



AWARENESS AND PREVENTION AGAINST EDGED WEAPON ATTACKS



BACKGROUND

Edged weapon attacks present a potential threat to critical infrastructure workers and the security of the venues or events hosting public gatherings. Attackers can use edged weapons such as knives, machetes, hatchets, box cutters, and other sharp instruments to target people and cause injury or death.

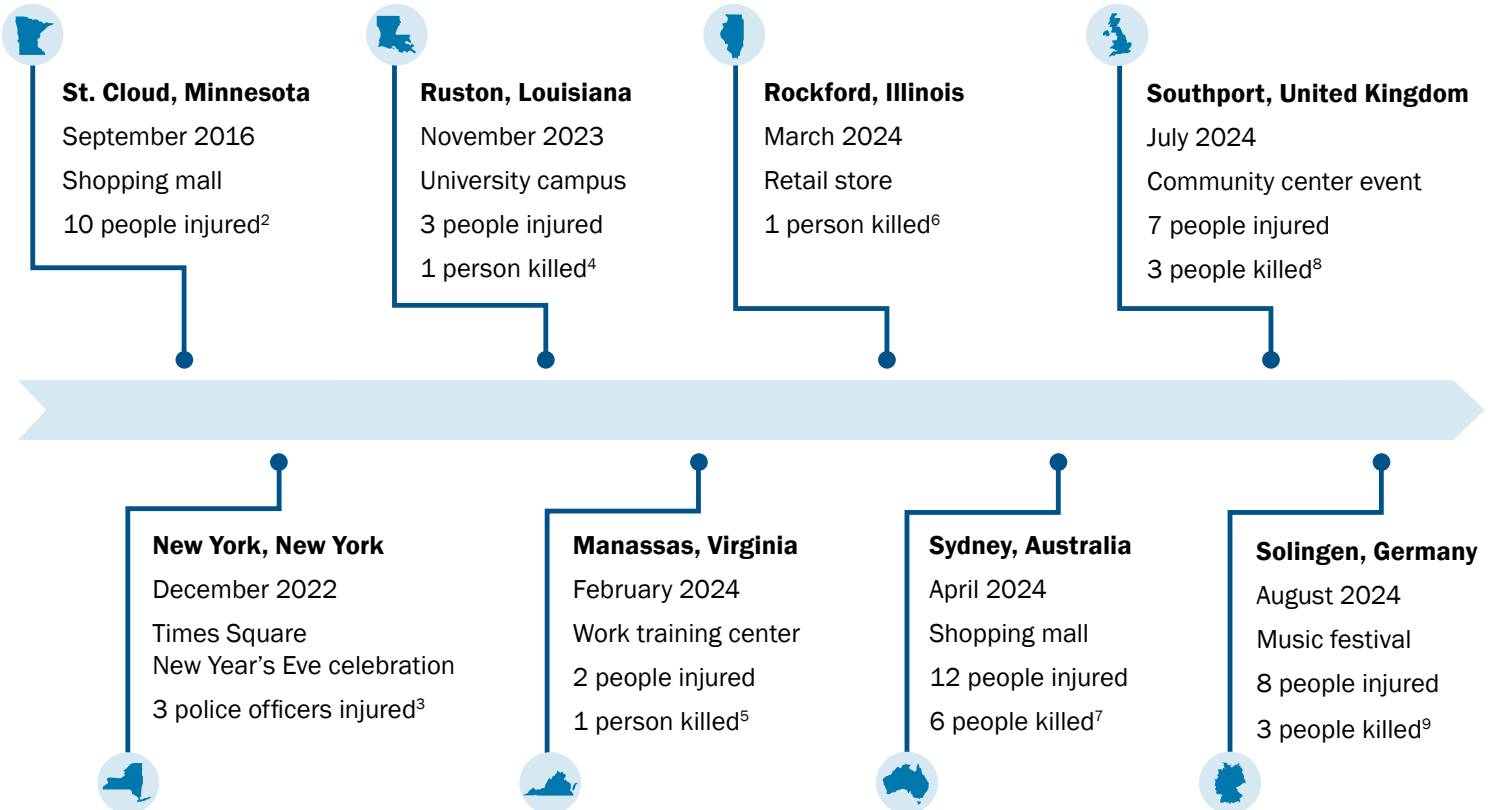
Edged weapon attacks are difficult to predict as perpetrators often display few, if any, indicators, before striking. In addition, knives and other edged weapons are easy to obtain and conceal, thereby becoming a weapon of default for some individuals. Venue owners and operators can help prioritize protection by taking several easily implementable steps to emphasize training, information sharing, and security protocols. To counter these risks, critical infrastructure and venue owners and operators can implement protective measures before and during events to protect patrons, visitors, and personnel.



