

SECOND EDITION

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# CRIME PREVENTION FOR HOUSES OF WORSHIP

**ASIS**  
INTERNATIONAL  
*Advancing Security Worldwide*

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### SECURITY AND CRIME PREVENTION PLANNING

“Planning is required since it is an approach that recommends identifying and stopping a problem before it occurs, of reducing hazards in given situations, and of forecasting rather than reacting to circumstances.”<sup>1</sup> Planning is perhaps the most important phase because the preventative actions you implement will reduce the opportunities for crimes to occur at your place of worship. As you plan and begin to write, consider these key elements: Protecting people and programs, protecting property, and preparing for emergencies.

**Protecting people and programs** will include many elements of crime prevention on the building and grounds as we focus on how to protect people. It will include background checks for volunteers and workers. It should also include protecting programs that the church sponsors and/or administers. Make a list of the various services/programs offered at your facility and include them in your plan. Services could include: children’s church, day care, food pantry, youth ministry, homeless shelter, adoption clinics, outreach ministry, concerts and special events, and more. Include a plan to protect your computers and the data they contain.

**Protecting property** will also include many elements of crime prevention on the building and grounds to avoid victimization and disruption to your ministry.

**Preparing for emergencies** will include all natural, man-made or medical emergencies that could disrupt your ministry. Natural emergencies could include fires, weather emergencies, and earthquakes. Man-made emergencies include letter or bomb threats, assaults, shootings, disruptive events, a child abduction, etc. Medical emergencies could include everything from heart attacks, allergic or chemical reactions, injuries and more. This plan must contain evacuation strategies for the buildings, which must be posted in strategic locations throughout the building.

As you develop your plan, you will find that it will continue to evolve as you refine what works best in your facility. Programs will change, personnel will change and you will continually address your needs and align new priorities. Some changes will simply be based on scheduling needs.

As the plan is developed, it is important to establish firm lines of command, control, and communications with your security director. A decision-maker should be identified and established with the understanding that this person has the

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authority to act, and that the decisions can be effectively communicated to those who need to know them. It is advisable to also designate someone in succession in the event of an absence.

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### **Engage Leadership and Form a Security Committee**

Leadership must be engaged if the crime prevention and security committee is going to be effective. Members look to leadership for support and approval and knowing they are doing the wishes of leadership will enhance and improve commitment to the tasks at hand. Designate a member of your staff/team as security manager who will be accountable for developing, implementing, reviewing and regularly updating the plan, as it will be an evolving document. He will also provide and coordinate training to the members/volunteers and employees.

The security committee should include many members, male and female, young and old, active and inactive with various levels of education. In all probability, the security manager will be the chairperson and the one who formed the committee. It should be a partnership between your congregation, local law enforcement, security professionals, staff and leadership, thereby ensuring the maximum “buy-in” to the plan. The best plan in the world is useless if people do not adhere to, and implement it.

The size of the committee should be representative of your congregation, including age and gender demographics. If you decide to form numerous subcommittees in the planning effort, you will need many volunteers.

One of the biggest challenges you will face is building consensus. Many congregants already understand the need for increased security and are seeking reassurance from leadership, as well as an opportunity to be an active participant in the decision-making process. Others will be resistant to the changes and you will need to provide justification and reasonable explanations and solutions. You will need a buy-in from your congregants and your staff.

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### **Develop a “Security” Mission Statement**

It is important for the security committee to develop a mission statement that clearly defines the goal and objectives of the committee. The security mission statement may be different from the mission statement of the facility because the security committee is more narrowly defined. Security is a process, not a destination and it is a long-term issue that requires careful planning and review. After developing the mission statement, it is recommended that you develop “action points” and develop a timeframe for completion. It is at this stage that you may appoint subcommittees in order to accomplish more within a shorter timeframe.



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## Develop an Emergency Contact List and Identity Chain of Command

Once you have a security director, you will need to develop a list of contacts for key people who may need to be contacted in the event of a crime or an emergency. This list will include the security director, the pastor, communications personnel, key ministry members, local emergency responders, insurance agents, and local utility providers.

While developing this list, establish the chain of command for emergencies. It is best to have someone in control who can assess the situation and make split second decisions.

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### Conduct a Risk Assessment

A risk assessment should be conducted by the security committee, with advice and council from the local police and respected private security contractors. The first step is to “brainstorm” to determine what needs to be accomplished. Ask basic questions such as those listed in the Risks Assessment sidebar.

These are just a few questions to generate discussion on the committee and to give some general directives. Security is more than guns and badges and it requires more than just a written procedure. It requires that each person participate and make conscious decisions in view of a “criminological perspective.”

#### Risks Assessment Questions

- How are we protecting our leader?
- How are we protecting our property?
- How are we protecting our people?
- Is our building located in a high or a low crime rate area?
- What are your most vulnerable areas?
- What are your most valuable assets?
- Where are our most valuable assets?
- Who has access to these assets?
- Do we have adequate insurance?
- Do we have an up-to-date inventory list of all our assets?
- If someone was going to rob our facility, when would be the best time, and why?
- Do we have fraud prevention checks and balances in place?
- What types of crimes have occurred at other institutions in our community?
- If someone disrupted our services, how would we respond?
- If a hostage was taken, what would we do?
- Are we taking precautions in our hiring process?
- Do we have members trained in how to handle a medical emergency?
- If someone reported a sexual molestation in our congregation, how would we respond?
- Do we have security cameras to prevent criminal activity at our facility?
- Do we have a severe weather plan?
- Do we have a program to check our fire alarms and extinguishers?
- Do we have a day-care operation or soup kitchen?

