Active Shooter FAQ

What steps is West Chester University taking to provide safe classrooms?

While no institution can guarantee absolute safety in the classroom or on campus grounds, WCU has taken the issue seriously and works continually to improve the safety of the University’s campus and classrooms. The guidelines in this FAQ are just one step toward a safer educational environment. Among the actions the University has taken are these:

1. Purchase and activation of an emergency text messaging system
2. Use of the WCU Emergency Informational Homepage to notify the campus community of an emergency
3. Ability to utilize, if appropriate, the local media and the Chester County and West Chester Borough Reverse 911 System for notification purposes
4. Implementation of an external emergency notification system
5. Regular tests of the emergency telephone and call box system on campus.
6. Creation of a Threat Assessment Team (TAT) to collect information about possible threats and to recommend actions based on the determined threat.
7. Training by the University Department of Public Safety (DPS) of all police officers on how to respond to an active shooter incident: Several of the DPS administrator’ve staff are considered experts on the subject of active shooters and ensure that the department is trained in and equipped for the most up to date tactics and strategies.

In the event of an emergency, what is my responsibility?

Many experts in this field believe that, along with campus officials, faculty are important partners in providing for the safety of their classroom students in the event of an emergency, just as they oversee student safety during classroom and laboratory activities. All faculty should anticipate and plan how they would ensure the safety of their students in the event of an active shooter in the building. While anticipating every detail of an emergency is impossible, by planning ahead, faculty can greatly improve their students’ and their own odds of surviving the emergency.

In the event of gunfire in my classroom building, should I evacuate my class, or should we stay where we are and barricade the door?

Statistically, the more distance you place between yourself and someone firing a weapon, the higher the probability that you will escape injury. Therefore, if you hear gunfire, your first course of action should be to evacuate yourself and your students away from the danger if you can safely do so. You should only consider sheltering in place or elsewhere within the building if evacuation is not possible.

Would locking all classrooms during classes deter a shooter?

1. WCU classrooms have locking doors. If you wish to engage the lock while teaching your class, you should do so, but relying solely on locks for safety has two fundamental problems: Most classroom doors have a glass window, and any modern firearm is powerful enough to shoot through even tempered or safety glass. A shooter could then easily lock the door or reach victims through the glass.

What should I consider in making my emergency plan?

1. Identify the type of emergency for which you are planning. This FAQ is designed to help you plan for an active shooter emergency.
2. For an active shooter situation, select and become familiar with an area or building where you could most likely evacuate your class. Your evacuation site should be approximately 500 yards (five football fields) away from the incident. Ensure that the site will be open, available, and accessible during your class hours. Also select at least one alternative site and become familiar with it, too.
3. Become familiar with all of the emergency exit routes in your classroom building. Determine at least two routes that you could take to evacuate yourself and your class from the building. Remain aware day to day of what is happening on these routes. For example, maintenance work could temporarily hinder access to a route.
4. Although requiring some work, you should be your last recourse, also plan for the possibility that you and your class may not be able to leave your building. Select a safe area in the building that will afford you the best concealment and cover. If you select your classroom, identify heavy items in the room that could be used to barricade the door. Consider whether the barricade would be visible through a window in the door and therefore indicate to an active shooter that possible victims are just beyond the door. Is there an interior room—without windows but with a lock—into which you could move your class and possibly go unnoticed by an active shooter?

What other steps should I take to prepare in advance for an emergency?

1. You are encouraged to take roll at the start of each class. Prepare to take the attendance list with you in the event of an evacuation. Your attendance record will aid rescue personnel in determining who may still be in the building.
2. Program your cell phone to speed dial 911(Chester County Emergency Services) and 610-436-3311 (WCU Department of Public Safety).
3. Rehearse what you will need to tell an emergency dispatcher, including your name, what is happening, your injured persons are with you, and what you observed while you were evacuating.
4. Once you have developed your emergency classroom plan, advise your students that in the event of an emergency, you have a plan; however, do not share the plan with your class. Letting your students know that you have planned for an emergency will give them confidence in you and increase the likelihood that they will follow your directions. The University does not publicize emergency evacuation sites because active shooters have in the past used such pre-designated sites as targets for their violence. For this same reason, your emergency plans should be kept confidential.
5. Consider one of three options to ensure that your class will receive an emergency text message:
   a) allow cell phones to be left on and silenced during class. 2) designate several class members to receive the text message and forwards it to others in the class.

