Tom: Folks, I'm on the line with Officer Jason Weber. Now Jason, you are a different type of guest for our podcast and I really want to thank you for taking the time to talk with us today.

Jason: Oh, sure. You're welcome.

Tom: Now I'd like you to start by telling us a little bit about your background.

Jason: I have been in law enforcement almost 26 years now. The last 24 I have worked for the town of Menasha police department, which is about 40 miles south of Green Bay, Wisconsin. I think everybody knows where the Packers are. I have worked basically three shifts in patrol, I had a stint in detectives, and for the last nine years, I have been working in community policing and community relations. I also serve as the vice president of the Wisconsin Crime Prevention Practitioners Association. And in my downtime, I instruct nationally for the National Criminal Justice Training Center and throughout Wisconsin for the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

Tom: Okay. The reason I found you was Wisconsin MPI has contracted you to do a program on the active shooter protocol and the meetings industry. Now that's something that I would never have thought of and in all the event planners that I've ever talked with, I've never come across that. So I can imagine right now that some people would be going, "Wait a minute. Active shooter protocol, what is this? It wouldn't apply to something that I do." But would you talk to us a little bit about why this is so important?

Jason: It's important just for that fact, is that people don't think about it. People don't want to think about it, to be honest. Everybody has that mindset that, "You know it's not going to happen here. This is the stuff that happens in the big cities or it happens somewhere else. It just doesn't happen here."

And unfortunately we see that. We see that happening in a lot of smaller communities. In fact, my community here in Manasha, we had an active shooter incident just about a year ago, last May, where we had four people that were killed. It happened in a park. It certainly was something that we didn't think would ever happen here. We have 20,000 people that live here.

But I think you're starting to see more and more incidents happening in places like where these conventions are, where these meetings are, or basically where large amounts of people gather. These are called, if you ever watch the news, you'll hear the term soft targets. And those are those places that really don't have a lot of hardened security that make it difficult for these people to get in. But yet they still have a lot of people there.
Take Paris, the incident that happened just recently over in Paris. Where did those happen at? It did not happen at the Louvre. It did not happen at the Eiffel Tower. Because those two places are pretty well-secured, are pretty buttoned down. It happened in a coffee shop, in a restaurant, at that concert venue. The people did try to infiltrate a soccer stadium, but because they had such a good security plan there, they couldn't make it past that main gate. One of them ended up detonating himself. It was out front or out in the street. So I think you're starting to see some of these incidents start happening at these soft targets. That's where the convention centers and those places where meetings fall into.

Tom: This would also apply I guess to terrorism as well.

Jason: Well, sure. I think active shooter is starting to be like a catch all. Crisis management is probably a more better term, but active shooter is what gets the people's attention. But you're absolutely right, the principles that we instruct can be applied to anything, be it a fire, an explosion, acts of terrorism, a madman running around with a knife. It is really the same response. What we're teaching people is how to recognize that and how to respond to it.

Tom: Now is there a particular style of event that would be...you mentioned the convention centers...could something like this happen at, say, an office party for a company or a wedding or...

Jason: Sure it could. It could happen anywhere. You mentioned the office party. San Bernardino. That was at a Christmas party, a large gathering. So it really could happen anywhere. Not just in the school, not just in a workplace. A lot of times, these madmen and stuff are looking for places where people gather. It might be a convention facility. It might be in the movie theaters, like we saw in Aurora. It really could be anyplace. And what we need to do is start preparing and start planning for it. At the same time, pray that it never happens. But you really need to prepare for it.

Tom: I'll tell you, it gets scary when you think all about these things. In episode one of our podcast, I interviewed my wife. She's an event planner for her company and she mentioned risk management. At the time, we were talking about event planners and what happens if the caterer doesn't show up or the entertainment doesn't show up. This literally takes risk management in a whole new direction for us. So I'm curious. What are some of the risks that an event planner should consider when it comes to security and safety? Can you talk to us about how we implement that?
Jason: You have a unique occupation and a unique setting. Because one of the big things that we stress, we in law enforcement will do risk assessments of businesses and buildings. One of the big things that we look at is access control. How do we control that access, who's coming in, and making sure that those people should be there?

Now at a convention center, it's pretty unfiltered open access. So it's very difficult in securing that. One thing that people can look at doing is making sure that everybody has name tags. Just looking for things out of ordinary. But really with meeting planners, they need to make sure that their internal emergency operations plan is in place. How are we going to communicate in the event that we have something...be it a natural disaster, a tornado, an active shooter, whatnot...how do we notify people what's going on?

