



SUPREME COURT OF ARKANSAS

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WHO: White County Sheriff's Office Capt. Norman Hale
Director of Security and Emergency Preparedness Pete Hollingsworth
Supreme Court Assoc. Justice Rhonda K. Wood

WHAT: Press conference and demonstration of innovative law enforcement training
course for courthouses throughout Arkansas

WHERE: 1600 East Booth Road, Searcy
Training Room

WHEN: Monday, February 9
10 a.m.

**ARKANSAS DEVELOPS FIRST ONLINE COURT SECURITY TRAINING PROGRAM
--TO BE USED NATIONWIDE**

The FBI issued a report recently that found the number of active shooters in the United States has increased in the last fourteen years. The first seven years of the study saw an average of 6.4 incidents a year; the last seven years had an average of 16.4 incidents. Courthouses are always at risk for violence, in large part due to the nature of the business conducted in our nation's courts.

Pete Hollingsworth, Director of Security and Emergency Preparedness for Arkansas's Administrative Office of the Courts, has developed an interactive court security training course for law enforcement and court staff that will be used throughout the country.

Hollingsworth, a certified police officer, along with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC), applied for and won a \$30,000 grant from the State Justice Institute (SJI). He has spent the last year developing the course, which is eligible for law enforcement continuing education credit in Arkansas. The free, elective course consists of four modules that cover active shooters, best practices in court security, judicial threat management, and body language as a communications tool. All court security officers in Arkansas are required by statute to complete a twelve-hour initial training that is separate from this elective course.

MORE

“Court security remains a top issue for state courts, and the Arkansas Judiciary has taken a leadership role in developing training that prepares court security officers for future threats,” said Jonathan Mattiello, Executive Director of SJI. “SJI commends the Judiciary on their work, and encourages all state courts to use this valuable training resource.”

While Hollingsworth created the training content, he worked with the NCSC, which developed the online programs to deliver the training. NCSC is offering the courses as part of its Institute for Court Management. Several court staff in Arkansas are trained faculty for these programs, which are put on all over the country.

NCSC’s President Mary McQueen commended “the Arkansas Judiciary for its commitment to improving the security of its courts and for its innovative approach to making security training more effective and engaging for the state’s court security officers. Arkansas courts are the first to use this new online-learning simulation format, which better prepares officers for threatening situations and, in turn, makes for safer courts.”

Arkansas is not immune from courtroom violence. In 2011, a man shot and injured a court employee in Crawford County. Video from that incident is used in the training and by law enforcement nationally. Supreme Court Associate Justice Rhonda Wood is the liaison to the Security and Emergency Preparedness Committee. When she was a circuit judge in Faulkner County, she and her staff were confronted by a woman in the courtroom who threatened them with a gun. Fortunately, no one was hurt, but that is an example of the dangers people face in courtrooms around the state and country.

Hollingsworth says that every day courthouses are “visited by a large number of citizens, many of whom may be disgruntled and angry. Acts of violence such as threat against judicial officials, escapes from custody, and disruption of court proceedings are increasing. Additionally, courthouses, which represent the ideals of democracy in American society, have become symbolic targets for anti-government extremists. One goal of my office is to provide training for Court Security Officers that has an immediate impact toward providing a safe and secure environment for courthouse staff and visitors.”

The National Center for State Courts is an independent, nonprofit court improvement organization whose efforts are directed by and in collaboration with the Conference of Chief Justices, the Conference of State Court Administrators, and other associations of judicial leaders.

The State Justice Institute was established by Federal law in 1984 to award grants to improve the quality of justice in state courts, facilitate better coordination between state and federal courts, and foster innovative, efficient solutions to common issues faced by all courts.

