

MySurvivalAlliance

5 TIPS FOR SURVIVING A RIOT



1. The Golden Rule of Riots:
Don't Go to Places You Know
Are Going to Be Trouble

2. If You're Near a Riot, Blend In

3. If You're Completely
Surrounded by a Riot...

.. Continue Inside

12 WAYS TO SURVIVE WORKPLACE GUN VIOLENCE

By all accounts, it's easy for nutcases to obtain firearms in the United States. Since there's no shortage of nutcases, the likelihood goes up every year that you might get caught in workplace gunfire.

A couple of years ago I had a conversation about with two experts on workplace violence: Don Grimme of GHR Training Solutions and criminologist Park Dietz, founder of The Threat Assessment Group. Grimme primarily addressed the issue of how to prepare for a shooting and Dietz how to react when a shooting actually is taking place.

Based on those conversations, here's how NOT to become a casualty:

1. Understand the Risk

Depending upon who's counting (and how they count), workplace gun violence claims somewhere between 500 and 1,000 lives each year. About a third of these deaths are suicides. The rest are homicides, about a fourth of which are committed by people known to the workers (coworkers, former co-workers, family, friends, clients, and patients.) You're twice as likely to die by getting shot at work in the southern states than in the rest of the country and

about half of workplace murders take place in public areas, thereby putting bystanders at risk.

2. Take Verbal and Written Threats Seriously

Always assume that somebody who threatens to use a gun to resolve a workplace issue is both capable and willing to back up that threat with action. Workplace shooters tend to be loners with mental health issues, have a previous history of violence, or spousal abuse, and may hold extreme political views and espouse weird conspiracy theories. They talk a lot about violent acts and may share violent fantasies.

3. Don't Be Needlessly Confrontational

If somebody at your office looks likely to become violent (e.g. throwing a screaming fit, making threats), do not become belligerent yourself. Doing so can easily escalate the conflict, making violence *more* rather than less likely. Unless it's your specific responsibility to intervene in such situations, it's wiser and safer to withdraw from the situation and then contact either Security or the police.

4. Have a Plan

As a general rule, you should always be aware of three things about your workplace. First, the quickest way out of the building. (This is good to know anyway, because that's where you'll head if there's a fire.) Second, know the location of the nearest room that can be locked or barricaded. Finally, mentally select someplace nearby where you can hide if bullets start flying.

5. Duck and Cover

It seems a bit obvious to say this, but if you hear gunshots, hit the floor and scramble for cover. Don't assume that you'll immediately know the direction where the bullets are coming from. If there are security guards or police present, there may be crossfire. If you have armed coworkers, they may panic and shoot at anything that moves. Bystanders can and do get killed in firefights.

6. Gather Your Wits

Once you've found someplace where you're not in a potential line of fire, take a couple seconds to assess the situation. Determine the likely location of the shooter(s) and then decide what to do, based upon your options. Needless to say, this will be difficult, which is why you made a plan in Step 4. Do NOT call 911 at this point, because at this point calling attention to yourself (like by talking or having a squacking phone) is a very bad idea. I'll explain when's the right time to call 911 next.

7. Get Out and Away From the Building

Your best option for survival is to leave the building and run, in a zigzag pattern (See Step 11 below), as far away from the building as possible. Don't stop in the parking lot because you're still on the premises and therefore still in danger. If you want to help your coworkers, the best way to do so is set a good example and lead the way out of danger. When you're so far away that you're certain you're out of danger, THEN call 911.

8. Make Yourself Inaccessible

If you can't get out of the building, go to the nearest room that can be locked from the inside and/or barricaded. Once

inside, lock the door and/or barricade it. Do not open the door, even if somebody outside says they are the police. It could be the shooter. Once you are secure in an inaccessible place, THEN call 911.

9. Hide (and Be Quiet)

If you can't get out of the building and can't get to an inaccessible room, then hide someplace that you're not visible. Do NOT call 911, because an important part of the concept of "hiding" is not making any noise.