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## Ask for Law Enforcement Assistance

Partnerships with your local law enforcement officials are extremely important. Contact them and ask if they have a crime prevention officer on staff. They will review your site for security weaknesses and make recommendations for improvement. Schedule a meeting with the officers who patrol the area in which your facility is located and get to know the officers in your area. This will help you develop a community partnership and a proactive approach to reducing crime.

An informal security assessment is simply a walk-through in which officers identify weak spots. Weak spots are areas that are hard to view or areas that are vulnerable. A formal security assessment is a walk-through conducted by an officer trained in Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) who can provide more technical expertise. He will focus on weak spots, but will also provide architectural recommendations to enhance the safety of your facility. If your local law enforcement agency does not have someone certified in CPTED, your state patrol department may be able to help.

By conducting a walk-through, the officers will identify potential hiding places by pointing out places that are not visible to others or may not be covered by the cameras. They can examine door and window locks and advise if they are sufficient. They can assess the area where you count and/or store the offerings. They can advise if you need to install additional security mechanisms.

### Key Security Actions

- Greeting and observing visitors
- Securing and locking the doors
- Using an alarm system
- Using cameras/recorder systems
- Calling the police
- Alerting security officers
- Keeping calm
- Preserving a crime scene by not touching or moving anything that the perpetrator has touched

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### Security Committee Training

After you have formed a security committee and developed a mission statement and a security plan with key actions, it is important to train your security committee in the policies and procedures and teach them how to respond. It is important that each participant is aware of “key actions” and has a clear understanding of his/her responsibilities. Serving on the security committee is a ministry

of great importance and one that should be taken with great attention to detail. You will need to train the pastor, leadership team, security team, worship leaders, emergency responders (from your congregation or the community), and congregational members and volunteers.

Your congregation will want to know about the crime prevention and security plan. They will want to know the mission, benefits, and the necessity for the plan.

## **The Layered Security Approach**

Your security programs should be “layered.” Security professionals sometimes refer to this concept as the “onion” approach. It is used by personal protection specialists to protect VIPs and properties. For example, the Secret Service uses this approach when protecting the president of the United States. They have agents in very close, further away, and remote to his location. These are the inner to outer layers. These security professionals are stationed at appropriate locations and are used to assist primary agents who are “watching” for threats and to decrease the likelihood of assassination or kidnapping.

The “layered” security approach is appropriate for your security program, as well to protect people and property. The extremes of your church property are the outer security layer usually the parking lot, located at the extreme perimeter of your property. Security must begin here, at the perimeter.

The outermost security is usually accomplished by parking attendants, volunteers, members, “guardians,” security or police officers, and traffic officers. It is intended that these individuals are conspicuous with their radios and uniforms. Corporal Chip Gillette, a member of, and the first responding police officer to the 1999 Wedgewood Baptist Church “spree” shooting in Fort Worth, Texas, believes that volunteers should wear distinctively colored vests clearly marked as “welcome committee” or some similar designation.<sup>2</sup>

### **Layers of Security**

- 1st layer: Streets and parking lots, traffic officers and parking guardians
- 2nd layer: Outside an “umbrella” welcome committee to observe walkways and grounds
- 3rd layer: Building entranceway welcome committee
- 4th inner layer: Ushers and sanctuary hosts
- Innermost layer: Controls platform access, pastoral and distinguished speaker personal protection

Those designated can direct traffic and assist in parking lot traffic control while they are watching cars, people, and looking for anything out of the ordinary. The Bellvue Baptist Church in Cordova, Tennessee, is one of the largest churches in the Mid-south. Bellvue has a marked security patrol vehicle, complete with security decals on the doors, emergency flashers, and the standard police/security vehicle “bar” light system, although it is equipped with amber flashers versus the police blue to comply with good policy and Tennessee State Code.

During services, this vehicle is constantly roving, to ensure the safety of all worshippers. If the security officer finds someone sitting in a car, he approaches the visitor courteously and inquires if he can provide assistance. However, at the same time, the parking lot visitor's identity is determined, and notes are made about the automobile description and tag number. Legitimate worshippers appreciate this courteous attention while those with less than pure motives will feel uncomfortable and leave. The Bellvue parking lot is much safer than that of the other churches in the area. It is also worshipper friendly. The Bellvue parking lot is an unacceptable environment for those who come to commit crimes against worshippers, to steal cars, or to steal from the unoccupied cars parked there.

The next layer of security should include your outside greeters, standing just outside the entry doors. These individuals may be equipped with portable radios or cellular phones. They open doors for all who enter, paying particular attention to the needs of the elderly or infirmed. They give directions to classrooms and can provide aid in many other ways. In inclement weather they provide umbrellas and help with loading and unloading wheelchairs or baby strollers, if aid is needed.

The next layer in your security circle is the usher or greeter, congregational volunteers who stand immediately inside the building, usually in the foyer outside of the sanctuary. These individuals hand out bulletins, smile, greet, and provide directions. They make members feel wanted, visitors feel welcomed, and criminals feel uncomfortable. The innermost security circle should be in close proximity to your leaders.

**Considerations for Policy Development and Effective Layering**

**Interior Questions**

- Are there areas that are not visible by others or are not accessed by others?
- Are there areas that are not well lighted?
- Are there areas that are not covered by the security cameras?
- Are there areas that are small in which a victim would have difficulty escaping?
- Are there areas in which screams would not be heard?
- Are there areas likely to be entered by women versus men?

