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## **Case Study: Brooklyn Subway Shooting**

### **Introduction:**

On the morning of April 12th, 2022, a man boarded a Manhattan-bound N train in New York City's subway system during the rush hour. Sitting quietly on the train, the suspect traveled eight stops and suddenly went on a shooting rampage on the train and the platform of 36th Street station at Sunset Park. The man carried smoke canisters and opened fire with a Glock 17, hitting ten people in the subway car. Also, more than a dozen people were injured. He fired 33 rounds from his weapon. Passengers were choking from the smoke in the subway car, and as they entered the station, the smoke exited along with passengers fleeing the scene. The suspect exited and took off his coat. He blended in with other passengers, boarded an R train, and got off a stop later. This attack was premeditated and one of the worst mass shootings in the New York Transit system history.

### **Facts of the Case**

The shooter was identified as Frank Robert James, a 62-year-old male from Philadelphia. On April 6th, the suspect rented a U-haul in Philadelphia but did not retrieve it until April 11th. He drove to New York City in the early morning hours on April 12th, 2022. There is camera footage of the U-haul van on the Verrazano bridge. He then enters Brooklyn to park it at West 7th and King's Highway. He dressed as a construction worker, wearing a yellow hard hat and an orange reflective jacket with tape. He left the U-haul van with a rolling black backpack and another bag. James then enters the subway station at Kings Highway at 8 a.m.

The shooter rides on the Manhattan-bound N train for about eight stops. That is when he pulls out the smoke canisters and shoots 33 rounds. The gun jammed during the shooting.<sup>1</sup> However, James hits multiple passengers, the youngest being a 12-year-old. The train makes it to the 36th Street station, and James escapes by blending in with other passengers. He gets on an R train and rides it one stop. One important fact of the case was that cameras were not working at the 36th Street station at the time of the shooting. They had not been functioning for days because of delayed repairs.<sup>2</sup> That was the same story in another two stations when they tried to pull up footage from the cameras.

Police officers got images of James because Samaritans took pictures of him at the scene. James also left the two bags behind with a U-haul key, which led officers to find a name when they called the company to get identification. More weapons, a torch, and gas canisters were in those bags with that key. In the other bag were fireworks explosives and explosive powder. Once they got a name, it turned out that James had a record and posted content a few days before the shooting. He created a series of rambling videos before the attack, saying how he would commit violent acts. The hunt was on once James was ID. They did find James's U-haul truck, and they sent the bomb squad in for safety purposes in case there were explosives in the vehicle. They found more weapons in the van. It took less than 30 hours to find the shooter. In the meantime,

James was going on trains and buses that eventually took him into lower Manhattan. All the NYPD were out in full force looking for him. Local news released a photo of James so New Yorkers knew they should call authorities if they saw him. There was also an award promoted in the apprehension of the suspect. He was not taken into custody until the following day, April 13th, 2022. New Yorkers kept an eye out for the perpetrator and contacted authorities that the shooter was in the East Village. In the footage, James was sitting and walking around the neighborhood. Once authorities got him, the FBI and NYPD brought James in for charges of terrorism and violence against mass transportation, including one count for each gunshot victim. Gun violence is the main issue when it comes to this case. The Gun Violence Archive, a nonprofit research group, said this was one of the 648 shootings in the United States in 2022. James pleaded guilty to a firearms offense and ten counts of terrorist attack in federal court. He faces a life sentence.

The victims were taken to two different hospitals. Most patients were treated at NYU Langone Hospital for gunshot wounds and some of the passengers were treated for smoke inhalation. The rest were treated at Maimonides Medical Center in Borough Park. In total, 21 out of the 29 passengers that got injured sought care. Nine victims remained hospitalized. In the next section of the case study, we will go over the epidemiological aspects of Gun Violence.