Almost 20% of the mass attacks in public spaces studied by the National Threat Assessment Center involved the use of a bladed weapon.¹

THREAT ENVIRONMENT

Authorities attribute edged weapon attack incidents to various motivations, including but not limited to terrorism, domestic violent extremism, and other criminal activity. Examples of incidents impacting areas adjacent to or within critical infrastructure include the following:





PREVENTION

Conduct a security assessment based on an edged weapon attack to assess vulnerabilities unique to the venue or facility.

Maintain active monitoring and situational awareness. Use a monitored video surveillance system that provides clear view of key assembly areas in real time. Station security guards or volunteers in key areas with specific responsibility to scan crowds and remain alert to concerning behavior or weapon threats.

Spot and report potentially concerning behaviors proactively using techniques from CISA's [Employee Vigilance through the Power of Hello](#).

Foster a positive culture of reporting, so that bystanders and personnel do not feel hesitant about practicing the [If You See Something, Say Something®](#) principle.

Develop and clearly communicate a specific list of prohibited items for steady-state operations, and especially events. Share with employees, event staff, volunteers, and attendees. Communication can include messages in ticketing apps, social media, email, signage within the facility and parking area, video boards, and/or periodic announcements. Update annually.

Use locked retail displays in commercial facilities that sell cutlery, camping supplies, sharp or serrated tools, or other merchandise that could be used as a weapon. Consider making access to these displays available only to managers or authorized personnel.



SCREENING

Implement visitor screening, including visual and possibly magnetometer screening practices.

Implement bag check procedures and policies where possible, potentially permitting only clear bags at certain venues or events. Communicate all bag check and restriction policies in ticketing information prior to an event and consider providing clear bags at the venue entrance. For more information visit CISA's [Public Venue Bag Search Procedures Guide](#).

Consider implementing a holistic approach to screening that encompasses both physical and technological weapons detection measures. Such measures may include metal detectors, advanced imaging and crowd monitoring digital platforms, and artificial intelligence tools. Knives can be difficult to detect with technology. Therefore, dedicated human monitoring remains essential. Ensure that all monitoring—including visual and possibly technology-enabled methods—conforms to appropriate privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties requirements before deployment.



TRAINING AND EXERCISE

Train staff and security personnel to be able to recognize potentially suspicious behaviors. Ensure personnel are fully versed on the facility's active assailant emergency response plan; provide STOP THE BLEED®, as well as other key first aid instruction on site as part of routine employee training.

Have staff routinely exercise emergency plans to identify any potential best practices or areas for improvement in edged weapons threat response.

Socialize best practices for conflict prevention if someone is directly engaging individuals in a disturbing way. If possible, engage in dialogue to de-escalate the situation. For more information see CISA's [De-escalation Series](#) and [Violence Prevention through De-escalation video](#).



RESPONSE

Buy time: Use verbal communication and body language to create distance and allow for additional response options.

If faced with an edged weapon threat, create as much physical distance as possible between you and any person identified to be carrying an edged or other weapon. Contact 9-1-1 as soon as it is possible to safely do so.

Report: If a crime takes place, report it to local law enforcement.



For more information, see CISA's [Personal Security Considerations Action Guide: Critical Infrastructure Workers](#).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For additional information, please see the following resources:

CISA – [Physical Security Considerations for Temporary Facilities](#): A resource that provides information on cost-effective security measures, especially for pop-up or temporary events.

