



Law enforcement firearms
with Richard Fairburn

| [Print this Article](#) | [E-mail this Article to a Friend](#) | **New:** [Discuss this Article](#) |

Instant response: Carry off-duty!

By Dick Fairburn, Illinois State Police

Several years ago a comprehensive study of active shooter incidents found that most were over too quickly for a Rapid Deployment Contact team to assemble and make entry into the kill zone. In almost every incident where an active killer was stopped before they fully ran their plan, someone on-scene took immediate action. Generally, these "Instant Responders" were security guards or ordinary citizens. Even when police officers did stop the shooter, they were either on-scene when the shooting started or the first to arrive at the call.

The church shootings in Colorado this past Sunday followed the same pattern. At the first attack, the shooter was gone before police could arrive. At the second shooting, about 12 hours later, the killer was himself killed by a courageous volunteer security worker carrying a weapon on a concealed weapons permit, thus stopping him before he could do more damage. Similarly, an off-duty officer minimized the killing last spring at a Utah mall. Just a few days before the Colorado incidents, another mall shooting in Nebraska was over before police could get on-scene.

Rapid Deployment training is great training. It should be mandatory for all officers and should be refreshed at least annually. But, Rapid Deployment must be considered a follow-on technique to supplement the Instant Response of on-scene personnel or first arriving officers. Any other technique will delay contact with the killer and allow them more time to snuff out innocent lives. Even at the World Trade Center, a large percentage of those rescued and evacuated before the collapse were directed by civilians who stepped up and filled a vacuum of leadership. The 9/11 report dubbed these heroes "First - First Responders."

So, as we approach this hectic holiday season, I recommend one iron clad rule all sworn officers should obey. Carry a weapon off-duty. For those of you who feel your only off-duty obligation is to be a trained observer: I disagree. And, more importantly, the reality of this spiraling increase of mass murderers also proves otherwise. Remember examples such as the security guard in Colorado and the construction workers at the World Trade Center, who were last seen headed up the stairs to direct the evacuation of one more floor. Step up and remember your oath to protect and serve.

A look at the list of active shooter incidents show that a significant number occurred in religious facilities - of all faiths. Even dedicated officers may feel strange wearing a concealed sidearm at church - until the unthinkable happens at their church and they have the means to save many lives. Carry off-duty wherever you may legally do so.

I live in one of the only two states that have no provision for concealed carry by permitted civilians. A researcher who tracks concealed carry statistics claims several potential mass murders are stopped each year by legally armed civilians, often without a shot being fired. Most of these mass killers are frightened little boys trying to make themselves famous as they go out in a blaze of glory. When confronted by a confident, armed adversary, many such shooters surrender with little more than a whimper.

Step up. Find that off-duty sidearm you carried in your youth and get in some practice time at the range. Be aware of your surroundings at all times - Condition Yellow - Relaxed Alert. In case the elephant does appear in front of you, train your family to get the hell away from you and call in your description to 911. If the

shooter does want to fight, you will quickly become a bullet magnet.

Oh, and one last piece of advice. Carry a reload for your sidearm. The off-duty officer who responded at the Utah mall did yeoman work with a .45 and a single magazine ... but said he sure would have liked to have a few more rounds for insurance!

Dick Fairburn has had more than 26 years of law enforcement experience in both Illinois and Wyoming. He has worked patrol, investigations and administration assignments. Dick has also served as a Criminal Intelligence Analyst, and as the Section Chief of a major academy's Firearms Training Unit and Critical Incident Training program. He has a B.S. in Law Enforcement Administration from Western Illinois University and was the Valedictorian of his recruit class at the Illinois State Police Academy. He has published hundreds of articles and a book titled, [Police Rifles](#).

12/12/07 PoliceOne article