

## **Ask the Chief**

**Dear Chief:** In light of the theater shooting in Aurora Colorado earlier this year, what can citizens do to reduce the possibility of something similar occurring in Alamosa?

### **Dear Concerned Citizen:**

I am sharing an article (with permission) from a police publication that addresses this topic specifically; I fully agree with all of the articles content. As citizens, we can save lives by recognizing a neighbor, friend, fellow student, client, patient, customer, employee, or relative that might have turned a dangerous corner. Nearly every active shooter goes through five phases. If a citizen pays attention and calls the police they may very well prevent a tragedy of monumental proportions.

### **Fantasy Stage:**

During this stage the shooter has daydreams of the shooting. He fantasizes about the news coverage. He idolizes other shooters. He might draw pictures of the event and make Web postings. Would-be Active Shooters in the Fantasy Stage will often discuss their desires with friends and foes alike. If news of these fantasies are shared with you, believe them and pass them on to law enforcement. If police can intervene prior to the suspect acting on their fantasy there may never be a head line.

### **Planning Stage:**

In this stage the suspect is deciding on the “who, what, when, where and how” of his day of infamy. He will put his plans down in writing. He will quite often discuss these plans with others and sometimes seek out an accomplice. He will plan the time and location to insure the most victims, or in some cases to target specific victims. He will determine the weapons he will need and where he will get them. He will decide how to travel to the target area and how to dress to conceal his weapons without arousing suspicion. If the police are tipped during this stage, once again intervention can be made prior to people dying and families crying.

### **Preparation Stage:**

During this stage the suspect may be obtaining gun powder for his improvised explosive devices. He might break into his grandfather’s house to steal some weapons and ammunition for the event. He might stockpile or pre-position weapons and explosives for the assault. Active shooters have been known to call friends and tell them not to go to school or work on the scheduled day of the attack in an effort to keep them out of the line of fire. If one of these friends calls the police about their concerns, this citizen intervention may prevent multiple funerals.

### **Approach Stage:**

This is a very dangerous stage. The suspect has made his plans and decided to act. He will be walking, driving, or riding toward his intended target, armed with his tools of death. Contact with the soon-to-be active shooter could come in the form of a traffic stop, a citizen call, or a stop and frisk. A thorough investigation can still lead to an arrest of the suspect before he brings down a multitude of victims in a needless shooting or bombing.

### **Implementation Stage:**

Once the shooter opens fire, immediate action needs to be taken. The Active Shooter will continue to kill until he runs out of victims or ammunition, or is stopped. This suspect is unique, because he is fully dedicated to going for the “top score”, which is measured in kills. The sooner an on or off-duty officer or citizen intervenes with an effective, efficient act of courage, the less the casualties there will be. There is risk in doing something, but the greatest risk lies in doing nothing.

In the case of every active shooter before one shot is fired they dream, draw, write, discuss, twitter, plan, gather, purchase, steal, construct, case, practice, dress, pack, load, transport and approach. Quite often these actions, when performed by a future active shooter are disconcerting even without the witness knowing their context.

Although this article refers to active shooters as males, all persons (including females) may exhibit the common characteristics shared here-in and ultimately commit the acts we associate with Active Shooters.

Source: <http://www.policeone.com/active-shooter/articles/5844457-Colo-massacre-Educating-the-public-on-the-five-phases-of-the-active-shooter/>

Craig Dodd, Chief of Police