



# **LTC Shots Fired Tabletop Exercise**

**February 15, 2013**

## **AFTER ACTION REPORT/IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

**PREPARED BY**

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**February 15, 2013**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The LTC Shots Fired tabletop exercise was developed to test the capabilities of long term care facilities, including skilled nursing and assisted living facilities to respond to an Active Shooter event within their operations. The exercise commenced with a short educational seminar to provide players with basic knowledge of the challenges inherent to an Active Shooter event. The LTC Shots Fired tabletop exercise is tangible evidence of the Health Care Association of New Jersey's (HCANJ) and Leading Age New Jersey's (LANJ) commitment to provide continued training, education and exercises via the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) process. Since many of the players participating in this exercise have had no prior experience in discussion-based exercises and due to the short time period allowed for the exercise, it was important that the design of this exercise draw out and identify areas of improvement in a positive manner, as well as, encourage our member facilities to become more active in the HSEEP exercise process.

The following objectives were developed for LTC Shots Fired:

- **Objective 1:** Identify and evaluate plans for response and mitigation of potential workplace violence such as an Active Shooter event.
- **Objective 2:** Assess the roles and effectiveness of coordination between law enforcement officials and LTC owners/operators in reacting to an Active Shooter event in accordance with existing plans.
- **Objective 3:** Examine and evaluate facility incident response plans used during an Active Shooter event.
- **Objective 4:** Assess the methods and effectiveness of internal and external communications during an Active Shooter event in accordance with existing plans and SOPs.
- **Objective 5:** Identify and evaluate response, mitigation, and recovery actions associated with an Active Shooter event at their facility.
- **Objective 6:** Identify gaps, redundancies, developmental activities, and best practices in standard procedures in response to an Active Shooter event.

The purpose of this report is to analyze exercise results, identify strengths to be maintained and built upon, identify potential areas for further improvement, and support the development of corrective actions that will guide future emergency preparedness grant initiatives to advance overall emergency preparedness within each of our member facilities. As such, this AAR/IP will be made readily available to all HCANJ and LANJ members via our website and may be distributed to all players for their review and comment.

### Major Strengths

The major strengths identified during this exercise are as follows:

- Facilities recognize the importance of providing their employees with training and

- education related to Active Shooter situations;
- Facilities identified adequate policies and procedures for visitor accountability;
- Existing emergency operations plans provide a suitable foundation for the addition of Active Shooter policies, plans, and procedures.

## **Primary Areas for Improvement**

Throughout the exercise, several opportunities for improvement in the response to the scenario were identified. The primary areas for improvement are as follows:

- Facilities recognize that the LTC environment often provides limitations to physical security and therefore they must rely on other strategies to address Active Shooter situations;
- Facilities must establish relationships and open-lines of communication with local law enforcement agencies and local offices of emergency management;
- Facilities must augment existing emergency operations plans with specific information related to active shooter situations and provide training and education to their employees.

This exercise met all pre-established objectives related to the identification of internal plans, policies and procedures essential to address a regional catastrophic weather-related event resulting in evacuations and medical surge. HCANJ member participants indicated that the exercise was a positive learning experience, that they had the opportunity to network with their colleagues, and expressed an increased interest in HCANJ's emergency preparedness program.



# SECTION 1: EXERCISE OVERVIEW

## Exercise Details

### Exercise Name

LTC Shots Fired

### Type of Exercise

Seminar and Discussion Based – Tabletop Exercise – (TTX)

### Exercise Start Date

January 16, 2013 – 9:00am

### Exercise End Date

January 16, 2013 – 12:30pm

### Duration

3.5 hours

### Location

Robert Wood Johnson Center for Health and Wellness

### Sponsor

Health Care Association of New Jersey (HCANJ) / Leading Age New Jersey (LANJ)

Grant funding provided under the auspices of the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (NJDHSS), United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR), Office of Preparedness and Emergency Operations (OPEO), Division of National Healthcare Preparedness Programs (DNHPP) Hospital Preparedness Program (HPP)

