

**STUDY OF THE PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ADVANCED LAW  
ENFORCEMENT RAPID RESPONSE TRAINING (ALERRT)  
ACTIVE SHOOTER PROGRAM**

**THESIS**

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## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this project to law enforcement officers who put their lives on the line daily with little to no recognition. May this project help get them the training they need to do their jobs better and safer.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

# **STUDY OF THE PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ADVANCED LAW ENFORCEMENT RAPID RESPONSE TRAINING (ALERRT) ACTIVE SHOOTER PROGRAM**

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Media headlines all too often report scenarios of active shooters and terroristic attacks, many of which criticize law enforcement response. In 1999, two students entered Columbine High School and opened fire on students and faculty for an hour; the SWAT teams did not find them for four and a half hours. Due to this, the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) program was created to teach first responders how to respond to such circumstances; however there is little to no research

concerning the appropriate police response. The present study was conducted to determine the perceived effectiveness of the ALERRT Program Active Shooter course for Texas peace officers. Through the survey responses, the program was found to be extremely effective for active shooter scenarios, as well as every day policing tasks. In addition, consensus concluded that active shooter training should be mandated by the state. Areas for future research are discussed.



## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Active shooter situations have unfortunately become more and more common. An active shooter is defined as an armed person who has used deadly force, and continues to do so with unrestricted access to additional victims (Greenberg, 2007). Police have traditionally been taught to arrive, secure the perimeter, and wait for SWAT, however, this type of response allows for higher death tolls due to the length of time it takes for a SWAT team to arrive. In addition, shooters understand the lack of training and other such issues that complicate police response to such situations, and incorporate it into their plan. Because of this, the best action a department can take is to send in the first responders to try and minimize death and injury, and neutralize the threat (Garrett, 2007). This is why programs such as the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) Program have been created. The ALERRT Program is a training center devoted to teaching first responders, patrol officers, how to immediately respond to an active shooter scenario. The ALERRT program relies on traditional lecture methods as well as hands on training scenarios to reinforce their objectives. The methods used by the ALERRT program teach not only the physical skills required, but the mental motivation as well.

The purpose of this study is to assess perceptions of whether or not the ALERRT Program's Active Shooter Course is effective in training police officers how to respond to an active shooter. The study also looks at whether the course had a perceived effect on their abilities in day-to-day policing, as well as whether or not law enforcement officers believed that active shooter training, such as ALERRT, should be mandatory for all peace officers. Although active shooters seem to be occurring at an increasing rate, there is little literature in regard to police response.

Such information is of extreme importance since active shooter scenarios are not going away. The majority of peace officers in the state of Texas do not receive this type of training. Those who do receive the training fight for grant money or the agencies have larger budgets which allow them to pay for the training. Smaller agencies do not have SWAT or other such tactical teams, and therefore can only rely on their own basic peace officer training. This training is not sufficient for tactical operations such as an active shooter scenario or a terrorist attack.

This thesis attempts to add to a limited area of research concerning police response to active shooters. The following chapter is a literature review which covers active shooters in schools and in regard to terrorism, police response, and the background and evaluation of the ALERRT program. The third chapter gives a description of the research approach, defines the research questions, and describes the methods of data collection and analysis. The fourth chapter details the results and findings of the study. The final chapter discusses the results as well as the recommendations and limitations of the study.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In order to understand why this type of training is so important, it is necessary to understand the history, and therefore, the threat that this type of situation can pose. An active shooter is defined as an armed person who has used deadly force and continues to do so with unrestricted access to additional victims (Greenberg, 2007). The subject's overriding objective appears to be that of mass murder rather than other criminal conduct such as robbery or hostage-taking (Burns & Curnutt, 2007). As the active shooter scenario is a new development in policing, there is little literature covering the appropriate responses, so it is necessary to examine the more general areas pertaining to active shooters. This literature review covers the evolution of active shooters in schools and terrorist incidents. In addition, the ALERRT Program's development and structure are discussed.

#### **Active Shooters in Schools**

##### **Incidents.**

One of the first active shooter incidents took place at the University of Texas. Charles Whitman held the city of Austin hostage for over 90 minutes on August 1, 1966 (The Madman in the Tower, 1966). This incident is important in that at this time, SWAT

teams were not around yet, and it was considered the duty of the patrol officer to handle the situation. Due to this occurrence and others, in the late 1960's, Darryl F. Gates of the Los Angeles Police Department pushed forward this new concept of specialized response teams (History of SWAT). Other agencies responded accordingly and many tactical units were created, shifting the burden of responsibility for active shooter incidents to the tactical units.

### **Columbine.**

On April 20, 1999 Columbine High School changed forever, and drove future policy for emergency responses. Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris entered the school and killed thirteen people, and injured more than one hundred and sixty (A Columbine Site, 2009). Their original plan was to plant propane bombs in the school cafeteria, and shoot any survivors as they fled the building; however, when the bombs did not detonate, they entered the school. They planned their attack during the "A" lunch period because that is when they calculated that the most students would be in one place at a time. To divert police efforts, they detonated timed bombs in a field a few miles off. After attaching more timed bombs to their cars, Klebold and Harris entered the school around 11:19 and began shooting. Dressed in black trench coats, each carried a backpack, a duffel bag, a sawed-off shotgun, a 9mm semi-automatic carbine rifle, a 9mm Tec-DC9 semi-automatic pistol, and numerous pipe bombs.

Their first shots were directed at students outside the building, before they entered into the school. At 11:22, the school's community resource officer is told he is need at the back parking lot. At 11:23 a 911 call is made for a female student down in the

parking lot and dispatch relays it over the Sheriff's radio. At 11:24, the resource officer arrives at the south entrance, has 10 rounds shot at him, and he responded by shooting back. Shots are exchanged once more before Klebold and Harris reentered the school. At 11:25 dispatch announces possible shots fired at Columbine High School. At 11:26 the resource officer calls for back up and two Jefferson County Sheriff's Deputies arrive to rescue injured people outside; however, at the same time, Harris leans out a window and fires his rifle at the officers before disappearing back in the building as the officer shoots back. At 11:27, a road block is set up in the parking lot, and police are alerted that the shooter has a large weapon and grenades. From 11:29 to 11:36 Klebold and Harris are in the library where fifty-six people are hiding. During this time, 10 people are killed and 12 are wounded.

The Jefferson County SWAT team is paged at 11:33. At 11:44, in response to the possibility that a shooter has left the building; a perimeter is set up around the school. At 11:52, the Jefferson County Undersheriff authorizes SWAT to make an immediate entry into the school. Between 12:02 and 12:05, fire is exchanged between the gunmen and police officers, which was the last shots heard attributed to the gunmen. The SWAT team made entry into the school at 12:06 p.m., almost an hour after the shooting began. At 12:23 dispatch relays that all cellular lines are busy, and cannot connect to the command post. Between 3:22 and 3:37 the first SWAT team enters the library, and finds Klebold and Harris. The initial search of Columbine High School was completed at 4:45p.m.