I still don’t feel comfortable: what is my next step to receive more information?

Faculty are encouraged to contact the director of public safety if they would like additional information or would like to discuss emergency planning. A wealth of information is also to be found on the Internet. The following Web sites may be particularly helpful:

- http://www.wcupa.edu/dps/emergency
- http://www.wcupa.edu/dps/crisisresponse.asp
- http://www.wcupa.edu/dps/emergency/helpfullinks.asp

Key Actions

1. Evacuate away from the danger and remain calm
   - Follow the instructions of a faculty member, university employee or emergency personnel
   - Evacuate to the nearest exit
   - Notify anyone you may encounter to exit the building immediately
   - Evacuate to an area at least 500 yards from the danger
   - Stay together
   - Once you reach an area of safety, call the police at 911 or 610-436-3311
   - Notify the police of your group size and location and a contact person
   - Remain in the reported location until you are released by police

2. If you cannot evacuate, remain calm
   - Lock or barricade the door- placing anything heavy in front of it
   - If the door opens and cannot be barricaded, evacuate or move to another room
   - Stay out of sight, away from windows and doors
   - Turn off the lights
   - Remain quiet
   - Once secure NEVER open the door
   - Have one person call the police at 911 or 610-436-3311
   - Place a large note or article of clothing out on the window to let emergency personnel know you are there. Do not identify that the room is occupied for anyone inside the building.

3. If the shooter enters your room
   - Be prepared to attempt to overtake the individual with greater numbers
   - If the individual is overtaken, hold that person down
   - Call police at 911 or 610-436-3311 and report the situation
Keep your group together until dismissed by police. Stay together

Do not use the fire alarm to evacuate
Do not pull the fire alarm in an attempt to have people evacuate the building.

Sheltering in place:

Locking the door
Does the door have a lock? Is the lock functional? Do you need a key to activate the lock? Do you have that key?

Does the door open in or out?
Doors that open into the classroom can be barricaded with heavy objects inside the room. Doors that open out into the hallway cannot be barricaded. Reconsider evacuation or move to another room. If not possible, attempt to tie the door closed with an extension cord, belt, or anything that can be wrapped around the door handle.

Barricade the door
If the door does not have a lock, place heavy items inside of the room in front of the door. If there are no heavy objects, consider wedging the door or going to another location.

Do not stand in front of the door or windows
Stand out of sight and do not stand in front of doors and windows. Avoid huddling together in a mass. Use the walls and heavy objects such as desks, tables, and filing cabinets to hide behind.

Stay Quiet
Turn off lights, silence cell phones, turn off computers, etc.

Call for help
Have one person call 911 and advise them of your location and the number of people in the room.

Unsecuring your location:
NEVER open the door
Once you are secure, you should never open the door for any reason. Responding police will open the door for you.

Preplanning:
Reporting an Emergency
Calling 911 or 610-436-3311 in an emergency or under stress will be difficult. Preprogram your phone for one-touch dialing.

Receiving Emergency Notifications (WCUAlert)
Decide on a policy for cell phone use in the classroom.
1. Faculty member has the only cell phone on in the class.
2. Selected individuals have their cell phone on in class.
3. The entire class has their cell phones on.

Evacuation:

Sheltering:

Preplanning:

Evacuation:
Do not stop
An evacuation takes seconds if you do not stop. As you evacuate, tell others that you encounter to evacuate but do not engage in discussion or prolong the time it takes to exit away from danger.

Consider the windows
If you cannot make it to an exit, consider going through a window. Do the windows open? What floor are you on? Are there bushes or mulch that can break your fall?

Stay together
Keep your group together until dismissed by police.

Evacuation:

Preplanning:

Evacuation:

Sheltering:

Evacuation:

Sheltering:

Notes: ___________________________________________

Evacuation:

Sheltering:

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