### Program

Healthcare Association Emergency Preparedness Program

### Mission

Response

### Capabilities

Communications, Planning

### Scenario Type

Active Shooter

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## Participating Organizations

Chelsea @ Brick, Jewish Home @ Rockleigh, Stonebridge @ Montgomery, Jewish Home @ Rockleigh, Wanaque Convalescent Center, Hamilton Continuing Care Center, OceanView Center for Rehab, Francis E. Parker Memorial Home, Bella Terra Senior Living, Somerset Medical Center, Parker @ Stonegate, McCarrick Care Center, Park Place Center, Preakness Healthcare Center, Westfield Center, Forest Hill Health Care Center, Warren Haven, Brandywine @ The Gables, Woodbury Mews, Morristown Medical Center, Courthouse Convalescent Center, Seacrest Village, Jersey Shore Center, Mediacenter Rehab and Nursing, Brandywine @Governor’s Crossing, Barnegat Rehab & Nursing Center, Masonic Home of NJ, Bergen Regional Medical Center, Somerville Police Department, NJ State Police, Sussex County Sheriff’s Office, Riverview Estates – Baptist Home, New Jersey Department of Health, Home Care Association of New Jersey, New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness

## Number of Participants

Players - 64

Evaluators – 5

Facilitators - 6

## SECTION 2: EXERCISE DESIGN SUMMARY

### Exercise Purpose and Design

An Active Shooter is defined as an individual who is actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people. In most cases Active Shooters use a firearm(s) and display no pattern or method for selection of their victims. In some cases, Active Shooters use other weapons and/or improvised explosive devices to cause additional victims and act as an impediment to police and emergency responders.

Although the probability of an Active Shooter event occurring within a long term care facility is relatively low, the business impact and the impact to the health and well being of residents, staff and their families is great. In recent history, Active Shooter events have occurred within many diverse business environments including elementary schools, high schools, shopping malls, university campuses, museums, hotels, and hospitals. Nursing homes are not immune to the potential for an Active Shooter event. In fact, in March 2009, a gunman burst into a North Carolina nursing home and fatally shot seven nursing home residents and a nurse while wounding at least three other individuals. Unfortunately, all businesses need to take steps to prepare for such a horrible event. This includes training, exercising, policy and plan development, and establishing relationships with their local law enforcement agency.

One of the primary purposes of the LTC Shots Fired tabletop exercise was to further familiarize HCANJ member facilities with the HSEEP exercise process and provide them with at least an introduction to recognized response options during an Active Shooter event. The specific areas of improvement that are identified during this exercise will be utilized to build upon future emergency preparedness grant program initiatives through the continuous improvement process.

The Exercise Director solicited the assistance of subject matter experts in healthcare, law enforcement, emergency medical services and emergency management. This exercise provided participants with an opportunity to evaluate their facility's communications and planning capabilities in response to an Active Shooter event. This exercise also focused on the implementation and coordination of internal emergency management plans, policies and procedures, critical decision making, communications capabilities and the ability of our member facilities to manage an emergency situation. The Exercise Director ensured that the scenario, the event timeline, and expected observable actions were clearly defined, technically accurate and achievable given the established time parameters of the exercise.

### Exercise Objectives, Capabilities, and Activities

Capabilities-based planning allows for exercise planning teams to develop exercise objectives and observe exercise outcomes through a framework of specific action items that are derived from the Target Capabilities List (TCL). Each capability is linked to several corresponding activities and tasks to provide additional detail. The capabilities listed below form the foundation for the organization of all objectives and observations in this exercise.

