go back to get it if it puts you in danger.
- Leave other belongings behind.
- Encourage others to go with you, but don't let their hesitation slow you down.

Active armed offender attacks

When escaping an active armed offender, you should make use of cover and concealment opportunities if needed. This can include:

- building walls and partitions
- brickwork or concrete walls
- vehicles
- earth banks, hills and mounds
- fences and other large structures
- blinds and curtains.

If it is safe to do so, help people, such as our clients/customers/patrons, who might be unfamiliar with the area to either escape by telling them which direction to move, or where there may be a safe place to hide.

Improvised explosive attacks

Leaving the area will help you to avoid falling debris, minimise your exposure to dust, smoke, and hazardous substances. It will also keep you safe in case a secondary device is present.

Use the stairs instead of lifts or elevators. But be aware of weakened floors and stairways.

Once you are out of the building, move away from windows, glass doors or other potentially hazardous areas.

Hostile vehicle attack

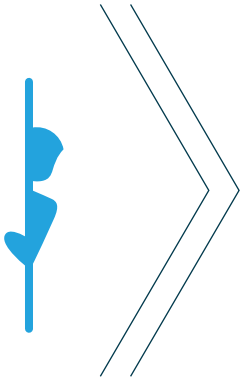
In vehicle attacks, move as quickly as possible to areas that put as many obstacles between you and the vehicle as possible but don't leave you trapped.

Prompt: Discuss as a group.

Where would you move to, given our context?

KNOW WHAT TO DO

HIDE



Stay out of sight and silence your phone.

In the event of an attack, if you cannot escape completely, hide.

- Stay out of sight and silence your mobile phone.
- Secure your environment by locking doors and windows and barricading entries where possible.
- Stay away from doors and be as quiet and still as possible so you do not give away your hiding place.
- Note any potential exit points.

Active armed offender attacks

A safe hiding spot is one that has a sturdy physical barrier between you and the offender.

Do not congregate in open areas or wait at evacuation points.

If you are hiding as a group, and it is safe to do so, remind everyone to keep quiet and still, and to turn their phones to silent.

Only as a last resort, consider looking for something you can use to defend yourself if you are located by the offender.

Improvised explosive attacks

If you become trapped in a building after an improvised device has exploded and objects are falling around you, get under a sturdy table or desk until you can escape.

If you are still trapped after an explosion and are sure the attacker has left, signal your location to rescuers by using a flashlight, whistle, or by tapping on a pipe or wall.

Hostile vehicle attack

In vehicle attacks, move as quickly as possible to areas that put as many obstacles between you and the vehicle as possible but don't leave you trapped.

Prompt: Discuss as a group.

What are some areas where it would be safe to hide, given our context? What are our exit points?

KNOW WHAT TO DO

TELL

Call the Police by dialling 111 when it is safe.

In the event of an attack, as soon as it is safe to do so, tell police by calling 111.

The more information you can give about your location, surroundings, the attackers and the events that have occurred, the better.

You may be asked to stay on the line and provide further information that the operator requests or if the situation changes.

If it is safe to do so, try to obtain the following information:

- exact location of the incident.
- description of the offender/s and whether they are moving in any particular direction.
- details of any weapons being used.
- number of people in the area and any that have been injured.
- the intent of the offender/s (if known or apparent).

Always try to be aware of your surroundings. If you see a commotion, hear screams, gunfire or loud noises, try to identify where it is coming from. If you think it is dangerous, consider what you can do to keep yourself safe. For example, you may have to hide before you have the opportunity to escape. In some situations, you may still need to hide once you have escaped the immediate area.

If you come across any injured people while hiding, providing first aid may help save their lives. But only help if it does not put yourself and others in any danger.

Try to stop others from entering the area, but only if it doesn't put you in any danger.

Do not move closer to see what is happening – this may put you in danger.

Consider looking for something you can use to defend yourself as a last resort if you are found by the attacker.

Prompt: Discuss as a group.

What is the key information to share with Police, given our context?

Working with Police and emergency responders

When police or other emergency responders arrive, follow their instructions.

Their first priority will be to deal with the immediate threat to prevent further injury and this may take time.

It is possible that police may not be able to distinguish you from the offender/s.

It is important to remember:

- police officers may be armed and could point guns in your direction
- police may treat you firmly
- you should avoid quick movements or shouting and keep your hands visible
- the police priority is to locate the offender. This means they may move past people that need help.

Be aware that police may enter your location at some stage to secure the building and locate people that have hidden from the threat.

You will be evacuated when it is safe to leave the area.

If you have safely escaped, stay away from the area until the police approach you for information.

Prompt: Discuss as a group.

Why might congregating in an open area be unsafe?

What next

Businesses like ours do a lot of work behind the scenes to ensure we are as resilient as possible to attacks while ensuring our clients/customers/patrons/the public can still enjoy themselves. Failure to prepare and respond effectively leaves us vulnerable.

Our most important asset is our people. Our primary responsibility is to keep you safe, as well as the people that use or visit our workplace.

