

# BSU Active Shooter TTX

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## After-Action Report

12/5/19

The After-Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR/IP) aligns exercise objectives with preparedness doctrine to include the National Preparedness Goal and related frameworks and guidance. Exercise information required for preparedness reporting and trend analysis is included; users are encouraged to add additional sections as needed to support their own organizational needs.

## EXERCISE OVERVIEW

<b>Exercise Name</b>	BSU Active Shooter TTX
<b>Exercise Dates</b>	Thursday August 22nd, 2019 0900-1400
<b>Scope</b>	This exercise is a Tabletop, planned for five hours at Bridgewater State University. Exercise play is limited to tabletop discussions.
<b>Mission Area(s)</b>	Response
<b>Core Capabilities</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. On-Scene Security, Protection, And Law Enforcement</li> <li>2. Public Health, Healthcare, and Emergency Medical Services</li> <li>3. Operational Coordination</li> <li>4. Operational Communications</li> </ol>
<b>Objectives</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Facilitate a discussion of tactics, protocol, and procedures when responding to an active shooter/hostile event on campus.</li> <li>2. After a simulated active shooter/hostile event on campus, to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the response by initial responders and mutual aid partners.</li> <li>3. Improve coordination and communication between responding agencies</li> </ol>
<b>Threat or Hazard</b>	Campus Active Shooter
<b>Scenario</b>	This exercise utilizes several different active shooter scenarios each geared to prompt a different type of discussion. Generally, scenarios are limited to an active shooter in or around the Rondileau Campus Center (RCC) and the timeframe of initial response through scene management.
<b>Sponsor</b>	Southeast Regional Planning & Economic Development District, Bridgewater State University Police
<b>Participating Organizations</b>	Bridgewater State University Police, Massachusetts State Police, Bridgewater Police & Fire, Massachusetts Environmental Police, Plymouth County Sheriff's Office, West Bridgewater Police & Fire, East Bridgewater Police & Fire, Middleborough Police & Fire, Raynham Police & Fire, Halifax Police & Fire.
<b>Point of Contact</b>	Kevin Ham, Exercise Director <a href="mailto:kham@srpedd.org">kham@srpedd.org</a> 508-212-5302

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Thirty-seven individuals from Sixteen agencies and departments participated in an active shooter Tabletop Exercise at Bridgewater State University on August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2019. The exercise director guided participants through four tabletop scenarios of increasing complexity. Using questions pre-determined by the exercise design team as prompts, groups first discussed amongst their own tables, then briefed back in an open discussion setting. The scenarios broke an active shooter response into three phases: Initial Response, Contact with Active Shooter, and Scene Management.

Three objectives were identified for this exercise:

- Facilitating a discussion of tactics, protocol and procedures when responding to an active shooter/hostile event.
- After an active shooter/hostile event, identify strengths and weaknesses of a response by initial responding agencies and mutual aid partners.
- Improving coordination and communication between responding agencies.

All three objectives were met by this exercise, and several strengths and areas for improvement were identified.

Strengths included unity of priorities during all phases of response, excellent cross discipline discussion and communications, and cooperation between agencies.

Areas for improvement included more detailed and robust dispatch policies and procedures, communications equipment, planning, and procedures, and a need for more joint exercises and training.

Multiple Fire and Police departments participated in the exercise, along with technical subject matter experts from local regional Law Enforcement Council SWAT and SAR teams. All agencies are listed in Appendix A, however for the purposes of this “responders” or “participants” is used to generalize the personnel involved in the exercise as players.

## ANALYSIS OF CORE CAPABILITIES

Aligning exercise objectives and core capabilities provides a consistent taxonomy for evaluation that transcends individual exercises to support preparedness reporting and trend analysis. Table 1 includes the exercise objectives, aligned core capabilities, and performance ratings for each core capability as observed during the exercise and determined by the evaluation team.

Objective	Core Capability	Performed without Challenges (P)	Performed with Some Challenges (S)	Performed with Major Challenges (M)	Unable to be Performed (U)
Facilitate a discussion of tactics, protocol, and procedures when responding to an active shooter/hostile event on campus.	On-Scene Security, Protection, and Law Enforcement, Public Health, Healthcare, and Emergency Medical Services		S		
After a simulated active shooter/hostile event on campus, to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the response by initial responders and mutual aid partners.	Operational Coordination		S		
Improve coordination and communication between responding agencies	Operational Coordination, Operational Communications		S		

**Table 1. Summary of Core Capability Performance**

### Ratings Definitions:

**Performed without Challenges (P):** The targets and critical tasks associated with the core capability were completed in a manner that achieved the objective(s) and did not negatively impact the performance of other activities. Performance of this activity did not contribute to additional health and/or safety risks for the public or for emergency workers, and it was conducted in accordance with applicable plans, policies, procedures, regulations, and laws.

**Performed with Some Challenges (S):** The targets and critical tasks associated with the core capability were completed in a manner that achieved the objective(s) and did not negatively impact the performance of other activities. Performance of this activity did not contribute to additional health and/or safety risks for the public or for emergency workers, and it was conducted in accordance with applicable plans, policies, procedures, regulations, and laws. However, opportunities to enhance effectiveness and/or efficiency were identified.