As this was the fourth HCANJ sponsored tabletop exercise that our facilities had opportunity to

participate in. There were six broad objectives of LTC Shots Fired exercise that were directly linked with two specific target capabilities from the Target Capabilities List including **Communications and Planning**. The objectives of the LTC Shots Fired medical surge exercise that were met include:

- **Objective 1:** Identify and evaluate plans for response and mitigation of potential workplace violence such as an Active Shooter event.
- **Objective 2:** Assess the roles and effectiveness of coordination between public safety officials and LTC owners/operators in reacting to an Active Shooter event in accordance with existing plans.
- **Objective 3:** Examine and evaluate facility incident response plans used during an Active Shooter event.
- **Objective 4:** Assess the methods and effectiveness of internal and external communications during an Active Shooter event in accordance with existing plans and SOPs.
- **Objective 5:** Identify and evaluate response, mitigation, and recovery actions associated with an Active Shooter event at their facility.
- **Objective 6:** Identify gaps, redundancies, developmental activities, and best practices in standard procedures in response to an Active Shooter event.

## Scenario Summary

The LTC Shots Fired tabletop exercise was organized into three separate modules; each designed to introduce and elicit a specific response from players who consisted of long term care facility administrators, nursing and support staff. Sixty four (64) players, representing twenty eight (28) different skilled nursing and assisted living facilities engaged in this discussion-based exercise. Players were encouraged to respond to each section of the scenario as specified within their facility specific emergency management plan.

### Module 1: “Did I Just See That?”

Your maintenance director observes a noticeably agitated unknown adult male exiting his pickup truck. The individual is dressed in a long black trench coat and is wearing a black ski hat. Upon exiting the truck, he reaches into the bed of the pickup and pulls out a long camouflaged duffle bag and is soon observed entering the nursing home through the front door..

Shortly after John Smith enters the building, the maintenance director hears loud screams and “popping noises” similar to gun shots coming from inside the front foyer of the nursing home. Several staff members are then seen fleeing the building and some of them are obviously covered in blood and look like they are in shock. **Key issues for players to consider during this part of the scenario include: lone gunman has entered the building, several staff members appear to have been shot.**

## Module 2: “Lockdown”

Local law enforcement officials arrive on scene within five minutes of the first 911 call from an employee cell phone inside the building. Police quickly enter the nursing home building in “Active Shooter” formation. The entry team confirms that the popping noises were indeed gun shots and they have encountered several wounded or dead residents and staff members on the floor. They begin a systematic search of the building for the intruder and call for the county bomb squad to respond on location as they have found a large duffle bag that appears suspicious and could contain an improvised explosive device. **Key issues for players to consider during this part of the scenario include: local law enforcement is now on scene, finding of a large suspicious duffle bag, numerous casualties are confirmed.**

## Module 3: “Incident Resolution”

Initial reports indicate that the facility administrator and Director of Nursing have been shot and killed. The SWAT team finds the gunman in the dining room on the west side of the nursing home holding a healthcare worker hostage. Meanwhile, first responder teams enter the nursing home, secure the east wing and begin evacuation of the building. Negotiation with the gunman continues for a brief period of time as the SWAT team enters the barricaded room, but not before the gunman shoots himself and commits suicide. **Key issues for players to consider during this part of the scenario include: key personnel have been killed or injured, residents and families learn of events, media inquires commence.**

# SECTION 3: ANALYSIS OF CAPABILITIES

This section of the report reviews the performance of the exercised capabilities, activities, and tasks. In this section, observations are organized by capability and associated activities. The capabilities linked to the exercise objectives of LTC Shots Fired are listed below, followed by the corresponding activities. Each activity is followed by related observations, which include analysis and recommendations.

## Capability 1: Communications

**Capability Summary:** Communications is the fundamental capability within disciplines and jurisdictions that practitioners need to perform the most routine and basic elements of their job functions. Agencies must be operable, meaning they possess sufficient wireless communications capabilities to meet their daily internal and emergency communication requirements before they focus on interoperability.

### Activity 1.1: Event Notification

**Observation:** There was inconsistent application and generalized confusion regarding the proper application of the NJ Emergency Healthcare Codes. During the exercise, some facilities decided it was appropriate to announce/declare a “Code Blue”, “Code Grey”, and

“Code Red” to garner a proper response. This easily creates confusion among employees as to the nature of the event and how to effectively respond. More so, responses to “Code Blue” and “Code Red” may actually place employees in greater harm, causing them to encounter an active shooter unknowingly.