Up until the incident at Columbine High School, it had become common practice for patrol officers to arrive on scene, set up a perimeter, and wait for SWAT to arrive, however Columbine changed this. Due to this policy, the two gunmen at Columbine had

nearly an hour alone in the school before the SWAT teams arrived, and they were not found until four hours later. Twelve students had been killed in the hours before SWAT arrived (A Columbine Site, 2009). With the nation in shock, agencies began to rethink policies to keep tragic situations such as these from occurring; however, this was not, and is not, the end of active shooter incidents. Active shooter incidents happen more often than is realized or that reported in the media. In April 2007, a Virginia Tech student opened fire first in a dormitory and later in a school building. This incident is considered the most lethal incident in American history. Thirty-one people were killed (Hauser & O'Connor, 2007). At Northern Illinois University on February 14, 2008, a gunman opened fire in a lecture hall shooting twenty-two people and killing five (Bohn, 2008). The gunman began shooting at three p.m. and the police arrived just three minutes later. Although time is a huge constraint for police response, this demonstrates the potential for police, especially university police, to arrive and stop the shooter in a relatively short time period, if properly trained.

School shootings may be infrequent, but they are essential to understand. There have been over 40 incidences of school shootings documented, and it was noted that in the majority of these cases, attacks were stopped by means other than law enforcement. Only twenty-seven percent of attackers were confronted by law enforcement, and only eight percent of them discharged their weapons (Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzeleski, 2002).

Table 1. Active Shooter Events

Date	Location	Number Killed	Number Injured
August 1, 1966	Austin, Texas	13	32
December 30, 1974	Olean, New York	3	9
May 28, 1975	Ontario, Canada	2	13
October 27, 1975	Ottawa	8	
May 19, 1978	Austin, Texas	1	0
October 1978	Winnepeg	1	0
January 29, 1979	San Diego, California	2	9
January 7, 1980	Stamps, Arkansas	1	0
January 27, 1984	Fayetteville, Arkansas	0	0
March 19, 1982	Las Vegas, Nevada	1	2
January 20, 1983	St. Louis, Missouri	2	0
February 24, 1984	Los Angeles, California	1	10
January 21, 1985	Goddard, Kansas	1	3
January 9, 1986	Durham, North Carolina	1	0
May 16, 1986	Cokeville, Wyoming	0	79
December 4, 1986	Lewiston, Montana	1	3
March 2, 1987	DeKalb, Missouri	1	0
February 11, 1987	Pinellas Park, Florida	1	1
May 20, 1988	Winnetka, Illinois	1	5
September 9, 1988	Greenwood, South Carolina	2	10
January 17, 1989	Stockton, California	5	30
November 1, 1991	Iowa City, Iowa	5	0
May 1, 1992	Olivehurst, California	3	10
December 14, 1992	Great Barrington, Massachusetts	2	4
January 18, 1993	Grayson, Kentucky	2	0
November 12, 1995	Blackville, South Carolina	2	0
November 15, 1995	Lynnville, Tennessee	2	0
February 2, 1996	Moses Lake, Washington	3	0
August, 15, 1996	San Diego, California	3	0
February, 19, 1997	Bethel, Alaska	3	0
October 1, 1997	Pearl, Mississippi	3	7
December 12, 1997	West Paducah, Kentucky	3	5
May 19, 1998	Fayetteville, Tennessee	1	0
April 20, 1999	Littleton, Colorado	13	24
May 21, 1998	Springfield, Oregon	4	>20
May 20, 1999	Conyers, Georgia	0	6
November, 19, 1999	Deming, New Mexico	1	0
February 29, 2000	Mount Morris Township, Michigan	1	0
March 10, 2000	Savannah, Georgia	2	0
March 26, 2000	Lake Worth, Florida	1	0

Table 1. Active Shooter Events Continued

March 5, 2001	Santee, California	2	13
March 30, 2001	Gary, Indiana	1	0
May 15, 2001	Ennis, Texas	2	0
January 16, 2002	Grundy, Virginia	3	0
October 28, 2002	Tucson, Arizona	3	0
April 14, 2003	New Orleans, Louisiana	2	3
April 24, 2003	Red Lion, Pennsylvania	1	0
September 23, 2003	Cold Spring, Minnesota	2	0
November 22, 2004	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	1	0
March 21, 2005	Red Lake Minnesota	9	0
November 8, 2005	Jacksboro, Tennessee	1	2
August 24, 2006	Essex, Vermont	1	1
August 30, 2006	Hillsborough, North Carolina	1	2
September 2, 2006	Shepherdstown, West Virginia	2	0
September 27, 2006	Bailey, Colorado	1	0
September 29, 2006	Cazenovia, Wisconsin	1	0
October 2, 2006	Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania	5	5
January 1, 2007	Tacoma, Washington	1	0
April 16, 2007	Blacksburg, Virginia	32	0
October 10, 2007	Cleveland, Ohio	1	4
December 21, 2007	Union City, California	1	0
February 8, 2008	Baton Rouge, Louisiana	2	0
February 14, 2008	DeKalb, Illinois	1	0
August 21, 2008	Knoxville, Tennessee	1	0
April 10, 2009	Dearborn, Michigan	2	0

### **Terrorism and Active Shooters**

Another threat to our domestic safety is terrorist attacks. Intelligence suggests that terrorists are planning an active shooter type attack here in the United States. Middle Eastern men were seen following buses and buying bus route maps in vehicles whose license plates came back as stolen or no record. Also, floor plans from schools in Virginia, Texas, and New Jersey have been recovered from terrorists in Iraq (Remsburg).



The first major incident pertaining to this is that of the Beslan, Russia school siege in September of 2004. Fifty assailants took over a school for 53 hours and held 1,200 hostages (Giduck, 2005). Men, women, and children were kept in an unventilated gym with no food or water in temperatures rising up to 115 degrees. When the assault finally began, fleeing children were killed as they ran straight to spigots for water (Giduck, 2005). In Beslan, there were over 300 Russian Special Forces being utilized to respond to the attack. Osama bin Laden has promised that what happen in Beslan will happen in the United States many times over (Remsberg). When looking at the preparedness of the U.S. response to a terrorist attack such as Beslan, there are noted areas for improvement (Talen, 2008). Talen faulted the U.S. for the training responding officers receive, because it does not include scenarios or exercises pertaining to active shooters, namely terrorists. In addition to training, Talen suggests that the after-action reports be direct about the individuals performance, and be fully documented. Since the United States has no police agencies that have 300 tactically trained officers, it is important that at least the numbers of officers available are trained properly.