*Develop a List of Your Most Vulnerable Areas  
a.k.a. "Hot Spots"*

While reviewing the interior of your facility, answer the basic question: Does your worship center have an area that is more likely to be a "hot spot?" Listed in the sidebar are some keys to help you determine interior "hot spots."

The exterior would include basic questions such as those in the following table.

While this is not a conclusive list, it will generate much discussion and will cause you to focus on situations and events that will be unique to your facility.

### *Monitored Entrances*

Ensure that entrances to your building and property are monitored. No one should enter your building unscreened and unnoticed. This can be accomplished using ushers, volunteers, staff, closed-circuit TV cameras, intercoms, and door release systems. Parking lots should be monitored.

### **Exterior Questions**

- Can criminals escape quickly from your parking lot and vehicular access areas?
- Can police officers see your premises clearly from the street?
- Do trees and scrubs obscure the view of passersby and patrol officers?
- Are there areas where predators can hide and attack suddenly?
- Does your membership walk to their cars in the dark?
- Is your nighttime illumination sufficient?

### *Develop a Profile of Perpetrators and Suspicious Behavior*

Your law enforcement officials can help you develop this profile based on people's behaviors and not their sex or race. No one can predict who will be a perpetrator of crime in a house of worship; however, my research indicates that an individual's behavior is a key to determining who might be in your house of worship just to commit a crime. This information must be shared with your security committee and your volunteers who are greeting and observing visitors. However, it should be noted that not every criminal will fit the profile. There is always a "lone wolf."

### **Suspicious Behavior**

- Individual appears to be nervous and looking around.
- Individual has on inappropriate clothing, such as baggy clothes or big coats.
- Individual is carrying bags or large purses.
- Individual is not focusing on the service and does not participate in activities.
- Individual leaves the service to wander throughout the facility.
- Individual leaves the service after just a brief encounter.
- Individual is not friendly.
- Individual does not make eye contact (may wear sunglasses).
- Individual is found wandering throughout the building and has a weak excuse as to why he or she is there (looking for the rest rooms, etc.).
- Individual appears to be angry.



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### *Establish Observation or Up-Front Participants*

These are security volunteers who sit in the front of the building (looking out into the audience) and are in a key position to observe those who enter the building. It is important that they develop a procedure so that they can signal individuals in the audience to “sit up” and take notice if they perceive a threat. The same would apply to security volunteers sitting in the balcony. It is also recommended that individuals trained in security have key seats by the doors, alarms, phones, etc.

### *Form a Welcoming Committee and/or Greeters*

These are members who wait at the doors to greet visitors and should be considered your first line of defense. They are positioned to welcome, assist, direct and deter. These volunteers are usually long-term members that recognize many of the church's members and can often spot a first-time visitor. These volunteers are a vital component of your crime prevention and security team, as they will be the first to recognize suspicious behavior such as someone trying to avoid them or wearing heavy or bulky clothing in hot weather, excessive sweating, and nervousness.

Additionally, an umbrella patrol is very effective when raining and is a great service to your members! It also ensures that people are present outside.

An additional line of security can be in the form of ushers who are inside the building and available to assist individuals in finding a seat or locating family, etc. It's a second set of eyes looking for anything suspicious while being accommodating. Keep in mind that any of these positions can be filled by current or retired, paid or unpaid, uniform or plain clothes law enforcement officers.

### *Traffic Control*

Since most of your congregation will arrive within 30 minutes of the start time, you can expect traffic delays. As a line of security, it is recommended that you provide traffic control by volunteers or paid officers. Volunteers in reflective vests with wands can direct traffic into your parking lots and you can hire law enforcement officers to direct traffic on public roadways and to control traffic lights. Either approach will enhance the member's experience and more eyes are available should someone come with the intention to harm.

### *Make an Inventory Listing and Project Identification List of valuable items*

It is recommended that you make a list of everything that is in the building. Items to include are instruments, furniture, office equipment, kitchen appliances, sound equipment, etc. Along with this list, attach serial numbers, makes, models, col-

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ors, purchase price, etc. Make certain that each item is marked with an identifying number. It is recommended that you have pictures or a video of every room in your facility. These items should be stored off-site or in a safe deposit box.

#### *Examine Doors, Locks, and Windows*

Examine each door, lock, and window. Determine if additional locks are needed or if you need to install new locks. There are various locks that can be purchased to strengthen the doors. Also, consider the type of glass in each. Can it be broken? If so, is it big enough for someone to crawl through? Window bars are a good deterrent. Doors and windows need to be clearly visible from a distance.

#### *Ensure Clearly Visible Classrooms and Offices*

It is highly recommended that classrooms have doors with windows or long, narrow windows along the doorframe so that individuals can see into the room. This is a good defense against abuse claims, both real and false, and makes it more difficult for someone to hold a classroom hostage. This is also a good recommendation for offices. If necessary, the narrow windows/satellites can be fixed with mini blinds to provide privacy.

#### *Install Strategically Placed Cameras*

When conducting the interior and exterior security assessment, determine where you need to install surveillance cameras. Some potential areas include entrance doors, hallways, classrooms, and hallways for the children, areas by the pastor's office and the safe, parking lots, and the perimeter of the building. If you cannot afford to install cameras in every area, make a list of potential sites and consider the risk of each site, then assign a number as a priority. Cameras can record in black and white or color, with or without sound. Cameras can be fixed or pan-tilt zoom, meaning someone can zoom in on an object.