### **Epidemiological Aspects of the Event:**

When we think of epidemiology, it is not always about the study of disease. There are four branches of epidemiology. The one branch that will be analyzed in this case study is violence and injury epidemiology.<sup>3</sup> An article in the New York Times focuses on the trauma that survivors deal with afterward. While wounds leave a scar, trauma can strongly impact mental health and affect an individual's well-being. Injury and violence epidemiology is part of public health, focusing on intentional and unintentional occurrences. This field examines causes, prevention strategies, and consequences when incidents occur. It does not focus primarily on mental health. However, it does recognize that there is a strong correlation when it comes to psychological well-being and trauma caused by intentional acts of aggression. The Brooklyn Subway Shooter did an intentional act of aggression and it was premeditated. The victims in the article discuss how they developed psychological conditions from this traumatic event. The victims report that they do not feel safe and are not able to function. For example, Rudy Perez (21) came from Guatemala 9 months before the attack. The bullet hit Mr. Perez's leg, and he was in a state of shock. He was unable to walk due to firearm injury and therefore not able to make income. That day's traumatic events made him anxious, so he had to seek mental health services. This example highlights for violence and injury epidemiology the vulnerability when it comes to the victim, impact on coping mechanisms of everyday life and anxiety which was caused by the traumatic experience.

Violence and Injury epidemiology focuses on firearm-related harm and injuries by exploring social-behavioral factors, type of firearm, demographic factors, geographical location, firearm access, criminal involvement, and any prior history of violence, including domestic incidents or suicide attempts along with injuries. It also explores mortality and morbidity rates which lead to data driven policies that focus on public safety concerns. Data collection and analysis can show

the importance of longitudinal studies when it comes to firearm-related harm and injuries.<sup>4</sup> Pointing to key patterns of firearms and identifying risk factors when it comes to firearm related incidents.

The U.S. Department of Health created Healthy People; it is a ten-year plan that has a bunch of objectives that are public health goals for the nation. They come out with a new edition every ten years for the decade to come. In Healthy People 2030, Firearm objectives and initiatives became part of that plan, showing statistical goals. It also shows if issues are improving or getting worse. One objective is to Reduce Firearm-related deaths; as of now, that number is getting worse. Another objective is to reduce firearm accessibility to minors. While establishing objectives is essential to address firearm-related injuries and death, effective management of a firearm situation demands coordinated response strategies that ensure the safety of individuals and communities.

### **Management of the event:**

In terms of management, when it comes to this case, the first branch was the MTA; employees were the first on the scene in terms of helping injured passengers until medical units arrived. They did fail when cameras were not operational at that time. News outlets questioned the MTA and safety concerns, asking how commuters could feel safe if the cameras were not repaired for months. MTA Chair and CEO Janno Lieber responded, saying they fixed all cameras and that it would not happen again to ensure New Yorkers that subways were safe. The next branch of management was the New York government, Governor Hochul and Mayor Adams. Mayor Adams worked closely with the NYPD Commissioner Sewell. First responders were the next branch, and that consisted of NYPD, FDNY, and EMS services. They arrived at the scene to help people who needed to be treated for gunshot wounds and victims who made their way out of the station. Lastly, the FBI unit in counterterrorism worked with the NYPD due to the nature of this case. These joint task forces focus on intelligence gathering, investigation, and upholding the law in response to acts of violence. As part of commitment to keeping communities safe, the FBI ensures effective communication channels to remain open between law enforcement and the public.

### **Communications of the event:**

Communication in this event started with the NYPD and MTA in terms of obtaining footage of the platform. Along with the FBI being activated due to the scenario of threatening a transportation system with firearms. MTA failed to supply footage. NYPD and FBI worked together to gather reports from victims and witnesses. Law enforcement then started to piece together information about the shooter, eventually leading up to his identity. Although they had photos of the suspect from passengers and then identifying the suspect, because cameras were down in stations, it was hard to know his whereabouts. NYPD Commissioner Sewall and Mayor Adams created a statement that shows the suspect's photo, a hotline number and a \$50,000 reward for information leading to the suspect's arrest. This was broadcast through local news outlets which was another means of communication, asking the general public to keep an eye open and to communicate to the NYPD if they saw James. Four individuals reported seeing James in lower Manhattan on April 13th 2022.