Most recently, there was a large scale terrorist attack in Mumbai, India. Over one hundred and fifty people were killed over a three day period. The terrorists formed five groups of two, which mainly targeted Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, known as Victoria Terminus, the city's busiest railway station, a tourist spot called the Leopold Café, the Jewish center in Nariman House, and the Taj Mahal and Oberoi hotels (Sengupta, 2009). There were also attacks on Vile Parle, Cama Hospital, Metro Cinema, Wadi Bunder, and Girguam (Mumbai attack: Timeline of how the terror unfolded, 2008). The plan to attack so many different locations left police confused, and impeded their ability to devise an

overall assessment of the situation. The amount of media attention that this attack received may encourage a similar attack. This tragic event also demonstrated the ability of terrorists to do large amount of damage with low tech weapons and basic tactics (Jenkins, 2009).

In addition, radical Islam has become an extreme threat to the United States. Terrorist organizations, such as Hezbollah, are currently embedding themselves within the United States to carry out attacks. The response to an incident, such as the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001, in which terrorists gained control of commercial airplanes and crashed them into the Twin Towers in New York City and the Pentagon, would not pertain to this type of training; it is important to show how seriously these types of threats should be taken. What also makes radical Islam threatening is the realization of their ties with Mexican drug cartels. These groups have recognized their connection and are utilizing the opportunity. Routes used by Mexican cartels for smuggling drugs are now thought to be used for smuggling terrorists into the United States (Report: Hizbullah, Mexican drug cartels working together, 2009). An al-Qaida recruiting video, authenticated by U.S. counterterrorism officials, threatened to smuggle a biological weapon into the United States through tunnels at the US-Mexican border in a mass casualty attack (Carter, 2009).

## **Response to Threat**

### **Proactive.**

The Safe School Initiative report noted that these school shooting scenarios are planned, thought out attacks, which rarely happened impulsively (Vossekuil, Fein,

Reddy, Borum, & Modzeleski, 2002). Although there are other techniques at a first responder's disposal, such as negotiations, active shooter scenarios present a unique scenario because there is no time. These instances require immediate response and reaction on the behalf of the first responders to stop the shooter (Klein, 2006).

Schools have problems identifying which students could pose a threat, as past cases have shown there is no true stereotype. The shooters have not historically been teenagers who associate with a bad crowd, do drugs, or are failing out of school. The U.S. Secret Service "Interim Report on the Prevention of Targeted Violence in the Schools" concluded that "There is no accurate or useful profile of the school shooter (Gaughan, Cerio, & Myers, 2001)." In addition, the targeted schools have not been problem schools. Columbine High School had a ninety-five percent attendance rate, and eighty-two percent of their students went on to college (Twemlow, Fonagy, Sacco, O'Toole, & Vernberg, 2002). In response to such dilemmas, many scholars have recommended schools use resources such as psychologists to better understand students, in order to prevent violent occurrences. Although such actions may sometimes be helpful, only half of students in a national survey stated they would report to an adult if they overheard someone at school talking about shooting someone (Gaughan, Cerio, & Myers, 2001). In addition, thirty-seven percent of respondents believe there are students at their school who would shoot someone, twenty percent have heard rumors that another student plans to shoot someone, and twenty percent have overheard another student actually talking about shooting someone at school (Gaughan, Cerio, & Myers, 2001). With only half of students willing to report a threat, other means will be necessary to resolve active shooter scenarios.

Schools can take steps to help prevent the occurrence of school shootings. In a study conducted by the United States Secret Service and the United States Department of Education in 2008, it was found that a school's climate has an effect on whether students would report threats. Having a connection with a teacher and feeling comfortable confiding in them, as opposed to believing trouble is the only thing that will come of it, affected whether or not students would report information. Schools should work to provide a climate in which students feel comfortable, as well as instruct teachers how to respond to such a situation (Pollack, Modzeleski, & Rooney, 2008).

In response to such incidents, ninety percent of schools in the United States have created Emergency Response Plans (ERP). These plans are intended for any type of school emergency that threatens students' lives as well as a lock down plan. Since active shooter scenarios happen so quickly, lock down scenarios have not been found to be effective, and in fact can cause negative results if victims were left locked in a room with the shooter (Fox & Savage, 2009). Many school plans include limiting access to the school (visitor sign-ins, locked doors), limiting weapons on campus (metal detectors, clear backpack policies), increasing surveillance on campus (security guards/ cameras), and reacting to a violent crisis (drills, alarms). These types of changes have also not been found to be effective (Addington, 2009).

### **Reactive.**

While some agencies still believe that active shooter scenarios are a SWAT mission, most have realized that first responders are required to pursue and engage the active shooter (Scanlon, 2008). Based on incidents such as Columbine and Beslan, there

is a dire need for a new and very specific type of U.S. law enforcement tactical training that comes from a similar specific tactical focus and principle (Crane, 2007). In order to minimize the active shooter's threat and prepare public safety professionals to combat the escalating danger they pose, agencies across the nation need to plan and train (Scanlon, 2008). Studying the Israelis is very beneficial for the new trend in policing since they have been dealing with similar issues for a much longer period of time. Their program constantly reinforced the fact that the brain is the primary weapon, and that all else is secondary (Crane, 2007). Active shooter response requires much more than simple tactics; it requires that officers are constantly thinking and problem solving. These situations are more than just stationary target practices, and include other factors- such as people screaming, blood on the floor, unknown number of suspects, ensuring that a shot taken would not injure an innocent, etc. This calls for an extremely active thought process that, regardless of the tactics, is crucial for success. Training needs to focus on ways to think through problems.

Many officers believe that the best learning is done on the streets, that practical experience is the best teacher. Although in some situations this might be true, it is not the case for active shooter scenarios. Active shooter incidents are comparably rare, and most officers will never have to deal with it; however, every officer should be prepared because no one is immune to such situations (Garrett, 2007). After years on the job with no serious action, officers become complacent. They lose their sense of situational awareness—being aware of the possibilities despite the initial, limited information, and the ability to not only perceive, but proactively counter the threat before it becomes tangible (McCarthy, 2004). To overcome complacency, agencies must become more

proactive in developing cohesive, integrated tactical training at the patrol squad level (McCarthy, 2004).

Based on information from previous active shooter incidents, once the shooting starts, another person is shot every 15 seconds; therefore time is a crucial aspect in active shooter scenarios (Patrol Response Challenge, 2008). Although time is not a factor that police agencies can train for, demanding that officers carry their weapons off duty and equip their vehicles with necessary tools is something they can enforce. Through analyzing past active shooter incidents, there are three main lessons learned. First, officers need active shooter training and proper breaching tools. Not only does officer training need to have a block on breaching, but they need to have the tools necessary and immediately available to them while on the street (Brandley, 2007). Secondly, the successfully stopped active shooter incidents have been the result of having an officer with the active shooter mindset at or near the scene. The final lesson learned is that agencies should require officers to be armed off duty (Patrol Response Challenge, 2008). The bottom line is that times have changed, and law enforcement leaders have made significant progress in recognizing the need train and arm patrol officers for responding to rapid deployment situations (Brandley, 2007).