Cameras can be positioned in plain view of the public or they can be overt. Some organizations choose to hide the camera in a small plastic dome while others put the cameras in a clock, radio, exit sign, fire sprinkler head, smoke detector, flood light, or speakers. The installation of a camera does not need to be intrusive to the congregants.

#### *Designate a Camera Viewing Center*

Once cameras are installed, you will need a place for security and/or volunteers to review them. Some cameras may record at night, but if nothing happened,

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there is no need to review. However, the cameras in your parking lots will need to be watched as congregants are coming into the building to worship. A large television screen can show several cameras at one time. Your computer technicians can have the cameras recording to the server and after a certain time frame, they can be recorded over.

This area should be set up in your lobby, if possible, so the people watching the cameras can provide other services, such as providing directions and answering questions.

### *Money Procedures: Cash, Check, and Credit Card*

Review the procedures and determine who has access to the money. When is the money counted? Is it counted the same time each week? How many people are present? There should always be at least two persons present when counting the money and both must verify the deposit matches the amount counted.

Deposits should be made by more than one person, if possible, and the times and route should vary to avoid setting a pattern. You could consider having a security guard or a security firm such as The Brink's Company to make the deposits. How much money is kept on-site overnight? It is recommended that you do not keep the offerings from the weekend services overnight unless they are in a safe and/or vault with a camera focused on them.

Credit cards expenditures should be closely monitored by someone other than the person who has permission to use the card. Fraud often occurs when there is a lack of accountability. If accepting credit cards as payments/donations, consult with your financial institution to ensure that you are compliant with the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS). You do not want to store any credit card numbers on your server.

### *Computer and Data Security*

Computer and data security should be an integral component of your security program. An unsecured system may leave members, donors, and staff open to personal harassment and financial difficulties and could be an embarrassment to your institution, if information is compromised. Your institution can be crippled by a computer attack before you even know what has happened.

Your computer may be vulnerable to attack by outsiders accessing your machine through Internet connections or by malicious insiders. If you do not have a computer security professional in your congregation, you should hire one. You need to

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have adequate firewalls in place to protect your data and you need daily backups that are tested on a regular basis and stored off-site. Anti-virus software is a must to protect your systems. It is also recommended that you have a policy regarding privacy, confidentiality, and network monitoring for employees and volunteers.

### *Conduct Interior and Exterior Security Checks*

Members of the security committee should be actively involved in conducting security checks during the services, during the day, and at the conclusion of each day's activities. This would include interior and exterior checks. After a service has started, it is imperative to lock some of the doors to eliminate points of access. It is also important that vacant rooms be checked to ensure that no one is hiding or that any inappropriate behavior is taking place.

### *Opening and Closing Procedures*

It is important that members conduct security checks upon arrival at the facility. A great way to reduce this task is to install an alarm system in every room with motion detectors. If the alarm is set the night before, you can feel confident that no one is in the building upon your arrival. It is also good to have motion detector lights that will come on as you walk through the building. This way, you are less vulnerable walking through the facility by yourself upon arrival or before departure.

As part of your locking procedures, visually check windows that are accessible from the ground. Also, check fire doors to make sure they are in a locked position.

### *Develop a Lockdown Plan*

A lockdown will only occur under extreme circumstances such as when a child is missing, hostile intruder inside the building, hostage situation, or a shooting. If your volunteers and/or employees hear gun fire, they should lockdown immediately in their classroom, office, restroom, wherever they are located and they should stay in this area until danger has passed. A lockdown includes locking all doors and windows, and moving away from windows. You can lockdown without being told to by your security director. Stay in lockdown until your security director or the police give an "all clear." In the event of a missing child, security should block every entrance/exit and every vehicle should be searched before exiting the property.

### *Develop an Evidence Policy*

It is imperative that evidence be protected and your security team needs to be trained on this topic. Do not erase or paint over graffiti until the police give per-

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mission. If a rock was thrown through a window, do not touch it or remove it until the police have arrived and attempted to lift fingerprints. If a sexual assault has occurred, the victim will need to be taken to a hospital. If a crime occurs at your facility, take a written statement from everyone who was there. These can be submitted to the police department, but keep a copy for your records in the event of an independent investigation.

### *Maintain Key Inventory and Control*

Conduct a key inventory to determine who has keys and to which doors. If you cannot account for all of the keys, it is recommended that you have the locks “re-keyed.” The offices should have a limited number of keys and they should only be issued to individuals who have a legitimate need to access the offices. If individuals leave your congregation, they should return the keys. Otherwise, you will be faced with having to re-key. This will be helpful in the event there is a burglary and no-forced entry. That leaves it to one of two conclusions. The door was left unlocked or someone had a key. Along with the police, you would begin to talk with individuals who have a key.

### *Limit Access Control*

Access control is important with key inventory because it is important to know who has access and to what areas. A security desk in the main lobby can allow individuals into the building with proper credentials, establishing a policy that when the facility is open, no visitor, delivery service person, or unknown individual is able to enter your facility without being observed and approved. Visitors should be directed to their destination or should wait in the lobby until their party is available. Some areas of the building will need to be secured for evening services if they are not used, i.e., baptistries, choir lofts, balconies, etc. Limit access to the parking lots and the building when not in use.

### *Photo Identification*

All employees should have and wear identification. Visitors are not allowed access to the building without proper photo identification.