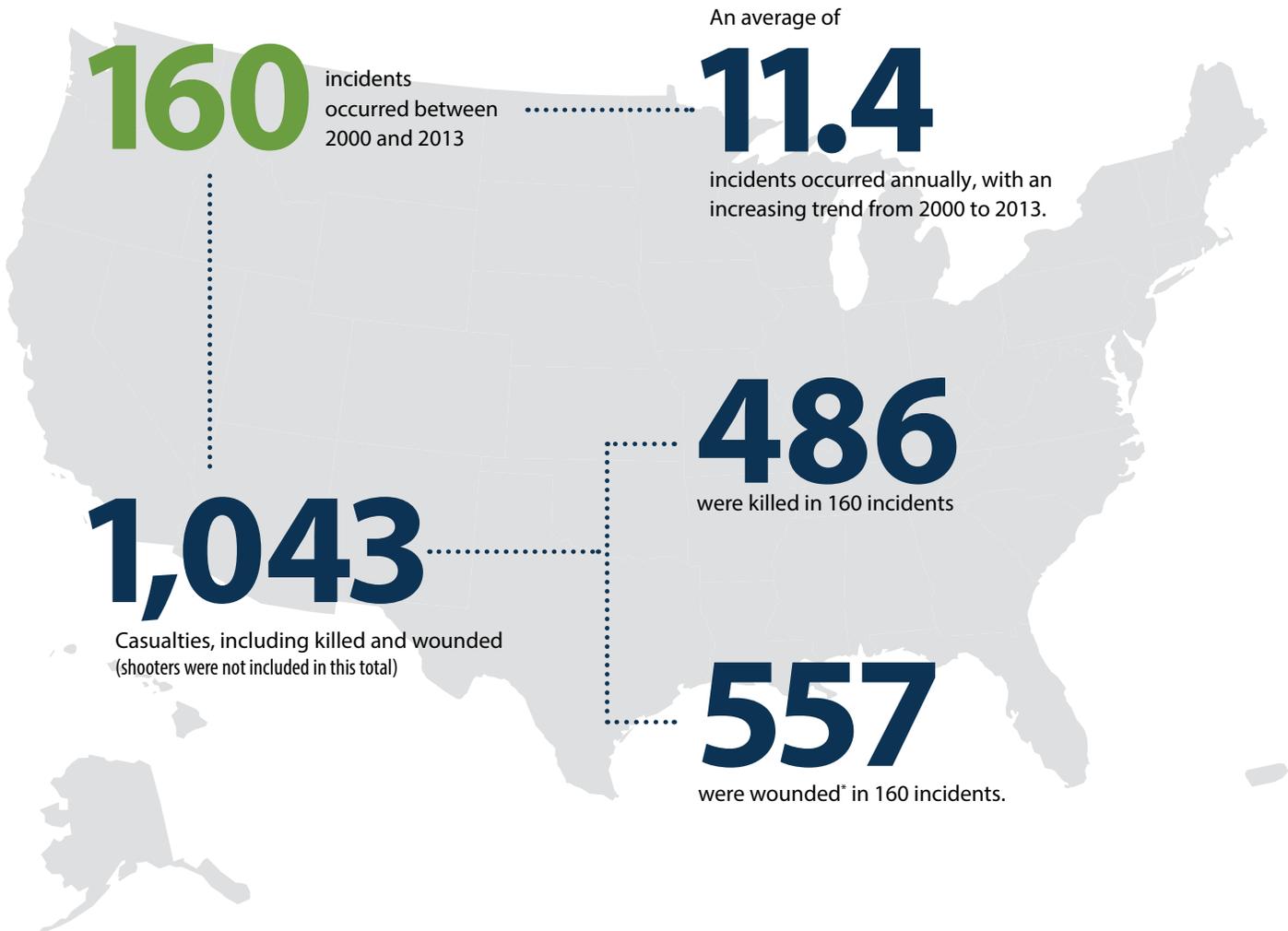
For more details:

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FBI active shooter study: <http://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2014/september/fbi-releases-study-on-active-shooter-incidents>

Snapshot

The following characteristics of the 160 active shooter incidents identified between 2000 and 2013 are noted:



Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2014

INCIDENTS

- An average of 11.4 incidents occurred annually.
- An average of 6.4 incidents occurred in the first 7 years studied, and an average of 16.4 occurred in the last 7 years.
- 70.0% of the incidents occurred in either a commerce/business or educational environment.¹⁰
- Shootings occurred in 40 of 50 states and the District of Columbia.
- 60.0% of the incidents ended before police arrived.

*A handful of those identified as “wounded” were not injured by gunfire but rather suffered injuries incidental to the event, such as being hit by flying objects/shattered glass or falling while running. This does not account for all those wounded in this fashion or any mental or emotional trauma that resulted in potential medical treatment.

¹⁰ All percentages are rounded to the nearest tenth