10. Become Less Threatening

If somebody points a gun at you, raise your hands palm outwards and move slowly away. Research shows that this gesture makes you non-threatening and make you less likely to be a target. Many websites and videos suggest ways to disarm a shooter. Attempting to do this is an excellent way to get yourself killed.

11. RUN!

If somebody is actually shooting a gun at you, run away in a zigzag pattern, because it's actually quite difficult to shoot something that's moving erratically. If you run in a straight line, you're presenting an easy target that (from the perspective of the shooter) is staying in one place. Keep zigging and zagging until you have gotten far, far away.

12. Play Dead

If (God forbid) you actually get shot, lie down, and do not move. With any luck, the shooter will not feel the need to walk over to you and administer a coup de grace.

I've twice been the object of work-related gun threats, so I know this stuff is for real.

HOW TO AVOID BEING A VICTIM, ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

I was born and raised in Manhattan. As such, I have a built-in situational awareness barometer that helps keep me safe. It's a sixth sense that city-kids have. We just "know" when things aren't right. If we listen to our gut, we can stay out of trouble almost 100% of the time.



However, I grew up in the 80s, when New York City didn't have the same "Sex and the City" siren's call that it has now. In the past ten years, I've seen more people come to NYC without a clue in their heads - Doing the most irresponsible stuff known to man (or woman.) Taking the subway home at 2am, drunk off their ass. Pulling out their \$600 iPhone on the A train at midnight. Lost in their iPad, reading away, completely oblivious to their surroundings, and the dangers that exist.

I've wanted to write this post for a long, long time. If it helps one person, or prevents one mugging, (or something worse) it's been totally worth it. I encourage you to Tweet it out, Facebook it, and pass it along to friends, family, and coworkers. There's nothing worse than being a victim in a situation where you totally and completely didn't have to. Sharing buttons are at the bottom for your convenience.

I want to thank Ty Francis (if you think a 6'1" former head of security for some of Southampton's toughest clubs doesn't have any good safety tips, think again) as well as retired Law Enforcement Officer Clement Tang for their most valuable tips that have made this article as helpful as it is.

I'm breaking this article down into different sections, but know this - There's not one section in here that can't help you. Read it. Please. If we can prevent one more NY Post Headline that screams about how a young woman left a bar at 3am and wound up dead, we couldn't ask for anything better from this article below.

General Safety Tips you should always follow, whether you live in a big city or a small town.

Don't develop a pattern of behavior.

- A pattern is what allows bad guys to plan an attack or ambush. It allows them to track your comings and goings. So they can plan when they can safely break into your apartment.
- Vary the times you come and go.
- Vary your routes to work, school, gym and coffeehouse
- Ever notice that when President Obama goes for a run, or even travels anywhere, he never goes the same route twice? There's a very logical reason for that. Patterns can get you in trouble. Don't have them.

Know your surroundings

- Beware of what is normal in your neighborhood...or anyplace you frequent.
- Is that a new car on the street?
- Have those guys always hung out on that corner?
- Knowing what is normal allows you to notice the changes. Noticing changes makes you more aware of potential dangers. Those changes will cue you as to when something unexpected might be about to happen

We have a "gut" for a reason. 99.9% of the time, going against it is bad form.

The number one clue that something isn't right will more than likely come from inside of you. Your gut - That "something doesn't seem ok here" feeling you get in your stomach. Don't ignore it! There's a reason we have those feelings. They're ingrained from primal instincts, from millions of years ago, when we'd turn around and find a Tyrannosaurus Rex walking behind us, sizing us up for lunch. **DO NOT IGNORE YOUR GUT.** If something doesn't seem right, it probably isn't. Trust your gut. You have it for a reason.

Situational Awareness is your best friend. Not using it turns your surroundings into your worst enemy.