### *Fencing and Gates*

Install perimeter fences to clearly establish your property outline using gates to limit and control access to areas that are not used daily. Parking lots should be closed at night as there is no need to have access. Also fences around the HVAC systems could prevent them from being damaged or stolen.



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### *Emergency Phones*

Each facility should have a telephone or at least have access to cellular phones. The strategic location of the telephone could be instrumental in the event of an emergency. Land lines can be used if your facility is facing a bomb situation.

### *Facilities Lighting and Parking Lots*

Observe your buildings and parking lot's lights at night. Check to see that each window and door is well lighted. Motion detector lights should be in areas around the building, especially corners. The fixtures should be up high enough that someone cannot tamper with the bulbs or settings. Every point of entry should be well lighted.

Lighting is generally considered the most important nighttime security resource. If you decide your church needs more lighting, solicit expert advice to ensure that your lighting is evenly distributed and that all "blind" spots are illuminated. A soft, uniform light, free of glare and consistent in its intensity over your parking lot and the entry/exit areas will reduce the potential for crime. There should not be areas where the lights are very bright and others where it is fairly dark. A crime prevention specialist, using a digital light meter to measure lighting, will show you which areas have an acceptable or unacceptable lighting variance. Additionally, your plan should have someone designated to check the bulbs on a weekly basis to replace burned out bulbs.

Review the number of entrances to the parking lots. Is it necessary to have more than one entrance open at all times? Should some entrances be blocked after the main services on the weekend? Please refer to **Chapter 4** for additional information on parking lots.

### *Drive-by Visibility for your Points of Entry*

Drive by the facility at day and night to check the visibility of all points of entry. You want to make certain that the doors are visible from a car and that the view is not blocked by trees or shrubs. Also, it is recommended that you not hang any type of banners or signs that block visibility into the doors from the outside. Also, do not park buses or vans in front of doors. When parking buses, be sure to leave sufficient room that individuals could not hide between them.

### *Emergency Plan*

It is recommended that you have an emergency plan for natural, human-made and medical emergencies. Your security committee and other interested mem-

bers should be trained on the emergency response plan that is published and widely distributed. What do you do in the event of a tornado or storm? Where is the safest area away from doors and glass if there is a shooter in the building? Do you have access to radios or televisions in these areas?

The actions of the emergency team will be instrumental in keeping the congregation calm. They may also save lives by their actions and proactive approaches.

### *Fire Plan*

In the event of a fire, where are the phones and fire extinguishers? Is the building address posted by the phones? If you dial 911 and the operator asks if you are in the country or the city, will the caller know? Exit signs should be examined on a monthly basis to make sure the light bulbs are good and if battery operated, they should be checked monthly. Fire extinguishers must be “re-charged” after a certain

amount of time. Keep a list of each extinguisher and when it is set to expire. You will need to contact a company to come and re-charge the extinguishers. They can also check the exit signs and replace bulbs if needed.

#### **Medical Response Team Plan**

- Do you have basic medical emergency kits?
- Do you have more advanced medical equipment available?
- If someone gets injured, would you have the necessary equipment to prolong life?
- What if someone faints?
- If someone is suffering from low blood sugar, could you assist?
- How do you remove the injured person without disrupting the service?
- During funerals, do you have medical staff on standby for those that are overcome with grief?
- Do you have a medical team site that is safe and free from distractions?
- If your facility has more than one building, do you have first aid kits in each building?
- Are workers trained in first aid and CPR?

### *Medical Response Team Plan*

A medical response team is necessary. The extent of services will again be determined by the size of your congregation. If you have medical professionals that are members of your congregation, ask if they are willing to volunteer to handle any medical emergencies. You can consider having an ambulance on standby in the event of an emergency. The following topics (see sidebar) should be discussed when determining your medical needs.

As with many of the recommendations in this book, the degree to which you respond will be determined by the financial resources and the size of your congregation.

If your facility has a nursery, day care, school, or classes for children, you have a huge amount of risk, and therefore you will need to develop procedures covering every topic mentioned in this book relating to children. By developing policies and procedures, you are indicating a good faith effort to provide a safe environment for everyone and it will be a strong defense in the threat of lawsuits. If you follow the stated precautions, conduct background checks, and provide staff/volunteer training, your liability is greatly reduced.

***You must conduct a background check on every employee/volunteer who works with children or youth.*** Your background investigation should include criminal records, credit records, apartment and housing records, and employment histories

Additionally, you must have first aid kits and you need cameras in this area for the protection of your staff and children. You may want to have the parents provide cell phone numbers so information can be texted or tweeted in a timely manner, should an emergency occur.

#### *Youth Camps and Retreats*

If your facility takes youths to camps and/or retreats, you need to define acceptable behavior for the youth and the adults. Keep in mind that predators often seek situations where they can be alone with young people. You do not want to create this environment. You need to ensure the youth and adults that inappropriate behavior is not acceptable and will be prosecuted.

#### **Policies for Nursery, Day Care, and/or Schools**

- Rule of Two—no one adult can be alone with a child.
- Sign in policies. You must have sign in and pick up sheets which need to be retained for at least two years.
- Develop late/early arrivals and departure policies.
- Bathroom policies—no adult can be alone with a child. If you do not have two adults, another child should accompany you.
- Sick child policies. Whom do you call and when?
- Child transfer authorization. Must know who can pick up the child.
- Background investigations on all workers and volunteers.
- What doors are open during the day?
- Who has access to the building?
- Define how children will be disciplined.
- What do you do if a parent reports abuse or inappropriate conduct?
- What do you do if you suspect a child is a victim of abuse?
- If a child is absent, whom do you call and at what point?
- Drug and alcohol policy should be posted.
- Security cameras at the entrance doors, classrooms, and hallways.