**Recommendations:** Although it is important that healthcare facilities adopt the NJ Emergency Healthcare Codes, it is encouraged that facilities use plain language when making a facility-wide notification of an Active Shooter event. The emergent nature of Active Shooter events necessitates the need to inform as many people as possible in the shortest amount of time – including residents, staff, and visitors – many of whom not understand healthcare codes. Plain language also ensures that there is a limited possibility of confusion regarding the appropriate response to this type of crisis.

**Activity 1.2: Incident Management: In response to the notification of an incident, provide and receive communications to local, county, or state emergency management partners.**

**Observation:** Long-term care facilities overwhelmingly indicated the immediate need to inform local law enforcement via 911 of the Active Shooter event.

**Recommendations:** Facilities should ensure that all staff, residents, and visitors recognize the need to first dial 911 upon the actual or perceived threat of an Active Shooter. Additionally, callers should remain on the phone with the 911 dispatcher providing as much detailed information as possible while law enforcement responds when safe to do so.

**Observation:** Although facilities are not familiar with the operations of a “Joint Information Center” or JIC, they recognized the need to collaborate with local law enforcement to ensure a common message was disseminated to family members and the general public.

**Recommendations:** All staff should be trained on how to appropriately interact with the media and direct them to the appropriate facility or law enforcement representative who is authorized to provide information about the event. Additional training should be provided regarding the Incident Command System (ICS) to provide a basic level of understanding of the Joint Information System (JIS).

**Observation:** Some LTCs do not have internal overhead paging systems that are capable of disseminating announcements to all employees.

**Recommendations:** Although costly, LTCs should consider installation of overhead paging systems. In their absence, existing facility based mass notification methodologies should be tested and validated to ensure that all personnel within a building can be notified of emerging situations in an expedient manner.

## Capability 2: Planning

**Capability Summary:** Planning is the mechanism through which Federal, State, local and tribal governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector develop, validate, and maintain plans, policies, and procedures describing how they will prioritize, coordinate, manage, and support personnel, information, equipment, and resources to prevent, protect and mitigate against, respond to, and recover from Catastrophic events. Preparedness plans are drafted by a litany of organizations, agencies, and/or departments at all levels of government and within the private sector. Preparedness plans are not limited to those plans drafted by emergency management planners. The planning capability sets forth many of the activities and tasks undertaken by an Emergency Management planner when drafting (or updating) emergency management (preparedness) plans.

Unlike the other target capabilities, the attributes of planning are difficult to quantify, as individual planners may have considerably varied education and experience and still produce plans that lead to the successful implementation of a target capability. The focus of the Planning Capability is on successful achievement of a plan's concept of operations using target capabilities and not the ability to plan as an end unto itself. Plans should be updated following major incidents and exercises to include lessons learned. The plans should form the basis of training and should be exercised periodically to ensure that responders are familiar with the plan and able to execute their assigned role. Thus, it is essential that plans reflect the preparedness cycle of plan, train, exercise, and incorporation of after action reviews and lessons learned.

### Activity 2.1: Conduct Strategic Planning

**Observation:** Facilities recognize that they generally do not have sufficient policies, plans, or procedures to address Active Shooter events within their operations.

**Recommendations:** HCANJ will develop an Active Shooter planning template that can be modified by individual facilities to address their specific needs. LTC facilities should utilize the basic template to help augment their existing emergency management plans and have their plans reviewed by local/county emergency management officials.

**Observation:** Long term care facilities recognize the need to provide mental and emotional support and counseling to employees, residents, and families after an Active Shooter event, but are not familiar with all of the crisis counseling resources available to them. Facilities are currently using employee assistance programs, psychologists, social workers, and clergy. However, there are also public and private entities that can provide a similar types of service.

**Recommendations:** HCANJ will provide a list of contact information and resources of disaster mental health services in New Jersey, including the New Jersey Department of Health - Division of Mental Health Services programs.