### ***The ALERRT Program.***

The Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) Program was founded to deal with active shooter scenarios such as those discussed above. When Columbine was discussed in the news and media, the officers involved were chastised about their actions. People could not understand why the officers did not immediately

charge in the school to find and stop the shooters. The reason, however, is that they were not trained or taught to do that, and in fact were taught to do the exact opposite. This identified weaknesses and outdated philosophies in tactical training and response (About ALERRT).

The mission of the ALERRT program was to do more than just verbally explain to officers the best response, but to physically train them how to do it. The program teaches officers important lessons on dealing with the external factors that may influence performance. It goes beyond stationary target practice to include shooting and moving, and doing so at an appropriate pace with a team. The program consists of force-on-force scenarios, active shooter, survival stress reaction, improvised explosive devices, rescue team tactics, and breaching segments. A major part of the ALERRT mission was to not only give police officers, or the first responders, the training, but to give the training at little or no cost. The program is supported by federal and state grants from the Governor's Office, US Department of Justice, and the US Department of Homeland Security, which allows for the classes to be free to the agencies. The course is instructed by veteran field officers who have experience in the realities of this new kind of terrorism that threatens our communities, (About ALERRT).

The course structure begins with classroom-style lectures covering four modules of material from the lesson plans. Along with a PowerPoint presentation, demonstrations are used to reinforce the topics being covered. At the conclusion of the classroom portion, participants demonstrate their abilities through force-on-force scenarios. The participants are evaluated on their performance as well as a written final exam. Both must be passed to be credited with completing the course.

The Active Shooter Training, a sixteen hour course, is broken down into four classroom modules. The first module, entitled Active Shooter- Past, Present, and Future, provides a historical background in regard to the training, specifically dealing with a barricade or hostage type of active shooter scenario. The module teaches that a first responder must be able to differentiate between the two and be able to apply the appropriate responses. In the case of a barricade or hostage situation, participants are taught the 5 Cs: contain, control, communicate, call SWAT and negotiators, and create an immediate action plan. In the case that a contact team must enter the scene, there are six concepts and principles to note: stay together as much as possible, 360 degree coverage around the team, communicate, work the angles, threshold evaluation, and move only as fast as you can accurately shoot and think. The teams must bypass the wounded, direct victims to safety, and direct the rescue team. It is also important to gather as much intelligence about the situation as possible, such as how many aggressors there are, when and where things happened, what actions or threats have been made, and what type of weaponry is being used.

Officer safety is covered as well as the case law that pertains to police use of force. It is important in this situation to be able to discriminate various targets to make certain that victims are not being targeted; this is called the quick scan technique. This technique outlines specific areas to look, such as the overall person, hands, waistband, the immediate area, and the individual's demeanor. Once more officers have arrived on scene, rescue teams should form to aid victims. Off duty response is a critical aspect to the ALERRT training as the program reinforces that being a peace officer is not a job, but a lifestyle, and one should be ready at all times by carrying their weapon even when off



duty. The last section of the first module discusses the threat of terrorism in the United States and how to respond effectively to such scenarios. The terrorism section begins with a movie and discussion of radical Islam and their roots in the United States, and urges peace officers to always be looking for signs of their presence. The event in Beslan, Russia is discussed and how such incidences pertain to the United States.

The next module is Concepts and Principles of Team Movement, which begins with a block on firearms safety. This covers the basics of safety rules, firearms manipulation, body position and stance, and issues encountered when dealing with a high stress situation. There are four techniques taught in concern to room entry: threshold evaluation and slicing the pie (searching a room before entering), team movement (speed of the team, formations- two, three, four, and five man teams, and T and Y formations), setting up for reentry (communication, positioning, and coming out), and room entry (principles, element of surprise, speed, and violence of action).

The third module is Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) and Rescue Team Tactics, which serves the purpose of helping peace officers recognize IEDs and respond appropriately. There are three rules taught: never touch the device, create distance between you and the device, and communicate to teammates and incident command. Participants are encouraged to create a rapid response bag, or a “go bag.” This bag’s purpose is to be readily available and multifaceted. The bag suggests items such as extra ammunition, spare flashlight, batteries, mirrors, duct tape, survey tape/fluorescent spray paint, rope, “T” bolts, first aid equipment, pressure bandages, blood stopper, cutting instruments, silly-string, door stops, miscellaneous tools, flash sound diversionary device, chemical lights, portable lighter, and exigent breaching tools. The next part of the block

discusses rescue team responsibilities and tactics, how to rescue and move the injured, what the team is composed of, linking up, and noting the circumstances.

The final module is Approaches to the Target and Actions at the Breach Point. This section discusses how to cover threat areas, such as the wedge formation or bounding over watch, as well as actions taken once the breaching point is reached. There are a variety of breaching tools which the program endorses for use, such as pry bars, battering rams, sledge hammers and hooligan tools. The last block covers shotgun breaching as well as the differences between breaching doors made of metal, wood, or a combination of wood doors and metal frames.

The next part of the course is the force on force training. This is where participants integrate the information learned in the classroom with a physical response. In this controlled environment, multiple scenarios are enacted to apply the concepts learned. The participants are evaluated on their ability to correctly handle the scenarios, as well as their ability to work with the other team members.

The course ends with the module, Training the Warrior. Here they discuss what a warrior is and the attributes associated with them, to include being selfless, moral, courageous, mission oriented, merciful, faithful, loyal, and humble- as well as ethical matters. This section is very important to help potential first responders understand the importance of their role, and the ability they have to help others.

The program has reached more than 17,000 front line law enforcement officers from nearly 600 agencies in 46 geographical regions of the United States (About ALERRT). The ALERRT Program also offers other courses which include Active

Shooter Train the Trainer, Advanced Instructor Class, and Rural Operations. ALERRT is based at the Texas State University-San Marcos campus, and partners with the San Marcos Police Department, Hays County Sheriff's Office, the City of San Marcos, Texas School Safety Center, Texas Engineering Extension Service, and Texas Tactical Police Officers Association.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

There is little research concerning active shooter training and response methods. Although there are a few courses and theories of appropriate responses to such scenarios, there is little to no information as to what works for the actual first responders to the scene. Since these scenarios will continue to happen, it is important to understand what works to prepare officers to successfully handle the situation. The current study focused on an evaluation of the ALERRT Active Shooter Course. The end goal of this project was to determine if the course, after the participants have had time to utilize the skills learned, was perceived as effective for police officers. Although most patrol officers may never encounter an active shooter scenario, the skills might also help them in their approach of everyday police work; therefore, the evaluation was used to determine if the content and training methods taught by the ALERRT Program were perceived effective in addressing the issue of active shooters, as well as everyday issues. In addition, the study inquired about mandating active shooter training for peace officers in the state of Texas, and more specifically, the ALERRT Course.

## **Sample**

The ALERRT program maintains a database of contact information of participants. For the current study, the participants were limited to Texas peace officers who participated in the active shooter course. The study was confined to Texas in an attempt to change Texas peace officer legislation on training standards; therefore, the results of this study may only be generalized to Texas.