- Yes, it's fun to play Angry Birds on the subway. But don't you think people are looking for those who are doing exactly that? If you're busy throwing birds at pigs, or landing planes, or even reading a book on your device, the following things are happening:
- You're focused almost entirely on whatever you're doing, and not on your surroundings.
- You're not holding onto your device with any level of strength - Rather, you're just resting it on your hands. You can't fling birds or turn pages if you're grasping onto a device, so you don't do it. Instead, you just rest it there, just waiting for someone to grab it and run off the train at the next open stop.
- This isn't limited to transportation. Using your phone while walking down the street is just as bad - It's so easy for someone going the other way to focus on your device, grab it, and be in a running start while you're still like "What the hell just happened?" The thief is already ten feet away and running by the time you turn around and even realize what's going on. Good luck catching up and getting your device back.
- In the end, I know we're not going to stop using our devices in public places. That would defeat the entire purpose of the device. What we can do, though, is at least be more aware of our surroundings when we do it. Can we look up for a second after every level and just assess our situation? That's not that hard to do.

Have your keys in your hands

Whether going to your car, work or apartment, have your keys in your hand before you approach the door. This allows you quicker access through the door and avoids the major distraction of fumbling for keys as you reach the door. An attack is most likely to occur when you stop at a door and try to find your keys. Your head will be down and you will neither be looking around or listen for unusual sounds (like steps coming your way). Attacking a victim at this time also has the advantage of gaining access to whatever you were about to enter. Also, being hit with a large set of keys can often discourage an attack and holding the keys between your fingers and punching someone with them can make them very unhappy.

Small things we should all do, but rarely do.

- Wherever you are, a small powerful flashlight is one of the most important things you can have. Even with something as innocent as a power outage, think of all the places you'll be on any given day that have no outside windows to let in light...hallways, stairs, elevators. A flashlight will always allow you to find your way to a safer place.
- In that same vein, don't fall into the movie plot setup of investigating noises in the dark...that is why you have a cell phone and know how to call 911 (or just walk away)
- A whistle or other noisemaker is your friend. Attach a small whistle onto your keychain. There. Now it's always there. Do NOT be afraid to use it to attract attention.
- Instead of yelling "HELP" when something goes wrong, yell "FIRE!" People are more likely to respond to "Fire" than to "help."

Have a buddy system

This doesn't mean you always have to take a buddy when you go somewhere. It means letting someone know when you are doing something different or going someplace you haven't been before... Also, when you plan to return. It doesn't mean where to start looking for the body when you are kidnapped (although it does help), but it can be very useful if should you be stranded or injured in an area that doesn't have cell coverage. You think it's an exaggeration? Some very logical examples that could easily happen to you

- You leave work late one night, and get stuck in the elevator, long after everyone else has gone home.
- You fall asleep on the subway and wake up lost (or worse, in the yards. I've seen it happen.)
- You get in a car wreck and skid off the road, down a 200 foot hill into a ravine, hidden from sight of the road.
- You get sick. Your appendix bursts. You hit your head. You name it.

Know the people in your neighborhood. When I'm walking to the gym in the dark at 5am, there's a homeless man on the corner of 46th Street. I bring him a cup of coffee each morning. In turn, he keeps an eye on me in the dark. It's a good trade. Do you know the people in your neighborhood? Can you call for them if you're running away from trouble?

Don't look like a Victim

- Victims of violent crimes like a mugging or robbery call attention to themselves by either being oblivious to their surroundings (defenseless) or by looking helpless (unable to defend themselves).
- Walk down a street with your head up and looking around. Don't hug either side of the sidewalk...especially not the inside where you have to pass close to doorways. For God's sake, don't text and walk at the same time. You're screaming out "ROB ME!"
- Don't stare (it can be taken as a challenge) but don't be afraid to look at people (it isn't an elevator). You can nod or smile if you'd like, but beware of offering an unintended invitation.
- At the end of the day, personal security and situational awareness comes down to not being clueless. I encourage you all to not be clueless.

Don't be clueless

- Yes, it is a wonderful new world out there to explore. But try to pay attention to the unusual when out walking.
- Has that person been behind you for a while?
- Do they stop when you stop and continue when you do?
- Do they look away when you turn to look at them?
- The easiest thing to do is go into a public place, like a coffee shop or an eatery, and have a seat...if they stop too, you might consider calling 911 and have them check out your stalker.
- The worst thing to do is continue on your way is it takes you to a less traveled area...if you can't stop; take a longer but busier route.