And yet at the same time, we have to let our attendees, when we meet with them, especially the day of that conference when we're meeting with them or that evening before, is let them know where the exits are. Because that's part of the big thing, too, in our response to these incidents. The number one response, if we can, is to avoid, is to get out of there. Run. Leave. You've got to know your exits. So many people just aren't...they call it situational awareness...they're just not aware of their surroundings. They know they came in this door and it's drilled in their head that they've got to leave that same door. Or many times in these conference venues, there's two, three, maybe four different exits.

Meeting planners are going to have to start, take that time to meet with their point of contact. Just let them know, "Hey, in the event something happens, this is what we're going to do. We're going to make an announcement over the speaker," or whatnot. "Just to let you know, there's an exit over here, one over here, and one on the side here." Just let them know and have that point of contact make that announcement and let those people know in the beginning when they make their opening statements or opening announcements.

Again, the meeting planner is very unique because you have different groups of people coming in every week. It's unlike a typical office or a traditional office or a school setting where these people are in there every day. And they know, you've got people coming in that maybe have never set foot in your facility before.

Tom So we're talking to the attendees about this. They do need to be addressed, in your opinion.
Jason: Oh, yes. It should be up to that person that's hosting that convention. In the opening remarks, you take care of those housekeeping duties, just to make people aware of where the exits are in the event something happens here. "There's a couple exits behind me and there's a couple behind everybody else in the back of the room." I think that we have to get these hosts and people that are having the meetings start making those announcements and let people know.

The other thing that we in law enforcement...and I use we as a global term...is that we are doing these kind of trainings routinely throughout the United States and telling these people these same tactics. Being aware of your surroundings. The different options to respond to. And over time here, hopefully we can reach a good majority of the folks and they already have that mindset in them. Because really you have to have that at all times, not just at your place at work or not wherever you are. But if you're out at the movie theaters. If you're out at a restaurant.

Tom: You mentioned they do these trainings. Is there specific organized lessons or class for this or does each jurisdiction do their own?

Jason: There's several different philosophies. There's one philosophy, but several different organizations that tweak it. The one that I was trained on is endorsed by the FBI. It's through Texas State University. And it's from the ALERRT Group. The ALERRT is an acronym for Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training. And one of the modules that they teach is the civilian response to active shooters. And basically you have three options. It's avoid, deny, or defend.

Awfully similar to Homeland Security was putting out, the run, hide, fight. Basically it's the same thing. The vernacular just has changed. The hide was too passive. We didn't want people just to hide, just to pray and hide. The deny is more of an active term. We want these people to lock the door, to barricade the door, to take those action steps.

But basically it's three things. It's avoid. Ideally if we can, get out. Avoid. If the announcement or if we know that the incident is happening in another part of the hotel, another part of the conference center, get out. But if it's happening across the hall or maybe somewhere close and you can't get out safely, then you're going to have to deny, you're going to have to hide, you're going to have to lock the door, you're going to have to take those steps.

And then the last one really is going to be defend. And that's only if you're toe to toe with the gunman or you're face to face. We certainly aren't advocating people to go look for the gunman. But if you are face to face with them and you
need to defend, you need to remember that you're in the fight for your life. You're fighting 110%. You're not just picking up a pencil or an eraser and winging it at him. You are in. You need to think about unconventional type of weapons, something hard, something to start hitting them.

So basically it all comes down to those three things. Avoid, deny, defend. And it's not necessarily in that order. It's option-based and really it depends on what the situation is. There's really no answer to the $64,000 question. It's really what is most appropriate for that situation.

**Tom:** Okay. I can understand that there's got to be a lot of different situations and they're all going to be, like you say, different. I guess it's going to be a spur of the moment kind of thing. Now if somebody was, let's say, confronted by someone with a gun, is there anything you would recommend they do? If they couldn't run, is there some way they could perhaps try to talk this person down or maybe save their own life?

**Jason:** Oftentimes these people, they have the avenger mindset. They're upset with something. They're singling people out. And they're looking to create as much carnage as possible before law enforcement gets there. So a lot of times, the pleading may not work. If you're going to get into a fight, you're going to have to get a jump on the person. You're going to have to react very quickly. It's a difficult thing.

We get questions about concealed carry. "What about guns? Should I be able to carry guns?" That's an option but you need to be trained. You need to be adequately trained. You need to be adequately equipped if you're going to carry a firearm. Again, it's going to be one of those judgmental things. You could try pleading, you could try talking. There has been instances where, for one reason or another, the gunman doesn't shoot people and moves on. And there's been others where there's just no listening and they shoot. Every situation really is different.