**Observation:** Long term care facilities have pre-established escape routes utilized in the event of fires, however, due to the rapid nature in which Active Shooter events commonly evolve, evacuation may not be a viable option. Active Shooter events may create a special set of circumstances that actually encourage people to “hide out” in an area out of the Active Shooter’s view or by blocking entry to hiding places by locking doors behind them if possible.

**Recommendations:** During an Active Shooter event, the ultimate goal is to protect human life. Facilities should pre-identify multiple “safe areas” and “evacuation routes” where congregations of residents, staff, and visitors can find secure refuge or escape the facility in an expedient manner. Resident rooms and other potential safe areas should be evaluated and “safe area” drills conducted.

**Observation:** Although LTCs have typically provided their emergency management plans to local emergency management officials pursuant to NJDOH regulation, many have not established pre-event relationships with their local law enforcement agency.

**Recommendations:** Long term care facilities should invite their local law enforcement agencies to not only review their emergency management plans, but also tour their facilities and discuss Active Shooter response protocols with facility personnel. The educational component, networking, and pre-established relationships will help to ensure better response by outside agencies, regardless of the type of emergency event. The immediate response of the first officers on the scene will be to take aggressive action to find and stop the shooter or shooters. LTC employees will need to recognize that during the course of law enforcement’s response immediate medical aid to victims will not be rendered by law enforcement entry teams.

**Observation:** During the exercise, it was commonly recognized that LTC facilities have had little experience in planning for Active Shooter events and that their emergency management plans require better augmentation to address gaps in vulnerabilities to such an event. However, LTCs must also provide training on their plan and exercise their plan routinely.

**Recommendations:** Following the “building block process”, once emergency management plans have been developed, they must be exercised, validated and evaluated. Upon evaluation of existing plans, education and training exercises should be developed so that employees are better prepared to respond to such an event. For example, simple communications drills that exercise the use of NJ Emergency Healthcare Codes, the Incident Command System, who to call first (911) and what information to provide emergency dispatchers, can prove invaluable, at least as a response baseline. Other training that should be considered in conjunction with local law enforcement include: recognizing the sound of gunshots, recognizing indicators of potential violence by an employee or visitor, how to react when law enforcement arrives and “adopting a survival mind set during times of crisis”. Progressively more



sophisticated drills may also be conducted that exercise other Active Shooter response actions including “evacuate, hide or take action”.

**Observation:** Evaluators indicated that LTCs currently recognize the internal chain of command as it relates to their corporate business structure, however, there is the potential that this pre-established organizational structure may become disrupted during an Active Shooter event. Moreover, since these types of events usually evolve very rapidly, most players indicated that they would not have time to establish components of the Incident Command System (ICS).

**Recommendations:** Once the crime scene has been secured by law enforcement, a comprehensive managed effort must be undertaken to prioritize key business processes that will ensure business continuity when there is a disruption of normal business operations. Since Active Shooter events are unpredictable and difficult to prevent, the vast majority of the responsibility for response to an Active Shooter event will be under law enforcement agency purview. As such, a significant effort must be undertaken to establish recovery/resumption processes to help return the facility to normal operations.

**Observation:** LTC facility security plans, facility visitation policies for previous employees (especially those that have been terminated or dismissed) and physical security concerns need to be further evaluated.

**Recommendations:** Although, it is nearly impossible to prevent public access into a LTC facility, it is important that receptionists and front desk personnel be aware of their surroundings, monitor visitors for suspicious activity and know how to notify law enforcement agencies in case of emergency. Additionally, strict enforcement of access controls (i.e., keys, security system pass codes) is the responsibility of the facility administrator and should be assessed on a continued basis.

## SECTION 4: CONCLUSION

The LTC Shots Fired tabletop exercise was conducted in an effort to examine how an Active Shooter event would impact the businesses of HCANJ and LANJ’s membership. This discussion based exercise proved successful as a means of educating participants about basic response actions for an Active Shooter event. An Active Shooter event is unique in that it is a low probably –high consequence type of crisis. Most importantly, this exercise identified that overwhelmingly, our member facilities need to better prepare for such an event.

