



## Going up: Creating an effective elevator speech

By **Keith Terry** Business Development Manager – Marketing

“You only get one chance to make a good first impression.” This quote has been attributed to both Will Rogers and Oscar Wilde. While there may be no confirmation of who said it first, it is a statement that should always be front of mind.

Many people, including insurance agents, find first-impression situations awkward and often get tongue-tied. Introducing yourself, talking about yourself, and discussing what you do can make for uncomfortable situations, no matter the level of professionalism or how many times you’ve done it. One way to overcome this pressure and reduce the potential anxiety of an awkward networking situation is by developing an “elevator pitch/speech.”

Salespeople should be very familiar with this term. Sales basics teach them to be prepared with several variations of elevator speeches about themselves, their business or agency, and what sets them apart from others in the industry. A good elevator speech is easily customizable to accommodate most sales situations encountered by an insurance agent.

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**– Will Rogers & Oscar Wilde**

Imagine you are attending a convention, and your room is on the 18th floor of the convention hotel. During a break in the agenda, you decide to head to your room to make a few phone calls, and as you step onto the elevator, your top prospect is already there and has pushed the button for the 10th floor—your time with this prospect starts now. You have a 10-floor elevator ride to gain their interest and convince them to talk with you further about his/her insurance program. Now, imagine yourself in the same situation, but this time, the prospect has pushed the button for the fifth floor. In this scenario, you only have five floors to talk with your prospect. How do you handle the elevator ride?

Consider developing an elevator speech using the following recommended components from Fred Miller’s “No Sweat Public Speaking” program.

### **Start on the first floor and build your speech as you go:**

- First floor: Introduce yourself.
- Second floor: What do you do?
- Third floor: Share your expertise.
- Fourth floor: What is your value? Why should the prospect hire you?
- Fifth floor: Why do you do what you do? “People don’t buy what you do. They buy *why* you do it.” – Simon Sinek

As interest increases and time allows (floors 6-10, in the case of the first example), you can expand upon your speech to build your value as an insurance agent.

These ideas are all helpful in developing a template for your pitch and making it unique to you. It is important that your speech feels natural when you deliver it. A well-rehearsed elevator pitch helps you relax, prepare for unknown situations, and present yourself confidently. To master the speech, you must own it, practice it, and know it. People will be quick to trust you and more willing to allow you to become part of their trusted team of advisors.

**“People don’t buy what you do. They buy *why* you do it.”**

**– Simon Sinek**

Once you’ve developed your five-floor elevator speech, you can easily adapt it to various products and situations as these opportunities arise.

To find out more about developing your elevator pitch, check out the book *No Sweat Elevator Speech!* by Fred Miller, and sign up for his regular blog on his website: [www.nosweatpublicspeaking.com](http://www.nosweatpublicspeaking.com).

# Preventing Heat-Related Illness

By Tipton Scruggs Loss Control Supervisor

As the calendar approaches warmer weather, adequate precautions must be taken to prevent heat-related illness, whether work-related or not.

Heat-related illnesses typically occur when the body cannot adequately cool itself through sweating. Not only is this a risk during leisure activities, but many occupations, such as construction, manufacturing, and landscape maintenance, also expose people to high-temperature conditions, which is something that must be considered from a safety and risk control aspect. Employees in these conditions are at risk of developing the following illnesses:

- **Heat rash** – Consists of a red, bumpy rash that can itch. This is not usually dangerous, although it is an indicator that heat is affecting the body and should be taken into consideration.
- **Heat syncope (fainting)** – Usually occurs when someone is not used to working in a hot environment; typically is not dangerous. Move to a cool or shaded area and wear loose clothing.
- **Heat cramps** – Painful muscle cramps caused by a loss of salt when sweating. Drinking fluids that are high in electrolytes can relieve heat cramps. However, severe cramps may require medical attention.
- **Heat exhaustion** – Symptoms include feeling weak, dizzy, or nauseous. Skin can be clammy, and body temperatures may be above normal. To treat heat exhaustion, remove heavy clothing, rest in a cool place, and drink electrolyte fluids. If there is vomiting or loss of consciousness, seek medical attention immediately.
- **Heatstroke** – The most dangerous type of heat-related illness. Occurs when the body's natural cooling processes stop working and the body stops sweating. May include very hot and dry skin, confusion, convulsions, seizures, and loss of consciousness. Heatstroke can lead to death, so get help immediately.