CISA – [Protective Security Advisors](#): Local security subject matter experts and other professionals who can assist with these assessments and help implement necessary protective measures.

CISA – [Public Venue Security Screening Guide and Touchless Screening Annex](#): A guide providing information on cost-effective measures and how to train personnel on appropriate screening practices.

CISA – [Securing Public Gatherings](#): A webpage showing a compendium of resources for securing public gatherings.

CISA – [Security Planning Workbook](#): A comprehensive resource to help critical infrastructure owners and operators develop a foundational security plan. This workbook is designed to be flexible and scalable to suit the needs of most facilities.

CISA – [Active Assailant Security Resources](#): A webpage providing the critical infrastructure community with information regarding attack vectors used by terrorists and other extremist actors, as well as corresponding suggested protective measures.

CISA – [Violence Prevention through De-escalation \(Video\)](#): A training video to help workers identify concerning behaviors and limit the risk from potentially hostile incidents.

CISA – [Tabletop Exercise Packages \(CTEP\)](#): CTEP is a set of discussion-based exercise templates that can be beneficial in considering a variety of threat scenarios.

DHS – [STOP THE BLEED®](#): STOP THE BLEED® is a grassroots national awareness campaign and call-to-action. It encourages individuals to become trained, equipped, and empowered to help in a bleeding emergency before professional help arrives.

NCTC – [First Responder’s Toolbox – Terrorist Messaging Urges Use of Edged-Weapons](#): A resource for responders to consider, interact with, and train for encounters with hostile individuals carrying edged weapons.

NPSA – [Marauding Terrorist Attacks \(MTA\) Web Resources](#): A resource that provides guidance on what to do before, during, and after an edged weapons attack.

- 1 Mass Attacks in Public Spaces (2016-2020), published Jan 2023, <https://www.secretservice.gov/newsroom/reports/threat-assessments/mass-attacks-public-spaces/details-1>.
- 2 Comerford, Nadine and Smith, Alexander. “Dahir Ahmed Adan Named by Police as St. Cloud, Minnesota, Stabbing Suspect.” NBC News. September 20, 2016. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/dahir-ahmed-adan-named-police-st-cloud-minnesota-stabbing-suspect-n651061>.
- 3 U.S. Department of Justice Office of Public Affairs. “Federal Charges Announced Against Maine Man Who Carried Out Machete Attack in Times Square on New Year’s Eve in Name of Jihad.” DOJ [Press Release]. January 10, 2023. <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/federal-charges-announced-against-maine-man-who-carried-out-machete-attack-times-square-new>.
- 4 “At least four people stabbed at Louisiana Tech University in Ruston; suspect in custody”. The Associated Press. Usnews.com. November 13, 2023. <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/louisiana/articles/2023-11-13/at-least-four-people-stabbed-at-louisiana-tech-university-in-ruston-suspect-in-custody>.
- 5 WTOP News. “1 man killed, another wounded in stabbing at Manassas trade school; suspect fatally shot by police.” February 13, 2024. <https://wtop.com/prince-william-county/2024/02/2-men-stabbed-at-manassas-training-center-suspect-shot-dead-by-police/>.
- 6 John Clark and Jess Lipzin, “Video shows Rockford Walmart stabbing suspect surrender to security after murder,” mystateline.com, March 27, 2024. <https://www.mystateline.com/news/local-news/video-shows-rockford-walmart-stabbing-suspect-surrender-to-security-after-murder/>.
- 7 Renju Jose and Lewis Jackson, “Sydney knife attacker appears to have targeted women, police say.” Reuters. April 15, 2024. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/australian-police-say-sydney-knife-attacker-may-have-targeted-women-2024-04-15/>.
- 8 Lynsey Chutel, “Southport Stabbing: What We Know About the U.K. Knife Attack and Suspect.” The New York Times. July 30, 2024. <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/30/world/europe/southport-stabbing-uk-suspect.html>.
- 9 “Suspect in fatal knife attack in Germany was motivated by ISIS terror group, prosecutors say.” CBS News. August 25, 2024. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/germany-solingen-knife-attack-latest/>.