

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. Purchase (in progress) of an external emergency notification system
5. Current comprehensive review 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 administrative 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 respected legal minds 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. Most WCU classroom doors lock, although some can only be locked by using a key on the outside of the door. 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 unlock 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 sheltering in the building 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 shelter 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 location, whether 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 should one be sent:** 1) allow cell phones to be left on and silenced during class. 2) designate several students to leave their cell phones on and silenced during class; or 3) leave on your own personal cell phone.

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/emergencypreparedness.asp>

<http://www.wcupa.edu/dps/Crisis-Response>

<http://www.wcupa.edu/dps/emergency/emergencylinks.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 number
- 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 out 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 or 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

Special Considerations

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.

Keep attendance for each class

In an emergency your attendance sheets may be used to identify who was in the building for accountability purposes.

Evacuation:

Have an evacuation route planned

Posted evacuation plans are at the entrance to each floor of a building. Become familiar with these routes. Evacuate to the nearest exit.

Know your destination

Identify two buildings you can flee to that are at least 500 yards away from the danger zone.

Don't take personal property

Leave personal property behind as carrying items with you can slow you down.

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.

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.

My Plan

Preplanning:

- I have programmed my cell phone to dial 911 and 610-436-3311.
- I have implemented a plan to receive text alerts through the WCU alert system.
- I have advised my class that I have an emergency plan and that they are to follow my instructions should an emergency occur.

Notes: _____

Evacuation:

- I have reviewed the building evacuation plans.
- I have identified my closest exit, and I routinely check the route to this exit for obstructions.
- I have identified two locations that I will take my class away from the danger area. They are _____ and _____.

Notes: _____

Sheltering:

- I know if the rooms where I teach can lock and if I have the means to lock them.
- I have identified a way to barricade, tie, or secure the door in absence of locks.
- I will not open the door once it is secured.

Notes: _____

Classroom Safety

FAQ and Planning Considerations



This frequently asked questions section has been developed to provide the WCU faculty with necessary information on emergency planning and classroom safety. It is our hope that these answers will help you begin your individual emergency planning. Should you wish to attend an emergency planning training meeting, please contact the Department of Public Safety for the schedule.

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