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Cheektowaga Police hold active shooter training to prepare for worst case scenarios

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BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) - A recent string of violence at American malls is raising some concerns about mall security.

Walden Galleria announced it will be holding another lockdown security drill Tuesday, September 27 at 10:15 am.

On September 17, a man stabbed 10 people in a Minnesota mall before being shot to death by an off-duty police officer.

Friday in Washington state, a gunman shot and killed five people before escaping from the mall. That set off a massive manhunt, lasting nearly 24 hours before police arrested a suspect Saturday evening.

Monday morning at a strip mall in Houston, a gunman wounded six people before being shot by police and dying at the scene.

Here in Western New York, the area's largest shopping center holds regular drills to train security and local police officers for worst case scenarios. Walden Galleria hosts security lockdown drills with their security team, mall employees and Cheektowaga Police to provide emergency training.

The last drill was held on June 21. 7Eyewitness News was at Walden Galleria to see what the training looks like. You can watch our story on the drill above.

Assistant Chief James Speyer of Cheektowaga Police said the drills at the Galleria help teach mall workers what to do in case of an emergency. Officers in the Cheektowaga Police Department also go through extensive training for active shooter scenarios.

"There's no doubt that these incidents, mass shootings, especially in public places like shopping malls, strip plazas and airports seem to be taking off," Speyer said. "So we're adapting the way we train, the way we respond. We go in as soon as we can and rescue people who are injured as well as eliminate the individual causing the damage."

Speyer said it's important to make training like this a regular part of police work in order to get officers as prepared as possible for a worst case scenario.

"If you look at any critical incident, especially where split second decisions need to be made, those officers, military, even sports figures revert back to what they've trained to do and what they know," he said.

Even with regular drills and training, Speyer said it's impossible to ever be totally prepared for an emergency like a mass shooting.

"We're never going to be fully prepared," he said. "We do whatever we can, but I don't think anybody is prepared for such a catastrophe."

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