

Tree of Life Synagogue

On Saturday, October 27, 2018 at approximately 9:55 am, a mass shooting occurred at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Robert Bowers, age 46, killed 11 people and wounded 6 others, including 4 law enforcement officers who intervened. Bowers was also wounded and was subsequently taken into custody and hospitalized for his injuries. He had an assault rifle and 3 handguns. He had no known criminal record. Bowers was charged with 29 counts of crimes of violence and firearms offenses after authorities stated he carried out an anti-Semitic attack on Shabbat, the Jewish Sabbath.



Below is a link to a story and some quotes which appeared in a ***Fox News Insider*** article shortly after the incident. It highlights the importance of active shooter preparedness and the need to conduct security assessments of facilities. Notably, a recent assessment conducted by a representative from the Department of Homeland Security and his ensuing recommendation to ensure adequate exits, was acted on by the Synagogue. As a result, at least one person was able to get out of the building.

<http://insider.foxnews.com/2018/10/27/pittsburgh-synagogue-shooting-former-president-says-working-exit-routes-likely-saved>

“The former president of the Tree of Life Synagogue said that working with the Department of Homeland Security on the building's exit routes helped to save an employee's life.”

Michael Eisenberg told CBS 2 Pittsburgh security was a "major concern" when he was president, and that one of the synagogue's maintenance workers was able to escape because the building's exit doors were working effectively.

"He was able to get out of the building ... because these exit doors were working well," he said. "I just can't tell you how thankful I am just to do that one task that Homeland Security told us to do."

He added that the building's exit doors were previously not easily opened from inside the building or outside.

"[The maintenance worker] could be alive because of this," he said.

Below is a link to a story and some quotes which appeared in a ***New York Times*** article on Sunday, October 28, 2018. It discusses the Congregation's active shooter preparedness training. Their immediate awareness of what they heard as being gun shots and movement to a ***"safe"*** place within the Synagogue likely saved additional lives.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/27/us/active-shooter-pittsburgh-synagogue-shooting.html?action=click&module=Spotlight&pgtype=Homepage>

"By that time the elder Mr. Weiss was already in action, carrying out the all-too-real protocols of the active shooter response training that congregants at Tree of Life had put into place the year before. Recounting what his father told him, the younger Mr. Weiss said that services had just been getting started when he heard a loud noise.

"There was a loud sound and a couple of people investigating it heard a couple more loud sounds," he said. "That's when my father and the rabbi discovered it was the sound of gunshots."

The rabbi instructed everyone to get to a safe place, and after the Tree of Life congregants had done so, his father considered the other congregations that meet in the building on Saturdays. The bris was taking place on a lower floor, and he checked first to make sure the people there were safe. They were."

Summary

Security assessments should be an integral part of any crisis management plan. Additional exit doors and/or emergency windows within internal office space, warehouse and production areas, etc., are essential for people to get out of the building in the event of an emergency. The first element of the ***"Run, Hide, Fight"*** principle is to ***"Run"*** or get out of the building. Too often, offices are constructed with a ***"one way in, one way out"*** design which limits one's ability to escape and may put them directly into harm's way or an obstruction which would prevent them from exiting.

Active shooter and victim sustainability training is essential for everyone. Situational awareness and quick recognition as the event unfolds can save lives. It's important to recognize what we can do within our work spaces, educational institutions, health care facilities, houses of worship, sports arenas, etc., to maximize getting people to safety and to treat life threatening injuries before the arrival of first responders. Understand that if you're hearing gun fire, people have already been shot and the fight for your survival and those around you has begun.