Later, we find out that the suspect called crime stoppers because he knew the police were after him for what he did. So he told authorities he was at a McDonalds on the lower east side. The NYPD found him and took the suspect into custody. Since then, Hochul vowed to ensure cameras are on every subway car by 2025. The MTA states that the repairs were made to all cameras. Police presence has increased in the subway system this past year(2022-2023), especially to stop incidents of violence. James's case was reviewed recently and has pleaded guilty to all charges. It was also discovered that the suspect had a prior record, nine arrests in New York from 1991 to 2007, ranging from trespassing to disorderly conduct. James asked for an 18 year prison term. The FBI investigated Frank James' apartment where there was a storage unit that had AR-15 and other weapons, these were all confiscated to be used as evidence in the court of law. Local news stations and reporters still focus on this case and give updates to the public on the court case, the charges and future sentencing. Effective communication remains essential in addressing incidents especially when it comes to Gun Violence Incidents in our communities.

### **Summarize:**

Since the Brooklyn Subway shooting, there have been two lawsuits in the case, one against MTA and the other against the gun company because of liability claims associated with mass shootings and public spaces. It also holds gun companies responsible and focuses on the central issue of firearm injuries and death. Gun violence is a public health crisis because thousands of lives are lost yearly. When we watch the news, we hear the terms homicide, suicide, mass shooting, school shootings, or domestic violence cases that indicate a firearm was the weapon in these incidents. Gun violence does not just impact individuals, communities, and society. It raises concerns about gun control, accessibility to firearms, and gun laws. In 2019, a statistic showed 10.4 deaths for every 100,000 people in the United States. The United States has the reputation to be the country where a gun violence incident is five times more likely to occur compared to other countries. France and Switzerland are other countries that deal with gun violence following the United States.

Based on [gunviolencearchive.com](http://gunviolencearchive.com), in 2022, we had 20,200 GV deaths. In 2023, we are currently at 30,968 GV deaths.<sup>5</sup> Gun violence happens at malls, movie theaters, concerts, hospitals, subways, supermarkets, and even nightclubs. It sadly happens in education establishments, a critical issue that impacts the safety and well-being of children and teachers. We have had tragic incidents at elementary schools, such as Sandy Hook Elementary in 2012 and a decade later in the 2022 Uvalde Texas School shooting. These incidents highlight the devastating impact of gun violence on families and communities. It shows the loss of young lives, bringing attention to the vulnerability of children in school settings. There is an urgency to implement comprehensive gun violence prevention strategies and an urgent need for school safety measures when such incidents occur. In school, shooter drills exercise safety plans for potential threats. The purpose of the drills is to simulate real-life situations, allowing students and staff to practice appropriate responses; however, there is still debate on its effectiveness and the need for improvement, also causing unnecessary anxiety to young students. There is also urgency regarding response and preparedness from law enforcement regarding gun violence incidents.

The biggest challenge when it comes to gun violence is legislation because some states believe in the right to carry a weapon and differ in opinion regarding firearm access and gun laws. Having

different gun laws in each state is problematic because it creates loopholes that allow individuals to evade restrictions and obtain firearms even when they have a history of violence or mental health issues. We need stricter policies on guns regarding accessibility by doing more thorough background checks and regulating sales of firearms to prevent misuse. However, we cannot forget that there is a downside to that because there are issues currently with illegal firearms trafficking, which is challenging because there is no regulation on distribution or information on who is buying these weapons. Illegal firearms are a statewide and global issue because illegal guns are accessible because of the black market. We need firmer gun laws that eliminate these loopholes to prevent high-risk individuals from obtaining firearms. Gun laws will reduce gun violence incidents, protecting society because public safety measures make the difference. There needs to be more surveillance on the internet, where erratic behavior on social media, along with threats of violence. Lastly, firearm research must be promoted because it can help collect data to make more effective policy decisions regarding firearms.<sup>6</sup> Understanding the complexities of gun violence is urgent to find root causes to enhance public safety for all communities.

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