The big thing with these events really is to prepare for them and hopefully you prevent them. And instilling a robust security plan, having your staff trained to look for things out of the ordinary, people kind of lingering about or milling about that really don't have a name tag or it just doesn't look like they belong. Maybe talking to these groups ahead of time, saying, "Hey, is there anything we need to be worried about or concerned?"

The type of group that might be meeting at your facility might be those that would generate some type of ill will. I know recently some of our political rallies have stirred emotions up. Those are a lot of things to look at and you try
to head those off in the beginning because obviously we want to prevent this stuff from happening. We want to deter that person, maybe delay that person getting entry until we can get law enforcement there.

**Tom:** What would you say is an average response time for law enforcement?

**Jason:** The FBI has done a study. Over the last 15 years from 2000 to 2015, there had been 179 active shooter events and on average of those 179, it took law enforcement three minutes to get there. Now if you think about it, three minutes is pretty darn fast. Most of us can't get our keys out of our pocket to get into our car and leave within three minutes. But at the same time, three minutes is a pretty long time when we're sitting in there and shots are fired and there's a lot of chaos going on.

So what people do within those three minutes really can make a world of difference. These bad guys...and I say bad guys because 96% of these shooters are men...but they know that law enforcement or somebody is going to get there within three minutes. So they know they have a small window of opportunity. So oftentimes, something as simple as just a locked door makes them move on. And they'll continue on.

They researched 179 incidents. The FBI went through Sandy Hook, Virginia Tech, San Bernardino. We could rattle all of these things off. They looked at what steps and what things people did that were in these incidents. And that's really what drives what our training. It kind of dictates what we instruct and at the same time, how we in law enforcement respond. We review every one of these cases. Things get changed. Yeah, three minutes. Now oftentimes it's faster. I made reference to...our active shooter incident was at a park here in Menasha. Our officer was on scene within 34 seconds.

**Tom:** Wow.

**Jason:** So he was right down the road. But it was over by the time he pulled in. It was over. That's how fast a lot of times these things happen.

**Tom:** Oh, my gosh. Now we're talking about the protocol. What is an example, if you can, of a protocol that should something break out like this, let's say somebody comes into a venue and they have a gun and they start shooting. What is the protocol at that point for an event planner to have talked to their staff about? Can you give us some idea what are the first steps?

**Jason:** The first step is to notify everybody in the facility. That's why you have to have your staff trained into how to recognize this, how to get that notification
out there. A lot of times in these meeting planners, all staff have portable radios. So somebody can make that announcement over the portable radio that there's an incident going on here. And somebody somewhere else is going to have to make that notification, put it out over the loudspeakers or whatever system that they have in place to get it through the whole facility or even through the whole hotel.

Basically then people are going to have to react how they react. That's where those steps, that avoid, deny, defend, come in. There's not a whole heck of a lot more for that meeting planner to do. We certainly don't expect them to be a superhero and start rushing into the room. We need to start reacting with one of those options. That's why we're out training all of these different groups and the general public.

But the thing to keep in mind though is how to deal with this afterwards. How are we going to get through this afterwards? There's going to be a lot of mental trauma. There's going to be a lot of stress. We're going to need to start making arrangements for that among our staff.

Other things that we have to keep in consideration, media coming. Who in the facility is going to be designated that person to speak with the news media? How are we going to handle long-term incidents after that? If there's going to be memorial set up, how long are those going to stay up? How are we going to get rid of them? What are we going to do with that? The one-year anniversary. There's a lot of things afterwards that need to be addressed, but really to get to your question there, we need to raise the alarm and notify everybody else that there's an incident going on in such and such a room and pray.

**Tom:** That's some great stuff. In fact, I was going to ask you about the media nightmare that would confront somebody at the end of such an event or during, if it became a hostage situation, which again we would pray would never happen. So when an event planner is planning an event and they rent a venue like a convention center to hold it, what is the role of the convention center to help prevent this over and above what the event planner's doing?

**Jason:** The convention center should have an emergency operations plan that will address a lot of this. How are they going to react? How are they going to communicate? For a whole variety of events. Convention centers and facilities really should work with their local police department and have a risk assessment or have a security survey done of their property. There's crime prevention officers that are trained, our organization trains them routinely throughout Wisconsin at different things to look at.
Locks, lighting, access control, procedures, policies, that type of stuff. And it's a service that's free, which is good. But it builds that relationship with that local law enforcement agency. But they can come in and they could give suggestions on different tactics or different things that they can do just to harden up that security and deter somebody from attacking that or coming to that. So those are things that the actual facility can end up doing, but having that plan in place and then making sure that your staff is trained.