IMPROVISED SELF-DEFENSE WEAPONS: HOW TO TURN YOUR EVERYDAY OBJECTS TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

*Betty Jo is home alone, wearing her favorite flannel nightgown. She shuffles into her U-shaped kitchen and fixes herself a cup of Sweet Dreams tea. Suddenly, the kitchen door is kicked in and the prospect of sweet dreams turns into her worst nightmare. "Shut up! Shut the f*** up!" the hulking man spews as he closes in. Fearing for her life, Betty Jo backpedals in horror, becoming trapped in a corner. The attacker slaps and punches her, knocking her to the floor. ... The rest of Betty Jo's nightmare appears in the morning papers.*



It didn't have to be this way, however. Quick thinking, savage instincts, a surly survival mindset and some basic self-defense moves coupled with some improvised self-defense weapons could have turned her nightmare into his horror story.

Let's replay this with a different ending, taking it from the moment the attacker enters: In spite of her terror, Betty Jo glances around, hunting for and maneuvering toward self-defense weapons of opportunity. She feigns weakness, pleading to buy time, but has already made up her mind: The only way out is through. Taking matters into her own hands, Betty Jo erupts like a fireball.

She grabs a nearby metal colander and whips it at his eyes. He flinches, and by the time he recovers, she has already snatched the boiling pot of water from the stove and thrown it in his face. Backed up by all her might and a bellicose war cry, she slams her handy cast-iron pot cover into his mug.

As his hands reach for his pained face, she assails him with knee strikes. In spite of fearing his counterattack, the wonder drug of adrenaline propels Betty Jo into some fierce self-defense moves. She grabs her attacker by the hair, smashing him face-first onto her granite countertop. She kicks his legs out from under him, grabs a knife from the

counter and bolts out the door.

The morning paper reads: Betty Jo Goes Ballistic! Serial Rapist in Prison Hospital!

My version is dramatic and idealized. I don't mean to suggest that striking back is always the best or safest option, but it illustrates a crucial lesson: Self-defense moves are most effective when you can be adaptive. To be prepared, you must own your world and learn to transform everyday objects into self-defense weapons.

Self-Defense Weapons Always Depend on Being Ready to Execute Aggressive Self-Defense Moves

Today's technology should work for us, right? Why "get physical" and ruin my makeup doing self-defense moves if I can zap a bad guy with my stun gun and make it to dinner on time?

However, relying too much on your firearm, pepper spray or device-du-jour is dangerous. Violence pops up when women least expect it. Your body and whatever is within arm's reach is all you can count on in such situations.

Once you know how to use your body to generate power for self-defense moves and you possess resolve (the deep muscle that funds all acts of self-protection), a pen in your hand, junk on the street or a hallway fire extinguisher can become effective self-defense weapons when used against vulnerable targets.

However, even with a "weapon" in hand, never expect one strike or a surprise attack using improvised self-defense weapons — such as hot liquid in the face — to enable your escape.

A pumped-up aggressor can take a lot of punishment, so get your mojo in gear and prepare to let loose!

Improvised Self-Defense Weapons Are Everywhere!

Ballpoint Pen: This everyday writing tool can become a deadly weapon for self-defense moves when thrust into the soft tissue of the throat, under the jaw line or — in a life-and-death encounter — the eyes. The point also can be driven into a groin or "punched" into the thin-skinned back of a hand.

Sticklike Implements: Golf clubs, broomsticks and wine bottles, etc., can make great self-defense weapons because they can be thrust into vulnerable areas or used to strike (and bust) knees, hands or the head during intense self-defense moves. When held sideways, sticklike self-defense weapons (including umbrellas!) also can be rammed into a neck or face.

In the Kitchen: Choose from cutlery, pots and pans (a pot cover worn on the hand will add zing to any palm strike!), cutting boards or piping-hot coffee. A metal soup can, jar or ceramic mug can be struck into the temples or face, swung back into a groin or used to bust a collarbone and disable its adjoining arm. Many people wouldn't think of them as self-defense weapons, but hardcover books — such as cookbooks — can be thrust into a throat or smashed into a face.

