



Situational Awareness

Mass Shootings Analysis – Commonalities and Trends

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Key Findings

- (U//FOUO) An analysis of 29 mass shooting incidents in the United States since 1999 indicates that nearly half were workplace shootings.
- (U//FOUO) All of the shooters but one were males between the ages of 17 and 48. All but one of the 29 incidents were conducted by single shooters.
- (U//FOUO) Most of the active shooters took their own lives or were shot by responding police officers.
- (U//FOUO) Only four of the shooters were current or former members of the military.
- (U//FOUO) Semiautomatic handguns were the most commonly used type of weapon in the mass shootings.

Introduction

(U//FOUO) The mass killing incidents this year at a Sikh temple in Wisconsin and a movie theater in Colorado garnered international attention and focused the efforts of public and private sector security officials on the prevention of and response to mass shootings in the United States. This report examines the 29 deadliest mass shootings in the past 13 years, starting with the shootings at Columbine High School in Colorado in 1999, to identify commonalities and trends. These 29 incidents include shooting incidents in which at least five people were killed.

(U//FOUO) DHS 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. Active shooter situations are unpredictable and evolve quickly. Typically, the immediate deployment of law enforcement is required to stop the shooting and mitigate further harm to victims. Typically, active shooter situations are over within 10 to 15 minutes.¹

Recent U.S. Mass Shooting Events

(U) Three shooting incidents resulting in the deaths of at least five people have occurred during 2012:

- Sikh Temple Shooting - Oak Creek, WI
 - On August 5, 2012 Wade Michael Page killed six people and critically wounded three more at a Sikh temple just south of Milwaukee. Four of the deceased victims were found inside the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin, while the remaining two were found outside the building. The three wounded victims included two civilians and

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a local police officer. The gunman fatally shot himself outside the temple after being shot during a firefight with police.²

- Page was a 40-year-old who served in the U.S. Army and received a less-than-honorable discharge in October 1998. He was also a former leader of a white supremacist metal band, End Apathy. A 9-mm semiautomatic handgun recovered at the scene.³
- **Movie Theater Shooting – Aurora, CO**
 - On July 20, 2012, James Eagan Holmes shot and killed 12 people and wounded approximately 38 more after opening fire in a crowded movie theater in Aurora, CO, during a showing of the new Batman movie. Holmes allegedly entered the movie theater through an exit door about a half-hour into the movie. Holmes was arrested in a parking lot behind the theater near his car without further incident. He was wearing black body armor, much like the SWAT team of police that responded. However, police officers noticed that his gear differed from theirs and detained him.⁴
 - Holmes did not have a previous criminal history other than a traffic ticket. He had moved to Aurora from his hometown of Riverside, California, in 2011 to begin a doctoral program in neuroscience at the University of Colorado, Denver, but was in the process of withdrawing from the school.⁵

(U) A similar mass shooting may have been averted in November 2012 when a 20-year-old Missouri man admitted to police that he planned to shoot people in a movie theater during a showing of a Twilight film. The suspect had bought weapons and ammunition and had purchased a ticket for a showing of the movie. The investigation began when his mother contacted local police, saying that her son had recently bought weapons – including two assault rifles and hundreds of rounds of ammunition – that were similar to those used by the gunman who opened fire inside the theater in Aurora, Colorado.⁶

- **Christian College Shooting – Oakland, CA**
 - On April 2, 2012, seven people were killed and three others wounded when a nursing student opened fire at Oikos University, a small Christian college in Oakland, California. Six of the dead were students at the school, and one was a secretary. The gunman, identified as One L. Goh, a 43-year-old former student at the school. After fleeing the scene and commandeering a vehicle belonging to one of his victims, the suspect later surrendered to police at a grocery store about three miles from the school.
 - The motive for the shooting remains under investigation, but the Oakland Police Chief said that the suspect was upset about being expelled from the school and being teased by other students about his poor English-language skills. News reports have identified Oikos University as a religious-affiliated college with fewer than 100 hundred students, serving primarily the Korean immigrant community.⁷

(U//FOUO) The following chart provides detailed information on five mass shootings that occurred in 2011 and 2012.

	Oak Creek, Wisconsin August 2012	Aurora, Colorado July 2012	Oakland, California April 2012	Seal Beach, California October 2011	Tucson, Arizona January 2011
Weapon	Small arms: Springfield 9-mm semiautomatic handgun	Tear gas, small arms: a semiautomatic variation of the military's M-16 rifle, a pump-action 12- gauge shotgun, and at least one .40- caliber semiautomatic handgun	Small arms: semiautomatic handgun – make and model unknown	Small arms: semiautomatic handguns – 9-mm Springfield, a Heckler & Koch .45, and a Smith & Wesson .44 magnum	Small arms: semiautomatic handgun – Glock 9-mm
Disguise	None	Tactical clothing	None	None	None
Procedure	Opened fire outside, then went inside	Entered though emergency exit door	Opened fire in middle of classroom	Opened fire in hair salon where ex-wife worked	Opened fire at close range
Number of Assailants	1	1	1	1	1
Target Location	Sikh temple	Movie theater	University	Hair salon	Public gathering
People Killed/Wounded	6 killed/3 injured	12 killed/58 injured	7 killed/1 injured	8 killed/1 injured	6 killed/11 injured
Affiliation with Target	None	None	Former student	Ex-wife worked at salon	None
Motive/Target	Unknown	Unknown	Issue with school administration	Domestic	Political figure
History of Mental Illness	Unknown	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Prior Criminal History	No	No	No	No	Minor offenses
Warning Signs/Indicators	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Prior Military	Yes	No	No	No	No