The survey was sent out eleven times over a period of four months. The first survey was sent to a total of 6,614 people. Due to incorrect email addresses and participants opting out of the survey, the final number of participants included in the sample was 5,257. Of these, 1,786 completed the survey (1,684 completed all questions) allowing for a response rate of 34%. The database has emails dating back to 2004, so it is the likely explanation for the old emails producing a lower response rate.

## **Survey**

An email survey was sent to every peace officer who participated in the ALERRT Active Shooter Course in Texas, as it is the cheapest, easiest, and quickest method available. The survey contained twenty questions pertaining to if and how often officers are using the skills learned from the course. The first section day-to-day policing asked eight questions relevant to use of ALERRT skills in situations other than active shooters. There is also a short answer question to explain any critical encounters the officers have been involved with in which the ALERRT skills were utilized. In addition to this, questions were asked to determine if they had made any lifestyle changes as a result of the class, such as carrying their weapon off duty or adding equipment to their vehicle.

This section also contains questions about improved mindset, and if the course better prepares them for day-to-day police work. The final question in this section inquired about the individual's interest in taking additional courses through the ALERRT program.

The next section, confidence, asked three questions to determine how much their confidence, and therefore ability, had increased as a result of the course. The first question asked specifically how much their confidence level had changed in the following areas: tactical ability, ability to respond to an active shooter, deadly force encounters, safely handling your weapon, and handling high-risk situations. Next, questions are asked about their confidence in their general abilities as a peace officer, as well as if they are better able to identify personal areas for improvement.

The final eight questions of the survey, the section entitled mandatory training, consist of participants' opinions on how the legislation should be changed to better train officers. The first question simply asked if they believe the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education (TCLEOSE) should mandate standardized active shooter training for the basic peace officer curriculum. And, if they answered yes to that question, if they felt ALERRT specifically should be adopted by TCLEOSE. It is also asked if active shooter and force on force training should be added as a requirement for all peace officers, as well as if there should be a refresher course covering those skills. The next question aims to get a better understanding as to whether or not the current training prepares officers in the following areas: mindset, dynamic room entry, active shooter response, tactical firearms, approaching and breaching, threat of terrorism, IED awareness, off duty response, force on force training, deliberate searching concepts, low

light, and communication. The participant is then asked if their own personal preparation and training was sufficient to prepare them for the day-to-day demands of the job. In a strongly agree to strongly disagree response type question, it is inquired if they feel ALERRT teaches skills that are essential for law enforcement officers. Finally, the last question allows for any recommendations or comments regarding the ALERRT class. A complete copy of the survey can be found in the Appendix.

### **Limitations**

The email format of the survey provided for some limitations, including a low response rate. Since many of the email addresses date back to 2004, many of them may no longer be active accounts. The program used, Survey Monkey, did not catch all of the bad emails, as each time the survey was sent out, more addresses came back as undeliverable. Another limitation was that the email addresses were originally handwritten, and then transferred to an online database. This allows for mistakes as the interpretation of what was written could have been wrong.

In addition, the present study was limited to perceived effectiveness as opposed to analyzing actual behavior. Reliance on the value of the participants' answers limits the ability to understand actual behavioral differences when responding to an active shooter.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FINDINGS**

In order to obtain the data needed, a survey was created to collect data from the peace officers who participated in the course. There are three sections in the survey, day-to-day policing, confidence, and mandatory training.

#### **Methods of Analysis**

Descriptive statistics were calculated for each of the questions on the survey based on the number responded per question, and the results for each question are presented below.

#### **Day-to-Day Policing.**

The first question concerning the use of the skills learn in the ALERRT course in day-to-day policing, 93.6% responded yes with only 6.4% responding no. There were 1,761 respondents who answered the question, 1,101 added a comment, and 26 people skipped the question. The second question is about how often the skills taught in the ALERRT class are used, in which 1,744 participants responded, 43 participants skipped the question, and 1,052 added an additional comment. Of those who responded, 58.5% answered daily, 22% answered weekly, 11.7% answered monthly, 3.4% responded



yearly, and 4.4% answered never. The third question was an opened ended question which asked for a description of any critical encounter in which the ALERRT skills were utilized; 769 participants responded, and 1,018 skipped the question.

Question four explores whether any equipment was changed or added to the participants car as a result of the ALERRT Course, in which 58% responded yes and 42% responded no. There were 1,729 responses and 58 participants skipped the question. The fifth question in this section inquires about peace officers frequency in carrying a concealed weapon when off duty. Of the five answer choices, 32.1% responded significantly more often, 24% responded more often, 43.4% responded no change, and .2% responded less often and significantly less often. There were a total of 1,731 responses with 56 participants who skipped the question. The next question covers whether participants have a better tactical/ policing mindset as a result of the ALERRT class, in which 1,727 people answered and 60 people skipped the question. In response, 97.2% answered yes and 2.8% answered no. The seventh question in this section asks if their participation in the ALERRT training better prepared them for day-to-day police work, in which 97.1% responded yes and 2.9% responded no. There were 61 participants who skipped the question, and 1,727 who answered the question. The final question in this section asks if participants would be interested in taking more courses offered through the ALERRT Program. In response, 97.6% answered yes, and 2.4% answered no. There were 58 respondents who skipped the question, and 1,729 answered the question.

Table 2 presents the data from the Day-to-Day Policing section of the survey, and three out of the four questions received positive responses with over 90% in agreement of

the positive effect of the ALERRT course. The question concerning adding or changing equipment in their vehicle, only 58% respondents answered yes. However, based on comments noted after the question, many officers are not allowed to add things to their car due to agency policy, or do not have the personal monetary funds due to lack of agency support. This was publicly demonstrated when the mayor of Boston declined the proposal for the Boston Police Department to add rifles to police patrol (Levenson & Slack, 2009). In analyzing responses from the third question in this section, almost three hundred participants responded that they were involved in a critical incident after going through the ALERRT training.

Table 2. Day-to-Day Policing Yes/No Questions

	Yes	No
Have you used the skills learned in the ALERRT class in your day-to-day policing? Response Count: 1,60    Comments: 1,101	1647 (93.6%)	113 (6.4%)
Have you changed or added equipment to your vehicle while on duty as a result of the ALERRT class? Response Count: 1,728    Comments: 1,029	1002 (58%)	726 (42%)
Do you feel that you have a better tactical/policing mindset as a result of the ALERRT class? Response Count: 1,726    Comments: 797	1677 (92.7%)	49 (2.8%)
Has your participation in the ALERRT training better prepared you for day-to-day police work? Response Count: 1,725    Comments: 885	1675 (97.1%)	50 (2.9%)

The data from Table 3 continues to look at day-to-day policing but uses five point questions. The first question displays frequency of use in the skills learned; in which the majority responded daily use. As noted in comments posted after the question, many participants responded that there was no change in how often they carried their weapon off duty because they already do it, not because they do not agree with it.