There are some things you can all do to help:

- Be aware of your role and responsibilities within our emergency evacuation plans.
- Be aware of evacuation routes, including identifying alternative routes.
- Consider how you will communicate evacuation routes to people during an incident.
- [If applicable] Consider attending a first aid course to learn crucial first aid skills.
- [If the premises has security CCTV cameras] Report any issues so that the cameras are always working properly and retain the recordings as they may be of use to Police in the future.

Remember, visitors to our organisation may not be aware of our evacuation routes, so safely directing them away from danger may save many lives.

Prompt: Discuss as a group.

How do you think ESCAPE. HIDE. TELL. can be applied to us? How does this fit in with other emergency response plans we have?

Summary

In the event of an attack or similar incident, what you do matters.

Remember the three words:

ESCAPE
Move quickly and quietly away from danger, but only if it is safe to do so.

HIDE
Stay out of sight and silence your phone.

TELL
Call the Police by dialling 111 when it is safe.

Please share this message with friends and whānau (family).

Further resources

New Zealand Police website:

- Crowded places strategy
- Prepare your crowded place
- Crowded places useful resources

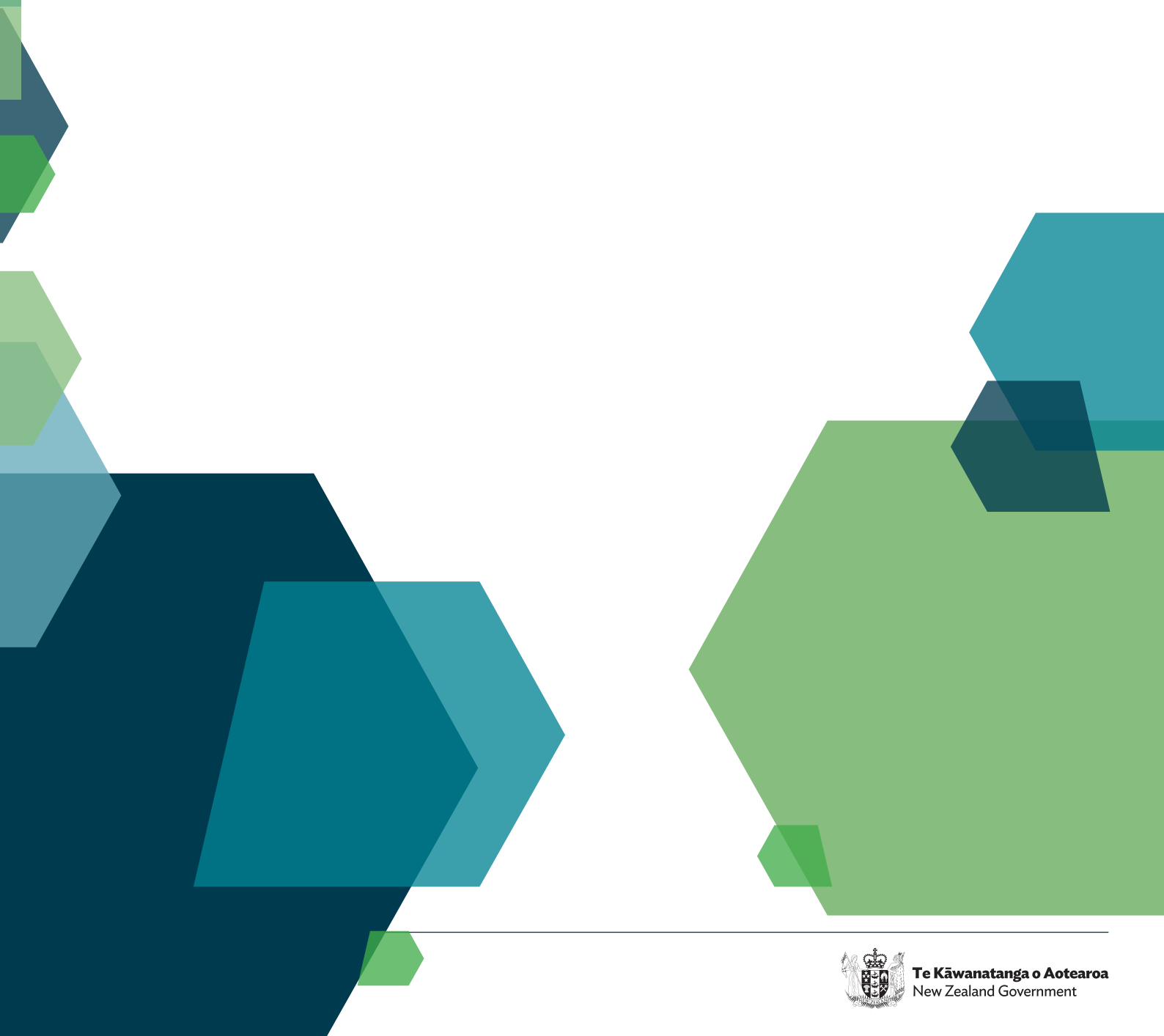
Know what to do in an attack...

ESCAPE

Move quickly and quietly away from danger, but only if it is safe to do so

HIDE

Stay out of sight and silence your phone

TELL

Call the Police by dialling 111 when it is safe