### **Youth Camps and Retreats**

- Supervision must be close by at all times, even at night.
- “No one plays alone” rules.
- Approved adults must be present during all activities.
- Adults cannot accompany youth in the showers, but they can be in the locker rooms.
- Inappropriate behavior should be defined.
- Rules of dress and conduct should be clearly defined and agreed upon
- Have a parental consent form.
- Parental consent form must be signed.
- Drug and alcohol policy should be posted.
- Ensure youths leave with approved individuals.
- Photo identification should be worn by staff and any others on the premises.

### *Gymnasiums and Ball Fields*

If your facility has a gymnasium or work-out room that is open during the week or late at night, you need extra precautions. At a minimum, you should have security cameras at the entrance(s) and the parking lot. As people are coming and going at various times, perhaps tired from a workout and their hands full of clothes and personal belongings, they could be targeted for an attack. If you can afford to have a security guard there, that would be an advantage.

If your facility has ball fields or tennis courts, you may want to have cameras installed. If someone is injured or abducted, it can be a key part of evidence.

### *Extra Curricular Events*

Events associated with the congregation should be clearly monitored at all times. If you are hosting events such as concerts or symposiums, you are responsible for security. Consider this when planning and preparing your budget.

### *Adult Trips*

Depending on the type of activity, determine the amount of information that is necessary. If you are providing transportation to an event, you should have a consent form that includes name, address, medical conditions, and emergency contacts. A copy should accompany the person in charge and another copy kept on file in your office. It is also recommended that someone with a medical background attend as an escort.

If you provide day care for the elderly, it is important that you have contact information on file. This should include, but is not limited to several contact numbers, list of medications, addresses, physician phone numbers, insurance plans, etc.

Establish a policy that anyone driving a church owned vehicle must have a valid driver's license, be 21 years of age, and have a good driving record. You will need to run a motor vehicle report on all drivers at least once a year and keep a copy of their driver's license on file. If they had driving violations in the past, it is best to allow years between occurrences before allowing them to drive for you.

Be sure that the vehicle is equipped with a fire extinguisher and first aid kit and the appropriate insurance certificates and registration papers. Appoint someone to be responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the vehicle fleet, including the pastor's car. Remember anything you can do to prevent an accident is a good investment of time and resources. If the church is negligent in maintaining their vehicles and an accident occurs, lawyers may come looking for liability and damages.

### *Screening and Hiring Procedures*

This is probably the most important element of having a secure facility. Many times, members of the congregation victimize individuals for years before it is discovered. Literature has supported the claim that we are most likely to be victimized by people we know. Why is this? We let our guard down and become trusting. We allow people to invade our private space and we become comfortable with the invasion as the perpetrator is always convincing that his actions are right.

We have all been excited when we have new people attending our services and joining our congregation. We often can't wait to put them in a leadership role thinking that they were "sent" to us. How many times have we stopped to check their background by calling their former pastor or employer? Do we know if they left in good standing? Are they running from an allegation of inappropriate behavior? Ron Aguiar, an author and director of security at Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky, recommends that new members be active in the church for at least six months before they are allowed to serve. This gives you time to get to know them and helps to affirm their commitment to your mission.

Do we hire individuals to work with our children without requiring a police records check? If so, we are setting a dangerous precedent. Also, it is recommended to establish a policy that will allow suspension pending investigation if someone is accused of a major violation.



As a standard policy, you should issue an “application” form, both to potential employees and to volunteers working in sensitive positions. All of the actions mentioned in the sidebar aren’t necessary in every case. A credit check would only be required if a person is going to handle funds, such as the administrator

#### **Preemployment and Pre-assignment Actions**

- Contact previous employers.
- Contact previous minister/priest/rabbi.
- Contact two or three previous board members.
- Submit a police records check.
- Ask for a personal history form.
- Discuss illegal drug or alcohol use policy.
- Require a credit check.

handling the business affairs or a secretary who writes all of the checks. However, talking to previous employers or previous church administrators will help to ensure you have made a good decision in trusting this person.

Youth teachers and those who work with children and volunteers dealing with these special groups need to be screened. At a minimum, you should conduct a local, state, and national record check and contact several of their former pastors. People who commit sex crimes or are pedophiles,

typically have a history of the problem. If you are diligent, then you won’t erroneously assign an inappropriate person to an important responsibility or a significant task. Never sign a contract with an employee prematurely. Submit every hiring recommendation to the congregation’s board for approval to limit personal liability.

Additionally, contact your local attorney about Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) to ensure your hiring policies and applications are in compliance with federal law. All hiring applications and employment contracts should be written by an attorney.

### **Develop a Policy on Investigations and Reporting**

It may be challenging for church leaders and the security committee to agree on reporting versus non-reporting of crime. If you call the police, the call will be on dispatch and the local media may follow. If you do not report the crime and the victim contacts local media or social media, it could appear that you are trying to hide the incident. So, what is the correct answer?

Obviously, if there is a shooting, robbery, or an assault you would contact the police. But, what if someone alleges discrimination or abuse? What if someone embezzles money? Will you investigate the complaint or call your primary law

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enforcement agency? If the charges are sustained and the state wants to prosecute, will the congregation participate?