Table 3. Day-to-Day Policing Five Point Questions

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Yearly	Never
How often do you use the skills taught in the ALERRT class?	1019 (58.5%)	384 (22%)	204 (11.7%)	59 (3.4%)	77 (4.4%)
Response Count: 1,743 Comments: 1,051					
	Significantly More Often	More Often	No Change	Less Often	Significantly Less Often
After completion of the ALERRT class, do you carry your weapon of duty	555 (32.1%)	416 (24%)	752 (43.5%)	4 (.2%)	3 (.2%)
Response Count: 1,730 Comments: 915					

### Confidence.

The first question in this section asks participants to indicate how much their confidence level has changed as a result of the ALERRT training in the following areas: tactical ability, ability to respond to an active shooter, deadly force encounters, safely handling a firearm, and handling high-risk situations. In response to tactical ability, 34.1% responded significantly increased, 61.5% responded increased, 4.4% responded no change, and no one responded decreased or decreased significantly. In terms of their ability to respond to an active shooter, 55.9% responded significantly increased, 41% responded increased, 3.1% responded no change, and no one responded decreased or decreased significantly. For deadly force encounters, 37.1% responded significantly increased, 52.8% responded increased, 10% responded no change, no one responded decreased, and .06% (1 person) responded decreased significantly. In response to their ability to safely handle a weapon, 31% answered increased significantly, 41.6% answered increased, 27.3% answered no change, .06% (1 person) answered decreased, and no one

answered decreased significantly. The last area, ability to handle high-risk situations, 37.7% responded significantly increase, 54.9% responded increased, 7.4% responded no change, and no one responded with either decreased or significantly decreased.

The second question in this section asks if the participants felt more confident in their abilities as a police officer as a result of the ALERRT training, in which 96.3% responded yes, and 3.7% responded no. There were 1,695 participants who answered, and 92 who skipped the question. In the final question for this section, 94% of participants responded that as a result of the ALERRT class, they have been able to better identify personal areas for improvement, with 5.4% disagreed. There were 1,695 participants who answered, and 92 who skipped the question.

The information in Table 4 presents the five point questions from the confidence section of the survey. An overwhelming majority of the participants experienced at least increased confidence as a result of the ALERRT course, with the exception of safely handling your weapon. In this category, although the majority of participants responded with at least an increased confidence, twenty-seven percent responded with no change. Similar results can be seen in Table 5, as both confidence questions received at least 95% in agreement with increased confidence and areas of improvement as a result of the ALERRT training.

Table 4. Confidence Five Point Questions

	Increased Significantly	Increased	No Change	Decreased	Decreased Significantly
Tactical Ability	577	1041	75	0	0
Ability to Respond to an Active Shooter	945	694	52	0	0
Deadly Force Encounters	626	893	169	0	1
Safely Handle Your Weapon	522	702	460	1	0
Handling High-Risk Situations	636	925	125	0	0
Response Count: 1,701    Comments: 418					

Table 5. Confidence Yes/No Questions

	Yes	No
Do you feel more confident in your abilities as a police officer as a result of the ALERRT training?	1632 (96.3%)	62 (3.7%)
Response Count: 1,694    Comments: 443		
As a result of the ALERRT class, have you been able to better identify personal areas for improvement?	1603 (94.6%)	91 (5.4%)
Response Count: 1,694    Comments: 517		

### **Mandatory Training.**

The first question in this section asks participants if they believe the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education (TCLEOSE) should mandate a standardized active shooter training for the basic peace officer curriculum. In response, 93.4% said yes, and 6.6% said no. There were 1,655 participants who answered, and 132 who skipped the question. The next question followed up on question one, asking if the participant answered yes in regards to mandating active shooter training, did they believe that the ALERRT training specifically should be adopted by

TCLEOSE for training peace officers. In response, 89% answered yes, 4.3% answered no, and 6.6% answered not applicable. There were 1,633 responses, and 154 participants skipped the question.

The third question asks whether active shooter training should be added as a requirement for all current peace officers, and 93.2% responded yes, leaving 6.8% responding no. There were 1,652 responses and 135 participants skipped the question. The next question inquired if there should be a refresher course covering the skills learned from the ALERRT class, in which 97.5% responded yes, and 2.5% responded no. There were 1,666 responses and 121 participants skipped the question. The fourth question asked is if force on force training should be mandatory for peace officers, and 95.9% responded yes and 4.1% responded no. There were 1,643 responses and 144 participants skipped the question.

The next question asks officers if they feel that their own agency's tactical training currently prepares officer to meet the demands of their job in the following areas: mindset, dynamic room entry, active shooter response, tactical firearms, approaching and breaching, threat of terrorism, IED awareness, off duty response, force on force training, deliberate searching concepts, low light, and communication. In response to mindset, 49.8% (majority) responded yes (they feel their agency prepared them), 17.7% responded uncertain, and 32.6% responded no. In response to dynamic room entry, 41.4% responded yes, 16.1% responded uncertain, and 42.5% (majority) responded no (their agency did not prepare them). In terms of active shooter response, 48.2% (majority) responded yes, 15.6% responded uncertain, and 36.2% responded no. In terms of tactical firearms, 49.4% (majority) responded yes, 17.4% responded uncertain, and 33.2%

responded no. In terms of approaching and breaching, 33.5% responded yes, 19.7% responded uncertain, and 46.8% (majority) responded no. In terms of threat of terrorism, 32.3% responded yes, 23.3% responded uncertain, and 44.4% (majority) responded no. In terms of IED awareness, 25% responded yes, 21.7% responded uncertain, and 53.3% (majority) responded no. In terms of off duty response, 25% responded yes, 21.4% responded uncertain, and 53.6% (majority) responded no. In terms of force on force training, 41.2% (majority) responded yes, 19.2% responded uncertain, and 39.5% responded no. In terms of deliberate searching concepts, 40.3% (majority) responded yes, 20.2% responded uncertain, and 39.5% responded no. In terms of low light, 38.8% responded yes, 17.6% responded uncertain, and 43.6% (majority) responded no. And finally, in terms of communication, 48% (majority) responded yes, 18.8% responded uncertain, and 33.1% responded no. There were 1,646 responses, and 141 participants skipped the question.

The sixth question in this section is whether the participant felt that before they took the ALERRT class, if their own personal preparation and training was sufficient to prepare them for the day-to-day demands of the job; 63% responded yes and 37% responded no. There were 1,666 responses and 121 participants skipped the question. Next a statement is supplied and the participant is asked to rank their response from strongly agree to strongly disagree: ALERRT teaches skills that are essential for law enforcement officers. In response, 79.2% answered strongly agree, 19.9% answered agree, 1% answered neither agree nor disagree, and no one answered disagree or strongly disagree. There were 1,667 responses and 120 participants skipped the question. The

last question of this section is an opportunity for any recommendations or comments regarding the ALERRT class.