Because again, you've got groups of people coming in that have never set foot in your place. They have no clue where anything is. Not even the bathrooms oftentimes. So you really have to rely on your staff. And that's all the staff, from the wait staff, the meeting planners, to the maintenance, the janitorial. Everybody's got to be trained in this because they basically are going to be the trainers for everyone else.

**Tom:** The police are busy enough, but should an event planner consult with law enforcement before an event if they were coming into a town?

**Jason:** Absolutely. I don't think for any and every event that they need to get a hold of law enforcement. Now if they have reason to believe that there might be an issue or you have a controversial group coming in and you may think that there are going to be picketers or protesters or something of that sort, absolutely get a hold of law enforcement. Because basically the more you get ahead of the game, the more you have the intelligence sharing and information shared, the better off it is.

Now we in law enforcement may know about the same time that you know who's coming. So we already may have a heads-up that such and such a group is coming to this facility so that we may, on a proactive role, reach out to you ahead of time. But there may be times that we don't or we just don't know and it really is not a bad idea just to touch base.

But again, I wouldn't do it for every group. We have facilities here that, my gosh, there's people here every week. We aren't notified every week, but I think the actual facility, as maybe an annual thing, reach out to their crime prevention officer and have them come out to just do a security check and take a look at the facility and any suggestions or anything that needs to be changed. It's always good to have an extra set of eyes and ears and for the most part, those services are free that the officer will end up doing.

**Tom:** Excellent information and that also answered a lot of questions that I had. Now we were talking about the media nightmare that would go along with something like this. Obviously the event planner has to have someone on staff
that's going to be a spokesperson. Should they maybe turn questions over to law enforcement and maybe take a less active role or how would you advise them to do that?

**Jason:** For the most part, law enforcement's probably going to be the lead contact with the media because it is going to be an incident that we would be handling. The facility really should have a liaison to work with that spokesman or spokesperson from the police department. What we learned from our incident last year is the more spokespersons or the more public information officers that you can have on scene, the easier it is. Because not only were we dealing with the traditional media...obviously we had the four stations out of the Green Bay market calling us, we had the four stations out of the Milwaukee market, we were fielding phone calls from CNN, from NBC National...but we also were dealing with rumors on social media.

So that created a lot more work for us just to try to monitor that because we were getting information that there was multiple shooters, there was multiple shooting locations in other parts of the community, just a lot of information that was floating around on social media. Unfortunately a lot of people take that for gospel, what they read on Facebook or on Twitter. So it really was all hands on deck.

That was one of the things that we learned. I alluded to earlier that we review all of these incidents and just rehash what went right and what went wrong. One of the things that we could have added on our incident was just to have an extra person or maybe two assist in addressing the media and the social media, that type of stuff.

**Tom:** That's great, Jason. I appreciate you sharing that because I wouldn't even have thought about...when I was asking that question, I didn't even think about social media. But you're right, if they read it on the Internet, it's got to be real. Are there any last thoughts that you'd like to share with our listeners on this topic?

**Jason:** It's something that you need to keep in the back of your mind all the time, regardless of where you are. At work, at the mall, out to eat. Have that situational awareness. When you sit down to eat at a restaurant, just look around. Where are the exits in case something happens? It's minute odds that there's going to be an active shooter. There's greater odds of a fire or something else. But you need to have a look around to have that situational awareness.

Don't dismiss anything that is out of the ordinary. It's that "See Something, Say Something" that we always see. If something looks out of the ordinary, let
somebody know. Give somebody a call. Call the police department, just something doesn't seem right about this car sitting here. Something of that sort. The more that everybody can really work together on this, the more that hopefully we can prevent or deter anybody from doing these acts.

**Tom:** Officer Weber, I really do appreciate everything you've shared with us today. If one of our listeners or hopefully more are interested in learning more about this topic, is there a way they can reach out to you or is there a website you would recommend they check out?

**Jason:** To get a hold of me, they can contact me. My phone number here at the police department is 920-720-7160. Or they can contact me via email and it's the letter J and my last name, Weber, W-E-B-E-R and it's @town, T-O-W-N, dash Menasha, M-E-N-A-S-H-A, dot com. And I certainly would be willing to talk or share anything. I've actually written a book on active shooter events for schools. I'm finishing one up for businesses and retail sector, so yeah, the more information that we can get out there and share, honestly the better for all of us.

**Tom:** Excellent. Again, Officer Weber, I appreciate your time so much. I appreciate your service. And thank you so much for being with me today.

**Jason:** Oh, thank you, sir.