Analysis of Mass Shootings Since 1999

(U//FOUO) The 29 mass shootings incidents since 1999 – listed in Appendix 1 – were analyzed to identify commonalities and trends. These include the following:

- Males between the ages of 17 and 48 conducted all of the attacks but one.
- The largest number of mass shootings – 13 of the 29 – occurred at the workplace and were conducted by either a former employee or relative of an employee.
- All of the active shooters were single attackers, with the exception of two students who conducted the shootings at Columbine High School.
- In most of the incidents – 20 of the 29 – the active shooters took their own lives or law enforcement was forced to shoot and kill them, thus leaving their true motives uncertain.
- In only four of the 29 incidents were the shooters active or former members of the U.S. military.
- Semiautomatic handguns are the weapon of choice for mass shootings.

Active Shooters: How to Respond

(U//FOUO) Following the tragedy that occurred at Virginia Tech in 2007, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security released a document with recommendations on what to do in the event of an active shooter situation. The most critical recommendation is for both law enforcement and the private sector to have training and conduct drills in order to be prepared for an active shooter incident.

(U//FOUO) In many of the case studies discussed, there were indicators of potential violence. The following is a list of warning signs that an employee may exhibit in the workplace⁸:

- Increased use of alcohol and/or illegal drugs.
- Unexplained increase in absenteeism; vague physical complaints.
- Noticeable decrease in attention to appearance and hygiene.
- Depression/withdrawal.
- Resistance and overreaction to changes in policy and procedures.
- Repeated violations of company policies.
- Increased severe mood swings.
- Noticeably unstable, emotional responses.
- Explosive outbursts of anger or rage without provocation.
- Suicidal; comments about “putting things in order.”
- Paranoid behavior or utterances (“Everybody is against me”).
- Increasingly talks of problems at home.
- Escalation of domestic problems into the workplace; talk of severe financial problems.
- Talk of previous incidents of violence.
- Empathy with individuals committing violence.
- Increase in unsolicited comments about firearms, other dangerous weapons and violent crimes.

Suspicious Activity Reporting

(U//FOUO) Any suspicious activity with a possible nexus to terrorism in New Jersey should be reported immediately following existing protocols specific to respective counties. Activity can

also be reported to CT Watch located at the ROIC by dialing 2-1-1 or (866) 4SAFENJ (866-472-3365) or Tips@NJHomelandSecurity.gov.

Contact Information

(U//FOUO) Any agency with information or comments/questions about this document should contact the NJ ROIC Intelligence & Analysis Unit at (609) 963-6900, ext. 6212, or njroicanalysis@gw.njsp.org.

Appendix: A Sample of Significant Mass Shootings Since 1999

(U//FOUO) The following is a list of mass shooting/active shooter incidents since 1999:

August 2012: Wade Michael Page fatally shoots six people and injures three at a Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, before taking his own life after being shot by a police officer. Page was a member of several neo-Nazi music bands.⁹

July 2012: James Eagan Holmes shoots and kills twelve people and wounds approximately 38 more after opening fire in a crowded movie theater in Aurora, Colorado, during a showing of the Batman movie. Holmes allegedly enters the Century 16 movie theater through an exit door about a half-hour into the premiere.¹⁰

May 2012: Ian Stawicki walks into Café Racer in Seattle, Washington, and opens fire with two handguns, killing four patrons and wounding one. Shortly thereafter he kills another woman in a parking lot while carjacking her SUV. Later that afternoon, he commits suicide.¹¹

April 2012: One L. Goh, a former student at Oikos University, a small Christian college in California, opens fire in the middle of a classroom, leaving seven people dead and three wounded.¹²

October 2011: Scott Dekraai, apparently enraged over a custody dispute, walks into a crowded Seal Beach, California, hair salon where his former wife works and opens fire. Eight people are killed, including a man sitting in a truck outside the salon. Another person is critically wounded.¹³

January 2011: Jared Lee Loughner shoots Arizona Rep. Gabrielle Giffords in the head during a meet-and-greet with constituents at a Tucson supermarket. Six people are killed and 11 others wounded.¹⁴

August 2010: Omar S. Thornton, a driver for Hartford Distributors in Manchester, Connecticut, emerges from a disciplinary hearing and begins shooting, killing eight people and injuring two at the family-owned distributorship and then shooting himself.¹⁵