The information presented in Table 6 demonstrates a continued trend of high response rates in favor of proposed mandatory training. The last question in this table, however, did receive lower response rates with sixty-three percent answering that their personal training previous to the ALERRT class was sufficient. Table 7 demonstrates that the majority of participants do not believe that their agencies currently prepare them for dynamic room entry, approaching and breaching, threat of terrorism, IED awareness, off duty response, and low light. Of all of the prompts in this question, there was little difference between yes and no, in terms of percentages, and surprisingly high percentages of uncertain responses.



Table 6. Mandatory Training Yes/No Questions

	Yes	No
Should TCLEOSE mandate a standardized active shooter training for the basic peace officer curriculum? Response Count: 1,654 Comments: 667	1544 (93.3%)	110 (6.7%)
If you answered yes to the previous question, do you believe that the ALERRT training specifically should be adopted by TCLEOSE for training peace officers? Response Count: 1,632 Comments: 484	1453 (89%)	71 (4.4%)
Should active shooter training be added as a requirement for all current peace officers? Response Count: 1,651 Comments: 473	1539 (93.2%)	112 (6.8%)
Should there be a refresher course covering the skills learned from the ALERRT class? Response Count: 1,665 Comments: 845	1624 (97.5%)	41 (2.5%)
Should force on force training be mandatory for peace officers? Response Count: 1,642 Comments: 526	1574 (95.9%)	68 (4.1%)
Looking back to before you took the ALERRT class, do you feel that your personal preparation and training was sufficient to prepare you for the day-to-day demands of the job? Response Count: 1,665 Comments: 481	1049 (63%)	616 (37%)

Table 7. Questions about whether or not the training provided by the respondent's department was adequate.

	Yes	Uncertain	No
Mindset	813	289	531
Dynamic Room Entry	680	264	696
Active Shooter Response	790	256	592
Tactical Firearms	809	285	543
Approaching and Breaching	548	323	766
Threat of Terrorism	528	381	726
IED Awareness	411	356	876
Off Duty Response	408	349	873
Force on Force Training	673	314	644
Deliberate Searching Concepts	658	329	644
Low Light	635	288	713
Communication	782	306	540
Response Count: 1,645    Comments: 485			

Table 8. Mandatory Training Response Statement

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
ALERRT teaches skills that are essential for law enforcement officers.	1319 (79.2%)	331 (19.9%)	16 (1%)	0	0
Response Count: 1,666    Comments: 258					

## Results

The first hypothesis states that the ALERRT Active Shooter Course will greatly increase a peace officer's perceived ability to respond to an active shooter. Not only did an overwhelming majority of participants respond in a manner which promoted the ALERRT training program, but 99% of participants either agreed or strongly agreed that ALERRT teaches skills that are essential for law enforcement officers. Law enforcement agency leadership also understands the importance of this class, as agencies compete for

the limited number of classes. When limited to perceived abilities, levels of confidence are a major influence. The survey clearly demonstrates that confidence increased as a result of the ALERRT training, for instance, one participant stated that "...the mindset of preparedness and confidence in my skills as I perform my duties is invaluable."

The second hypothesis states that the ALERRT Active Shooter Course will improve a peace officer's perceived day-to-day policing abilities. This comes from the first section of the survey, titled Day-to-Day Policing. Of the eight questions on this page, all received positive results. Not only did 94% of respondents say that the skills learned in the ALERRT course transferred to their day-to-day policing, but 81% of participants use those skills daily. In addition, 97% responded that the ALERRT training better prepared them for day-to-day policing. Part of improving day-to-day results involves an improved mindset about the profession as a whole. Not only did the course improve an officer's perceived ability to respond to an active shooter, and their day-to-day policing abilities, but also their behavioral patterns. Of those participants who responded to the question, 58% added or changed equipment to their vehicle, and 56% carry their weapon off duty at least more often, if not significantly more often. In analyzing the comments, many participants did not add or change equipment because of agency policy, and many officers replied no change in weapon carry because it was already a habit.

The final hypothesis states that the ALERRT Active Shooter Course should be mandated for all peace officers in the state of Texas. An overwhelming majority (93%) of respondents agreed that TCLEOSE should mandate a standardized active shooter training in the basic peace officer curriculum, and of those, 89% agreed that the training

adopted should specifically be the ALERRT training. Having standardized training ensures that all Texas peace officers would be able to respond in unison even if they are from different agencies. For instance, participants wrote:

“In 2008, I responded to a local college for a report of a shooting in progress. Several local law enforcement agencies responded and upon my arrival, Officers who I have never worked with before, but have taken the ALERRT Active Shooter course, were able to search the building for other suspects with the same good tactics and safety in mind.”

“Executed a downed officer extraction (during an active shooting event) with officers that had ALERRT training but didn't work together daily-common training resulted in a common mindset which allowed us to complete the extraction.”

It is common for certain types of training to be added in which all officers must complete within a given amount of time, such as CIT or cultural diversity. A vast majority (93%) of participants agreed that active shooter training should be added as a required course for all peace officers to complete (such as CIT), and 96% believed that force on force training should be mandatory for all peace officers.

When peace officers were asked how they felt their own agency prepared them to meet the demands of the job, there was an alarmingly large percentage of respondents who did not know or did not believe they were properly prepared. It is frightening to think those employed to protect and enforce laws do not feel they are prepared properly, and nothing has been done about it. In addition, because the training is not mandated, many participants use their own vacation time in order to attend the training.

“Every police officer I have talked to wanted it [The ALERRT Training]. Some departments will NOT allow personnel to take advantage of the free training by allowing time off. Alert training does not always fit officer time off schedule. Mandatory/Policy would correct this.”

Dying in the line of duty is not “part of the job description.” Since the job puts peace officers in these situations, the agencies should provide sufficient training so they can handle the various types of potential scenarios, and stay safe.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **Interpretation of Findings**

As seemingly regular occurrences of active shooters seem to be happening, law enforcement must be prepared. The purpose of the current study was to determine the perceived effectiveness of the ALERRT Active Shooter Course in preparing peace officers for an active shooter scenario. Based on the responses collected from the survey, the course enhanced perceptions of preparedness in first responders for an active shooter scenario, was useful in day-to-day policing, and should be mandated for all Texas peace officers.

There have been numerous encounters of active shooters in schools throughout history, from Charles Whitman at the University of Texas on August 1966 to Seung- Hui Cho at Virginia Tech University in April 2007. In the beginning there were no tactical teams, and basic patrol officers were responsible for responding to any and all situations, including active shooters. In reaction to ineffective responses, tactical teams were created. Now, as the time constraint calls for quicker responses, the first peace officers arriving on the scene need to be able to stop the shooter. In addition, law enforcement officers must also be able to respond to terrorist attacks. Terrorists are becoming more

and more aggressive in their preparation and tactics, and have made promises of attacks on U.S. soil (Burns & Curnutt, 2007). Currently patrol officers are not taught how to respond to an active shooter, which is why programs such as the ALERRT Program are so critical.