In addition to these, too much exposure to such strenuous conditions can put so much strain on the heart and blood vessels that it can lead to heart failure or stroke. Working outside under the hazard of direct or too much sunlight can result in sunburn or sunstroke, and long-term exposure can, of course, lead to skin cancer.

The good news is there are resources and ways to prevent these illnesses. First, the heat index is a reliable source in gauging the level of risk during summer months:

Heat Index	Risk Level
Less than 91°F	Low
91-103°F	Moderate
103-115°F	High
Greater than 115°F	Very high to extreme

Second, the following are preventive actions that can be taken to avoid heat-related illness:

- Drink plenty of fluids each day: approximately two bottles of water every hour, or more if performing physical work activities in elevated temperatures. Minimize Gatorade intake and avoid energy drinks, alcohol, and caffeine.
- Wear a hat and light colored, loose-fitting clothing. Cover as much skin as possible. Use sunscreen when working outdoors.
- Eat a regular, well-balanced diet and stay away from heavy foods.
- Build up sun exposure slowly and take more frequent breaks in cool, shaded locations to help the body adapt to the conditions. Acclimate the body to the work environment.
- If symptoms of heat-related illness appear, alert the supervisor present and take a break in a cool, shaded area.

Adhering to these safety precautions and being able to recognize the symptoms of heat-related illnesses will help ensure their prevention. Have a safe Texas summer!

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## Question:

With the increase in shooting events in Texas and across the country, I've had several employees ask me if we are going to provide any training on what to do if we find ourselves in this situation. What tips can you share until we have an opportunity to address the subject internally?

## Answer:

This is a concern that is quickly becoming a focus for all business leaders: How do we protect our employees? How can we reduce our exposure? The Department of Homeland Security has ample information available that agencies can use as a basis for training and preparedness. I've pulled the following excerpts from their publication ([www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/active\\_shooter\\_booklet.pdf](http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/active_shooter_booklet.pdf)) to provide some basic information regarding this timely subject.

### Responding when an active shooter is in your vicinity

Quickly determine the most reasonable way to protect your own life. Remember that customers and clients are likely to follow the lead of the employees and managers during an active shooter situation.

### Evacuate

If there is an accessible escape path, attempt to evacuate the premises. Be sure to:

- Have an escape route and plan in mind.
- Evacuate regardless of whether others agree to follow.
- Leave your belongings behind.
- Help others escape, if possible.
- Prevent individuals from entering

an area where the active shooter may be.

- Keep your hands visible.
- Follow the instructions of any police officer.
- Do not attempt to move wounded people.
- Call 911 when you are safe.

### Hide out

If evacuation is not possible, find a place to hide where the active shooter is less likely to find you.

Your hiding place should:

- Be out of the active shooter's view;
- Provide protection if shots are fired in your direction (i.e., an office with a closed and locked door);
- Not trap you or restrict your options for movement.

To prevent an active shooter from entering your hiding place, be sure to lock the door and blockade it with heavy furniture.

If the active shooter is nearby:

- Lock the door.
- Silence your cell phone.
- Turn off any source of noise (i.e., radios, televisions, etc.).
- Hide behind large items (i.e., cabinets, desks).
- Remain quiet.

If evacuation and hiding out are not possible:

- Remain calm.
- Dial 911, if possible, to alert police to the active shooter's location.
- If you cannot speak, leave the line open and allow the dispatcher to listen.

### Take action against the active shooter

As a last resort, and only when your life is in imminent danger, attempt to disrupt and/or incapacitate the active

shooter by:

- Acting as aggressively as possible against him/her;
- Throwing items and improvising weapons;
- Yelling;
- Committing to your actions.

### Manager reactions during an active shooter situation

Employees and customers are likely to follow the lead of managers during an emergency. They should be familiar with their Emergency Action Plan (EAP) and be prepared to:

- Take immediate action;
- Remain calm;
- Lock and barricade doors;
- Evacuate staff and customers via a preplanned evacuation route.

### Recognizing potential workplace violence

An active shooter in your workplace may be a current or former employee, or an acquaintance of a current or former employee. Intuitive managers and coworkers may notice characteristics of potentially violent behavior in an employee. Alert your Human Resources Department if you believe an employee or coworker exhibits potentially violent behavior.

Active shooter situations are unpredictable and evolve quickly. Because active shooter situations are often over within 10-15 minutes and before law enforcement arrives, individuals must be prepared both mentally and physically to deal with the situation. These guidelines could make the difference for your employees and customers who are in harm's way.