If you allow someone to resign without prosecuting and move on, are you condoning their behavior and allowing them to continue their lifestyle? On the other hand, if you participate in a court trial, is the congregation going to suffer from negative press? How will the community accept your decision? How do we keep the behavior of one person from impacting the reputation of the congregation? What do you do if an infamous convicted criminal starts to attend your congregation? What do you do if someone attending your congregation commits a horrendous crime? How do you respond to the media? What if protesters are across the street? What if one of your pastors or deacons is charged with a serious crime?

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### **Develop a Media Response Plan**

Develop a media response plan that outlines who will issue statements to the media and in what manner. It is very important that the statements be accurate and calming to portray the congregation in a positive manner. Address issues such as when or if you will release names and conditions of the victims? Will you do so before their relatives have been contacted? What are the ramifications of releasing the information?

#### **Develop a Media Response Plan for all Types of Crimes**

- Armed robbery
- Hostage events
- Lone shooter events
- Vandalism
- Service disruption
- Other serious crimes
- Medical emergencies
- Natural disaster
- Protestors

You should designate a single spokesperson for your facility. They should be the sole contact point for the media or anyone seeking information. Information they release should be clear, factual, non-emotional, and consistent with law enforcement requirements. Before issuing a statement, consult with law enforcement officials as they may not want you to release certain information until the investigation is complete. Having a clear and concise media policy can protect the congregation from libel, slander, and defamation lawsuits.

Developing a holistic approach to security is more than alarms and locks. We must ensure that our leaders and members are secure; secure from physical or spiritual harm, secure from an overly aggressive press, secure from individuals whom they have trusted, and secure from the unknown.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>B.M. Gray II, as found in Lawrence J. Fennelly, ed., *Security Applications in Industry and Institutions* (Boston: Butterworth-Heinemann Company, 1992), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Corporal "Chip" Gillette, Telephone interview by Dr. Quarles, 10 January 2001.

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### SECURITY SERVICES

Once a crime prevention and security plan is developed, it is time to begin implementation. Focus on all the resources and try to maximize the talents available. But, at some point, it will be time to hire a security staff or a security firm. It may be cost effective to use a combination of both.

Many of the largest religious facilities have their own proprietary security staff, where the institution is the employer. As the employer, the institution, church, synagogue, or temple will be responsible for recruiting, selecting, training, and supervising the security staff members and ensuring that policies and procedures are followed. Security can include the following components:

1. Building and perimeter security during services.
2. Building and perimeter security when the buildings are open.
3. Building and perimeter security when the buildings are closed.
4. Building and perimeter security at night.
5. Parking lot safety and traffic control.
6. Ministerial/Clergy security.
7. Financial security while counting, collecting, and depositing money.
8. Computer security for donations and computer integrity for employees.
9. Hiring and background checks for staff and volunteers.
10. Special event security such as concerts, guest speakers, etc.
11. Extracurricular activities such as trips, visits, ballgames, etc.
12. Short-term work for religious holidays.
13. Camera installation, monitoring, and recording.

Each of these areas will be developed according to the size of your facility and the financial resources you have allocated for security services. Your requirements for security during the services could be very different from the security you need at night. Providing security services is a very important task and certainly, not one without challenges. A comprehensive crime prevention, crime avoidance, and crime deterrence program is a complicated balancing act between the need for security and the freedom to worship.

Begin with a needs assessment using the list above. Then identify your current resources to implement the security services. Using your resources of employees, volunteers, members, city, county, or state law enforcement officials, or pri-

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vate security firms, determine how each area should be secured and staffed. How can cameras be installed to assist in each area?

There are many options to achieving your goal of having a safe place to worship. You may have volunteers and/or members performing some security functions. You may have local law enforcement agencies providing some functions. Cameras installed in certain areas may alleviate the necessity of having a person in that area. You may have contractual security personnel for some functions. You may choose to employ your own security personnel [proprietary] for around-the-clock services, but use contractual security personnel for worship services and special event management. The good thing is that you have options and you may choose any combination of providers, as you seek the best solution to minimize cost and optimize safety.

If you decide to implement a proprietary program, you will be responsible for all hiring, scheduling, including vacations, holidays, and assignments, timesheets, payroll, etc. If your facility has multiple services during the weekend, as the security coordinator, you will need to be there to ensure that all of your areas are adequately secured. If someone calls in sick, you will need to fill the void. You will also be responsible for ensuring that your security officers are “state certified” (most, but not all states have security regulatory agencies), as well as providing bonds, social security, workman’s compensation, matching whatever benefit package your other staff employees have, and a substantial comprehensive insurance program including security protection. You will find that your security personnel are quite costly in terms of liability insurance rates that are based on security officers gross salaries.

*Remember: The main goal for hiring a uniformed security guard is deterrence.*

*The main goal for hiring a plainclothes security guard is apprehension.<sup>1</sup>*

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## **Contractual Security Agreements**

Contractual private security personnel are employees of a separate agency that will perform security coverage based on an hourly rate. This approach requires a lot of planning and you must decide the number of personnel, the locations, the hours, dates, events, etc. The contract can be extensive and it is recommended that your legal counsel is involved in the negotiations. If you have friends in the law enforcement community, it would be good to include them in the planning, contracting, and implementation phases. Also, it is recommended that you con-



tact your local law enforcement agencies, city, county, and state, to see if they can provide any services for your facility. For example, they may be able to provide traffic control at your facility, perhaps on Sunday mornings. What will this cost? It varies from agency to agency ranging from free to an overtime cost.