**Performed with Major Challenges (M):** The targets and critical tasks associated with the core capability were completed in a manner that achieved the objective(s), but some or all of the following were observed: demonstrated performance had a negative impact on the performance

of other activities; contributed to additional health and/or safety risks for the public or for emergency workers; and/or was not conducted in accordance with applicable plans, policies, procedures, regulations, and laws.

**Unable to be Performed (U):** The targets and critical tasks associated with the core capability were not performed in a manner that achieved the objective(s).

The following sections provide an overview of the performance related to each exercise objective and associated core capability, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement.

## **Facilitate a discussion of tactics, protocol, and procedures when responding to an active shooter/hostile event on campus.**

### **Strengths**

The partial capability level can be attributed to the following strengths:

**Strength 1:** Participants were generally in line together with policies and procedures regarding response to an active shooter, with a lead priority across scenarios being ‘stopping the killing’.

**Strength 2:** Participants recognized the need for one of the responding Law Enforcement units to begin setting up a command area and link up with responding Fire Services personnel.

**Strength 3:** In the more advanced scenarios with multiple shooters and victims, participants quickly recognized the need to form secondary contact teams to secure the scene rapidly.

### **Areas for Improvement**

The following areas require improvement to achieve the full capability level:

**Area for Improvement 1:** Following a discussion in dispatch procedures it was recognized that the current system will quickly get overwhelmed by reports and calls, and the fail-over to neighboring towns lacks a robust system to maintain situational awareness.

**Analysis:** A detailed analysis of dispatch procedures should be conducted with an eye towards a robust system that is resilient against being overwhelmed in a larger incident. Responders should be getting a similar dispatch regardless of dispatch agency or responding agency to maximize clarity in an incident. As more jurisdictions are added to a dispatch response, the potential for confusion about common terminology increases. Standardized procedures would help alleviate this potential confusion.

**Area for Improvement 2:** Personnel from different responding departments rarely get the chance to train with other departments within the region.

**Analysis:** Joint training, and exercise opportunities should be pursued aggressively throughout the region to build muscle memory and reinforce policies and procedures.

## **After a simulated active shooter/hostile event on campus, to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the response by initial responders and mutual aid partners.**

### **Strengths**

The partial capability level can be attributed to the following strengths:

**Strength 1:** Participants emphasized that a solo incident commander can’t do everything, and it was clear across scenarios that a unified command was the only acceptable system.

**Strength 2:** Participants recognized the need to rapidly create a ‘warm zone’ from which emergency medical personnel could extract wounded and perform lifesaving first aid under an umbrella of force protection.

**Strength 3:** Bridgewater State University is working towards a ‘one-button’ emergency notification system which allows emergency messages to get to everyone on campus rapidly.

### Areas for Improvement

The following areas require improvement to achieve the full capability level:

**Area for Improvement 1:** During a high-profile event such as an active shooter incident on a large college campus, many resources will both self-deploy or bypass staging.

**Analysis:** Staging should be set up early, and there should be representatives from both police and fire at staging to ensure accountability. A police representative at staging will serve as both a subject matter expert for dispatching resources and will ensure that police assets checking in feel that their capabilities are understood.

**Area for Improvement 2:** Each responding department has its own active shooter response policies and procedures, but there is a lack of a coordinated, unified, regional response plan, policy, or procedure.

**Analysis:** A regional active shooter/hostile event response plan should be created, adopted, exercised, and implemented. This plan would provide for training of common tactics and techniques in order to improve coordination during the response.

## Improve coordination and communication between responding agencies

### Strengths

The partial capability level can be attributed to the following strengths:

**Strength 1:** While communications is an area of improvement, the participants rapidly worked down a list of emergency communications procedures from switching channels, to cellular phones, to message runners. This rapid triage of a known problem in the tabletop would likely be duplicated in a real response, minimizing impact to the response from a communications issue.

**Strength 2:** Participants put ego to the side and were eager to learn from each other and work together to create a commonality of purpose.

**Strength 3:** Participants recognized that responding agencies from further afield would be ideally split up and paired with personnel from BSU who know the campus. This mindset of one-team one-fight is key to a unified response.

### Areas for Improvement

The following areas require improvement to achieve the full capability level:

**Area for Improvement 1:** There was confusion as to what radio channels and frequencies a response would be utilizing. This confusion can create chaos and eat up vital response time.

**Analysis:** Massachusetts has a wealth of trained Communications Unit Leaders, and they should be engaged to create a general communications plan which can be used for any potential response. Key to that plan is planning for redundancy and backups. Equipment should be analyzed to ensure interoperability where possible and practical.

**Area for Improvement 2:** While there was a high level of knowledge of Rescue Task Forces and the need for creation of warm zones, casualty collection points, etc. there was some confusion on nomenclature and standards.

**Analysis:** Terminology should be standardized among responding departments to minimize on-scene confusion. Training and exercise should reinforce standard nomenclature.

## APPENDIX A: EXERCISE PARTICIPANTS

Participating Organizations
<b>State</b>
Bridgewater State University Police
Southeast Regional Planning & Economic Development District
<b>Local Police Departments</b>
Bridgewater Police
West Bridgewater Police
East Bridgewater Police
Raynham Police
Middleborough Police
Halifax Police
<b>Local Fire Departments</b>
Bridgewater Fire
West Bridgewater Fire
East Bridgewater Fire
Raynham Fire
Middleborough Fire
Halifax Fire
<b>Regional Law Enforcement Councils</b>
Southeastern Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council
Metropolitan Law Enforcement Council