November 2009: Major Nidal Malik Hasan, an Army psychiatrist, shoots and kills 13 people and injures 32 others in a rampage at Fort Hood, Texas, where he is based. Authorities allege that

Hasan was exchanging e-mails with Muslim extremists, including American-born radical Anwar al-Awlaki.¹⁶

April 2009: Jiverly Wong shoots and kills 13 people and seriously wounds four others before committing suicide at the American Civic Association, an immigration services center, in Binghamton, New York.¹⁷

March 2009: Robert Stewart opens fire on a nursing home in Carthage, North Carolina, where his wife worked, killing seven elderly residents and a nurse, and wounding four others. Stewart's wife was not in the facility at the time.¹⁸

June 2008: Wesley Neil Higdon opens fire at his workplace in Henderson, Kentucky, killing five co-workers and wounding another. Higdon was reprimanded by a supervisor for having an argument with a co-worker before the attack.¹⁹

February 2008: Steven Kazmierczak steps on stage in a lecture hall at Northern Illinois University and opens fire on a geology class, killing five students and wounding 16 others before killing himself on the lecture hall stage.²⁰

February 2008: Charles Lee Thornton opens fire on a City Hall meeting in Kirkwood, Missouri, killing five people and wounding two others. Thornton had a history of disputes with the city government and had been arrested twice at council meetings.²¹

December 2007: Robert Hawkins enters a shopping mall in Omaha, Nebraska, and opens fire. He kills eight people and wounds four others before taking his own life.²²

April 2007: Seung-hui Cho, a Virginia Tech senior, opens fire on campus, killing 32 people in a dormitory and an academic building in attacks more than two hours apart. Cho takes his life after the second incident.²³

February 2007: Sulejman Talovic opens fire in a Salt Lake City, Utah, shopping mall, killing five people and wounding four others. An off-duty police officer exchanges gunfire with the Bosnian refugee before other officers arrive and fatally wound Talovic.²⁴

October 2006: Charles Carl Roberts IV, a milk-truck driver armed with a small arsenal, bursts into a one-room schoolhouse in Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania, killing five Amish girls and injuring another five. He kills himself as police storm the building.²⁵

January 2006: Jennifer San Marco shoots her neighbor, then drives to the mail processing plant in Goleta, California, where she was previously employed, and kills six employees of the plant with a pistol before taking her own life.²⁶

March 2005: Jeff Weise opens fire at a high school on an Indian reservation in Red Lake, Minnesota, killing seven fellow students and wounding seven others, then committing suicide. Prior to the attack, Weise killed his grandparents.²⁷

July 2004: Elijah Brown opens fire at a food manufacturing plant in Kansas City, Kansas, killing five people and injuring two others before committing suicide.²⁸

August 2003: Salvador Tapia shoots six former co-workers at an auto parts warehouse in Chicago, Illinois, before being shot to death by members of the Chicago Police Department's Hostage Barricade and Terrorist (HBT) team.²⁹

July 2003: Doug Williams, a production assemblyman for 19 years at Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Co. in Meridian, Mississippi, goes on a rampage at the defense plant, fatally shooting five and wounding nine before taking his own life with a shotgun.³⁰

September 2001: Joseph Ferguson opens fire at his workplace in Sacramento, California, killing five people, including his girlfriend, and wounding two others. The attack occurs one week after he was suspended from his job as a security guard. The incident lasts 24 hours and concludes when Ferguson commits suicide during a standoff with law enforcement.³¹

December 2000: Michael McDermott, a software tester, shoots and kills seven co-workers at the Internet consulting firm where he is employed in Wakefield, Massachusetts. McDermott, who is arrested, was enraged because his salary was about to be garnished to satisfy tax claims by the Internal Revenue Service.³²

March 2000: Robert Wayne Harris opens fire at his former workplace, a carwash in Irving, Texas, killing five employees and injuring another. Harris was fired three days prior to the attack. He was tried and found guilty in September 2000. Texas executed Harris in 2012.³³

December 1999: Silvio Izquierdo-Leyva opens fire at the Radisson Hotel in Tampa, Florida, where he is employed, killing four co-workers and wounding three others. He then kills a fifth person during an attempted carjacking. He was sentenced in 2002 to life in prison without the possibility of parole.³⁴

September 1999: Larry Gene Ashbrook opens fire inside the crowded chapel of the Wedgwood Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas. Seven people are killed before Ashbrook takes his own life.³⁵

July 1999: Mark Orrin Barton, a chemist-turned-day trader, walks into two investment offices in Atlanta, Georgia, and opens fire on fellow investors and office workers. The shootings at All-Tech Investment and Momentum Securities Inc., across the street from each other, leave nine people dead and 12 wounded. After a six-hour manhunt, Barton kills himself.³⁶

April 1999: Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, students at Columbine High School in Colorado, open fire at the school, killing a dozen students and a teacher and causing injury to two dozen others before taking their own lives.³⁷

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