The Improvement Plan enclosed herein focuses on four primary capability elements including:

- **Training/Education** – program development to educate and train employees
- **Planning** – augment existing emergency plans to address an Active Shooter event
- **Equipment** – provide sufficient educational resources
- **Exercise** – intended to validate emergency plans

The success of HCANJ/LANJ’s emergency preparedness program hinges on active participation and input from our membership. It is the responsibility of each participating organization to reflect on the analyses and recommendations contained herein and to further develop improvements to their own emergency management plans. HCANJ/LANJ recognizes that in order to be further successful with our preparedness efforts, we must “harvest” the collective ideas of our membership. This After Action Report and the completion of our subsequent Improvement Plan are contingent upon joint partnerships which we will seek to expand upon both internally within our respective organizations, but also externally with local law enforcement officials.

## APPENDIX A: IMPROVEMENT PLAN

This Improvement Plan has been developed specifically for HCANJ membership as a result of the LTC Shots Fired tabletop exercise conducted on January 16, 2013. These recommendations draw on issues identified during the player hot wash and evaluator EEGs.

Table A.1 *Improvement Plan Matrix*

Capability	Observation Title	Recommendation	Corrective Action Description	Capability Element	Primary Responsible Agency	Agency POC	Start Date	Completion Date
<b>Communications</b>	Inconsistent application and generalized confusion regarding the proper application of the New Jersey healthcare codes.	NJ LTC should universally adopt the NJ Emergency Health Codes and provide appropriate employee training on their use.	Adoption of NJ Emergency Health Codes	Training	Member facilities	Admins	2-1-13	TBD
	Inconsistent application and generalized confusion regarding the proper application of the New Jersey healthcare codes	HCANJ/LANJ to provide NJ Emergency Health Code cards upon request	Adoption of NJ Emergency Health Codes	Equip	HCANJ/LANJ	Weidner	2/1/13	6/30/13
<b>Communications</b>	Promote proper notification procedures to local law enforcement	Train LTC employees on who to call (911) and what information is vital for law enforcement response	Review of Active Shooter response protocols	Training	Member facilities	Admins	2/1/13	On Going

<b>Planning</b>	Develop internal policies, plans and procedures for Active Shooter response.	HCANJ/LANJ to develop Active Shooter template to augment existing emergency management plans.	Active Shooter Template Development	Planning	HCANJ/LANJ	Weidner	2/1/13	6/30/13
<b>Planning</b>	Develop pre-event relationship with local law enforcement agency	LTCs should establish a working relationship with their local law enforcement agency and garner information related to their response protocols	Emergency management networking	Planning	Member facilities	Admins	2/1/13	On Going
<b>Planning</b>	Continuity of Operations Plans require development	Develop internal Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) and train key personnel of their role in crisis response/ and the Incident Command System	COOP	Planning	Member facilities	Admins	2/1/13	On Going
<b>Planning</b>	Drill and exercise response procedures that are established including establishment of safe areas and multiple evacuation routes, (evacuate, hide, take action)	Following the “building block process”, provide the necessary response training and then conduct internal response drills-ideally in conjunction with local law enforcement authorities.	Exercise development	Exercise	Member facilities	Admins	2/1/13	On Going

<b>Planning</b>	LTC facility security plans, media policy, facility visitation policies for previous employees (especially those that have been terminated or dismissed) and physical security concerns need to be further evaluated.	Validate existing facility visitation and media policies	Visitation/media policy review, validation, and augmentation as deemed necessary	Planning	Member facilities	Admin	2/1/13	6/30/13
<b>Planning</b>	LTCs should be made aware of additional sources of crisis / disaster and mental health support for their residents, employees and families	Establish potential sources of crisis / disaster and mental health support	Provide LTCs with additional crisis / disaster and mental health support resources	Planning	HCANJ/LANJ	Weidner	2/1/13	6/30/13