Sharp Objects: Knives, letter openers, scissors or pieces of glass can serve as self-defense weapons and inflict painful damage. One woman stabbed her rapist with a steel comb from her purse. It worked — she escaped!

Objects With Weight or Mass: A heavy vase or small table can be slammed into the face or torso. Don't merely toss the item, however. Keep it close to your body, then charge into and through your target.

Makeshift Shields: One physician shielded himself from a patient's oncoming knife with his briefcase. Large, thick hardcover books also could fit this bill.

Stuff It: A pillowcase containing a hard-hitting object — a brass candlestick, giant ashtray, your defunct toaster — could leave a lasting impression on Mr. Rapist's face. (And for you campers, a nice rock-in-a-sock is one of several self-defense weapons available in the woods.)

Your Mind Is Among the Best of Self-Defense Weapons

Be smart! Nothing beats preparedness and the ability to improvise. Keep these tips in mind:

Environmental Terrain: If immobilized from behind or lifted off the ground in a confined space (elevator, ladies' room, kitchen), get one or two feet onto the edge of a countertop or any flat surface and shove off as hard as you can. You have padding behind you: your attacker! He will "eat" the crash landing.

Distraction: Buy yourself a moment, then take control! A towel thrown over the eyes could work. So could dirt, sand, household products (and of course, pepper spray) aimed at the attacker's face and eyes. In the 1995 film *Copycat*, Sigourney Weaver fights for her life with a serial killer on a restroom floor. Even with her hands chained together, she slashes him with a piece of glass, then squirts shaving cream in his eyes. This distraction allows her to deliver a killer side kick and flee the restroom.

Practice = Preparation: Wherever you are, imagine you are suddenly ambushed. Give yourself three seconds to get a "weapon" in hand with the emotional and physical readiness to use it. Practice fashioning self-defense weapons wherever you are often until it becomes second nature.

Visualization: Picture yourself in scenarios like "Betty Jo Goes Ballistic." See yourself fighting back, improvising self-defense weapons from your environment and fighting back like a warrior goddess with attitude.

Reconciling Internal Conflict

In spite of my battle-girl persona, I can think of few things more repugnant than smashing or cutting another human being. The use of aggressive force in self-defense moves and the subject of self-defense weapons grates against femininity and feminism's nonviolent ideals. However, talk and empathy are not always saving graces — and estrogen doesn't make us sissies!

To effectively bring any weapon to bear, you must vanquish the "inner muggers" — the voices of doubt — and overcome moral or spiritual conflicts. (Example: "I'm a worker for peace" vs. "I'm about to bust bones.") A divided heart can jeopardize your ability to forcefully, unhesitatingly strike back when seconds count and your survival may be at stake.

Reconciling the forces of dark and light, the maternal and killer instincts, are deeply personal matters. When women give themselves permission to do "what it takes," owning the fact that this violent capacity is part of our female inheritance, they often claim their greatest strengths and can jump these hurdles like a tiger through hoops.

Feminist author Robin Morgan said it best in the 1970s when advocating that women acquire skills in the area of self-defense moves: "These skills are only tools. They have proven murderous or at least exclusive options in the hands of men. They could be liberating in the hands of women."

5 TIPS FOR SURVIVING A RIOT

In 2008, the Republican National Convention came to St. Paul, Minnesota, the capitol of my home state. Being both a current events junkie and a fan of the overtly political band Rage Against the Machine, I decided to see the group perform one town over in Minneapolis. A friend and I bought tickets ahead of time, ready for a fun night of music.

Then the riots hit.



I wasn't oblivious to the likelihood of energetic protestors. Major political events don't feel complete without a little noise in the street. What I hadn't anticipated was the violence. Smashed windows. Overturned cars. Looted storefronts. Fires. These things define the line between "protest" and "riot."

