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Residents experience a familiar fear after Navy Yard shooting

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In the wake of another mass shooting in the United States - the fourth in a little more than a year - the wear-and-tear on emotions has some people on edge.

"I'm shocked," said Derreck Elderkin, a 26-year-old Hyde Park resident. "I don't understand how something like this can happen."

Monday's shooting rampage at the Navy Yard in Washington, D.C., left 13 people dead, including the 34-year-old gunman identified as Aaron Alexis.

The FBI has no definition of a mass shooting but defines mass murder as "a number of murders (four or more) occurring during the same incident, with no distinctive time period between the murders. These events typically involved a single location, where the killer murdered a number of victims in an ongoing incident."

"I feel like absolute chaos is breaking loose in our country and it's making our own people turn against ourselves," Elderkin said.

Karla Vermeulen, deputy director for the State University of New York at New Paltz Institute for Disaster Mental Health, said that some people have an "understandable" case of "disaster fatigue," especially on the heels of the recent Sept. 11 anniversary.

These types of tragic events have become so horribly common to hear about, Vermeulen said.

"They just burst into everyday life," she said. "Everyone in that building (in the Navy Yard) went to work thinking it would be a normal day. It's emotionally devastating."

People "need these illusions of safety, although if you look at it statistically they're not illusions," Vermeulen said. "Look at the number of people who did go to work and had a normal day."

Coverage on social media and video footage "almost brings people along for the ride," Vermeulen said. "I wouldn't say people get numb to these things, but I would say they move on very quickly. ... That's a protective mechanism for those of us who weren't involved."

Tom McGuire of Pleasant Valley said he doesn't think a trend of tragedy has emerged, but constant updates are available now, and they weren't in the past.

"With technology and information, it's always right there, right at your fingertips. ... Now everything changes within a minute," McGuire said.

The information itself is not the problem, McGuire said.

"I think it (the information) is fine ... it keeps you aware," McGuire said. "It is just unfortunate when it becomes sensationalized. That's what puts the fear in people."

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Mass shootings, 2007-2013

April 16, 2007, Virginia: Seung-Hui Cho, 23, kills 32 people and himself on Virginia Tech campus.

March 12, 2009, Alabama: Michael McLendon, 28, killed 10 people, including his mother, four other relatives, and the wife and child of a local sheriff's deputy across two rural Alabama counties. He then killed himself.

Nov. 5, 2009, Texas: Maj. Nidal Hasan, allegedly opened fire on his colleagues in 2009, killing 13 people and wounding 42 others at a Texas military post.

July 20, 2012, Colorado: At least 12 people are killed when a gunman enters Colorado movie theater, releases a canister of gas and then opens fire during opening night of the Batman movie, "The Dark Knight Rises."

Aug. 5, 2012, Wisconsin: Seven people died in the shooting incident at the Sikh Temple in Oak Creek, Wis. One of those was the shooter.

Dec. 14, 2012, Connecticut: Gunman Adam Lanza killed his mother, Nancy Lanza, at their Newtown, Conn., home before killing 20 children and six adults at the Sandy Hook Elementary School. He then killed himself.

Sept. 16, 2013, Washington, D.C.: At least 12 people were killed and several more wounded when at least one gunman opened fire Monday at the Naval Sea Systems Command headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Source: USA Today

Video

To see local reaction to the Washington Navy Yard shooting, visit www.poughkeepsiejournal.com

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