The ALERRT Program uses a combination of classroom instruction as well as hands-on training. The instructors are extremely knowledgeable on the subject matter and the program outline is easy to understand. The program has trained more than 17,000 law enforcement officers from all over the United States and constantly has more applicants who want the training.

Studies have found that when an individual's performance matters, emotions affect them and can cause poor results (Compte & Postlewaite, 2004). A peace officer's job demands excellent results at all times, as lives are at stake. Measures should be taken that would not only increase confidence, but increase ability as well. As one participant stated:

"It is said that if a Fighter Pilot is to be a success he must survive his first three Dog Fights, experience being the best teacher. The same holds true with Gun Fights, only ALERRT training gets officers through those first encounters and gives them much needed experience and hopefully a very healthy dose of reality."

The survey was composed of twenty questions dealing with three main subjects: day-to-day policing, confidence, and mandatory training. Each section contained questions to get a better understanding of whether the skills learned applied to daily policing activities, if their confidence increased, and if they believe all Texas peace officers should be mandated to attend active shooter/force on force training. Overall, the

results were in favor of the ALERRT Program. Responses reflected a theme of perceived improvement and appreciation of the ALERRT Active Shooter Course.

In the event of a terrorist attack or an active shooter, all law enforcement officers in the area will respond as quickly as possible regardless of jurisdictions. This is especially noted in the event of a large scale terrorist attack in which single police departments do not have the numbers. In such an event, it is crucial that officers from different agencies be able to work together. Mandating the ALERRT active shooter training for all Texas peace officers would ensure a unified and efficient response.

“From my experience, officers without the training enter into potentially dangerous situations (e.g. building searches) without any tactical mindset. This class gives officers tactical training, confidence, encourages teamwork and creates a synergy that allows officers to work together from a common reference point of how to deal with scenes.”

As stated in a joint publication concerning terroristic threat:

Terrorists choose their targets deliberately based on the weaknesses they observe in our defenses and in our preparations. They can balance the difficulty in successfully executing a particular attack against the magnitude of loss it might cause. They can monitor our media and listen to our policymakers as our Nation discusses how to protect itself - and adjust their plans accordingly. Where we insulate ourselves from one form of attack, they can shift and focus on another exposed vulnerability. We must defend ourselves against a wide range of means and methods of attack (Sharp, 2006).

#### **Directions for Future Research**

The present study demonstrated that peace officers who participated in the ALERRT Active Shooter Course overwhelmingly perceived an increased ability to respond to active shooters. More research should be conducted to determine actual physical performance before and after the training course.



The current study's results are specific to the ALERRT Program as well as to Texas. Studies should be done to look at the impact of ALERRT on other states, as well as other programs that offer similar training. It would help to determine whether the results of the current study were due to lack of department training, purely the effects of the ALERRT course, or a combination of both.

In addition, research should be directed towards school resource officer and university police training, and their ability to respond to an active shooter. Studies have shown that one of the main factors affecting the response to an active shooter is time. Since school resource officers are stationed on campus, they would be the most effective law enforcement officer available.

“You don't understand how much my confidence changed. My biggest fear is that I won't be able to handle a situation right. Don't get me wrong...responding to a call is not an option, I would do it, but without the proper training then it seems to be a free for all. We're in a University setting so our environment is at the other end of the spectrum where "nothing" really happens and we don't get to experience a whole lot. Other departments stand at the other end of the spectrum where the "daily grind" or routine calls make them a little relaxed. Anyway, I was told once by an administrator that as long as I run situations through my mind/head, I would be able to handle the situation. How wrong is that...the closest thing to an actual active shooter is through your training...”

However, school resource officers are not given the proper training and are in a setting which encourages complacency.

## **APPENDIX**

### **SURVEY**

#### **DAY-TO-DAY POLICING**

1. Have you used the skills learned in the ALERRT Class in your day-to-day policing? (For example: awareness of surroundings, training, etc.)

☐ Yes

☐ No

If so, were they successful? If no, why not?

2. How often do you use the skills taught in the ALERRT class?

☐ Daily

☐ Weekly

☐ Monthly

☐ Yearly

☐ Never

If so, where areas are utilized?

3. Please describe any critical encounter in which you have utilized the skills learned from the ALERRT class and explain.

4. Have you changed or added equipment to your vehicle while on duty as a result of the ALERRT class?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please describe the changes made. If no, why not?

5. After the completion of the ALERRT class, do you carry your weapon off duty

- ☐ Significantly more often
- ☐ More often
- ☐ No change
- ☐ Less often
- ☐ Significantly less often

Please explain.

6. Do you feel you have a better tactical/ policing mindset as a result of the ALERRT class?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Please explain.

7. Has your participation in the ALERRT training better prepared you for day-to-day police work?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Please explain.

8. Would you want to take more courses offered through the ALERRT program?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, what type of class?

## CONFIDENCE

1. Please indicate how much your confidence level has changed as a result of the ALERRT training:

Answer Options	Increased Significantly	Increased	No Change	Decreased	Decreased Significantly
Tactical Ability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ability to Respond to an Active Shooter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deadly Force Encounters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Safely Handle Your Weapon	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Handling High-Risk Situations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please explain.

2. Do you feel more confident in your abilities as a police officer as a result of the ALERRT training?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Please explain.

3. As a result of the ALERRT class, have you been able to better identify personal areas for improvement?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Please explain.

**MANDATORY TRAINING**

1. Should TCLEOSE mandate a standardized active shooter training for the basic peace officer curriculum?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Please explain.

2. If you answered yes to the previous question, do you believe that the ALERRT training specifically should be adopted by TCLEOSE for training peace officers?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not Applicable

Please explain.

3. Should active shooter training be added as a requirement for all current peace officers? (For example: CIT or cultural diversity)

☐ Yes

☐ No

Please explain.

4. Should there be a refresher course covering the skills learned from the ALERRT class?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, how often?

5. Should force on force training be mandatory for peace officers?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Please explain.

6. Do you feel your agency's own tactical training currently prepares officers to meet the demands of their jobs specifically in the following areas?

Answer Options	Yes	Uncertain	No
Mindset	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dynamic Room Entry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Active Shooter Response	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tactical Firearms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Approaching and Breaching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Threat of Terrorism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
IED Awareness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Off Duty Response	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Force on Force Training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deliberate Searching Concepts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Low Light	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communication	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please explain.

7. Looking back to before you took the ALERRT class, do you feel that our personal preparation and training was sufficient to prepare you for the day-to-day demands of the job?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Please explain.

8. ALERRT teaches skills that are essential for law enforcement officers.

☐ Strongly Agree

☐ Agree

☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Strongly Disagree

Please explain.

9. Please note any recommendations or comments regarding the ALERRT class.

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## **VITA**

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