By the time of the concert, things had made a full transition. Throw in that Rage Against the Machine is far from being a Republican apologist, and the proverbial tinderbox had been placed. Now it just needed a match. The safe bet was on this concert.

Things were feeling sparky when we hit the Minneapolis Convention Center that September night. A booth of communists (not a joke, these were the real deal) petitioned attendees for donations. Apparently, someone had been unjustly jailed. They let people know it. The booth had me on edge and making a note of the exits.

The crowd's attention turned to the music after things started. People were beyond excitable. This was an arena full of emotions ready to burst. After the last note, I wondered what they'd do with that energy.

But nothing happened. The band urged people to be calm. Coupled with the scores of riot police garrisoning the streets outside, the end of the show was about as eventful as an Easter ham sale.

The situation certainly could've went the other way. Had it done so, the big mistake I made would've been highlighted in full detail. Repeat after me...

1) The Golden Rule of Riots: Don't Go to Places You Know Are Going to Be Trouble

If I know a stove is hot, should I touch it? Of course not. The same goes with political riots. Partisan events are announced well ahead of time. It's an unwritten rule that there will be problems on the street level. Unless you're planning on winning your party's nomination for president, stay the heck out of Dodge. The traffic alone is worth the vacation.

If you must be in the area of these events, avoid hotspots. Thankfully, there aren't many, since most protestors are peaceful. The few that do pop up are easy to spot. Just listen for the sirens.

I didn't heed this tip. I knew better. It could've cost me. Don't take the same gamble.

Other tips for surviving a riot include...

2) If You're Near a Riot, Blend In

No, that doesn't mean start breaking windows. It means don't draw attention to yourself. Not to the rioters. Not to police. Those two groups are already paying attention to each other. You need them looking the other way while you make a quick exit.

Remember, the vast majority of people have no interest in being violent. They'll want to get to safety just as much as you do. Sticking with those people should help you escape. There's safety in numbers, especially when they're non-violent.

3) If You're Completely Surrounded by a Riot...

If luck and Point 1 don't work out, this oft-cited article on WikiHow has some good tips should the guy next to you lose his cool. They include sticking to the perimeter of the action, getting a wall behind you and watching for crowd control chemicals (pepper spray, tear gas, etc.).

Those are good, general ideas. But my experience with unruly crowds tells me they don't go further than that. Average folks aren't going to look for a wall. They're going to want to get out of there.

Trust your gut. However you make an exit, do it promptly and without injuring anyone.

4) Don't Be a Hero

Leave the hero work to the people who are willing to take a punch on the job. Get yourself out of there.

Trying to intervene during a fight or looting is just asking for trouble. If the rioters, who are already willing to act violently, don't deal with you, the police will. It's hard to weed out who's who during a chaotic breakdown. That's why police use indiscriminate crowd control methods, such as gas. Takes care of everyone.

5) Be Careful with that Car

You know who doesn't like to be ran over by a car? Everyone. Keep that in mind if you're unfortunate enough to be stuck in a vehicle during a riot.

Driving toward a police line might prompt them to use force to make you stop. Rioters, on the other hand, can't seem to tolerate upright cars. What to do?

This is a judgment call. Don't drive in a way that irks anyone, but be stern enough to let people know "I want to get out of here."

In any case, the car isn't worth your life. If you need to abandon it, do it without thinking twice.

Worst Case Scenario

A city-wide riot, a la Los Angeles 1992, would be considered the worst case scenario. Faced with nowhere to run and uninhibited violence, no survival tip can prepare you. How you survive is up to your best judgment.

It's not worth getting worked up about, though. As I wrote in a post about gas masks, determine the most likely disaster to hit your area. Adjust survival plans accordingly. Chances are Mother Nature is a greater threat than a city-leveling riot.

Conclusion

I allowed myself a few sprinkles of humor in this article. It's not to make light of riots. They're serious business. But most people reading this won't ever have to use these tips.

That's because most riots, at least in the United States, are predictable. Pay attention. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. The best way to survive a riot is from miles away in front of a TV. Enjoy the fact you're not there.