Together with the company, define the requirements of the assignment (i.e., scope of services). Detail the times and locations along with rules of conduct and develop checklists that can be completed, dated, and signed. Be prepared to provide a map of the facility with copies of your written operational guidelines to be used in the event of an emergency, as well as, the list of contacts.

Private security is a profit-oriented industry that provides personnel, equipment, and/or procedures to prevent losses caused by human error, emergencies, disasters, or criminal actions.<sup>2</sup> Under this arrangement, the private security firm assumes a larger liability than the institution does. Because of liability, your administrators, or security committee, should read and review the comprehensive security policy of your contractor, the state certificates on each security employee at the time the new employee is employed, certification on all initial training, retraining, and in-service training programs; as well as, the insurance and workers compensation policy of the contractual firm. Most importantly, check references with other companies and/or religious institutions and inquire about lawsuits and settlements.

**Records to review prior to hiring a security firm/contractor**

- Comprehensive insurance policy.
- Certifications on all security officers used at your site.
- All initial training and in-service training programs of the security officers used at your site.
- Workers compensation policy on all security employees.
- Check references from other companies.

Security firms should have a Contractor's Broad Form General Liability Insurance with a minimum of one million dollar per incident with at least three million dollars total. Higher coverage is even better. Additionally, it is recommended that you include the contractual security vendor in your insurance policy. While this additional coverage could be expensive, this will greatly reduce your liability if your contractual security agency insurer refuses to honor its commitments during a lawsuit. Additionally, you should have Worker's Compensation Insurance and Automobile Liability Insurance coverage for all vehicles used. Include sexual harassment coverage through Professional Liability coverage. Your organization should be listed as an "Additional Insured" on their liability insurance policy.

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Security personnel requirements during regular services or special events will be extraordinary. “The choice between proprietary and contract guard services may be one of quality control versus flexibility and cost. The decision is not so clear-cut, however. Both proprietary forces and contractor firms *with good management* can meet the needs of your [facility].”<sup>3</sup> While there may be a 24-hour security program manned by one or more personnel simultaneously, the regular services are going to spiral manpower requirements significantly. A church with worship attendance of 5,000 to 7,000 may have 15 to 20 uniformed security officers managing the parking lots, sidewalks, and streets for the several blocks surrounding your facility. If you have sufficient parking spaces, your security personnel are in closer proximity to your members.

A privately funded extension of the public police responsibility, the contractual security officer is usually in uniform and most security officers in America are unarmed. Only a fraction of the total private security effort is armed today. Security guards control access to your properties, continually patrol to detect fires or break-ins, and enforce the rules and regulations established by the institution. In some cases they are authorized to stop, question, and arrest criminal suspects. It is within this authority, and especially when an authorized weapon is carried, that the liability greatly increases.

Some contractual firms work in security patrol vehicles, traveling from one contract site to another to ensure the security of these premises. Often, the security operation is in concert with burglar and fire alarm operations and central alarm stations owned and operated by the security firm. Some private firms respond immediately upon receiving an alarm of either a break-in or a fire, often arriving even before the police. Others just patrol the businesses who pay their wages, though, by extension, all the businesses in between and around their contracts are more secure because of their intensive patrols, which are in addition to police patrols and activity.

If you have parking space limitations, your worship service attendees may park several blocks away. In an inner-city area, these people need to be protected from predators and those who would target their automobiles as they worship. This is when a contract with a well-trained security team can be of great use.

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### **How to Negotiate a Contract for Contractual Security**

Churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples are challenging opportunities for the professional security provider. However, the security consultant or provider may be under some stress when approaching the religious institution. Most are filled with varying customs and practices. Men wear hats in a synagogue and

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everyone takes their shoes off in a mosque. All worshippers “cross” themselves upon entering a Catholic Church. Priests, nuns, rabbis, and pastors may wear clerical clothing. All of this may be confusing for the security provider, especially if he or she comes from a non-religious background. It may also be true when asked to assist another denomination or in providing security at a Protestant church versus a Catholic church versus a Jewish synagogue.

First, if you are walking into a unique situation, ask the person with whom you are meeting to instruct you on appropriate visitor behavior so you do not violate any customs. They will respect that and will teach you anything you need to know. They will quickly understand that you don’t know much about their group or institution as you interview them for all the information you need to provide a security contract.

Secondly, the security contractor already has the knowledge, skill and ability (KSAs) to provide security for them. They have experience in securing stadiums, coliseums, sporting events, concerts, and theatricals. Perhaps they have provided security for artistic exhibits, museums, and concerts. Many of the security skills, both in protecting VIPs, staff, special guests, and paying customers, as well as the assets on premises, are the skills you will need to protect any house of worship. Don’t let the clerical clothing and any variance of religious behavior obscure the security tenets that you implement.

In all likelihood, the security contractor will not be able to supply all of your security needs as part of the contract due to various reasons, including cost. Recognize that you will use volunteers for some functions, and you will provide security training for these volunteers. Develop a partnership that will benefit all parties.

What security do you need the most? Using a divided pyramid as a security paradigm, you can lay the base groundwork. The security you “must” have will be at the base. This will normally include outside-facility security operations, especially around the parking lots and property perimeters. The next division on your paradigm should be the security you “should” have. Some of these needs can be supplied by welcoming committee members, dressed in specially marked and colored vests, supplied with cell phones or radio transceivers. The last division of the paradigm should be those security principles that are “nice” to use.

A security contractor may choose to offer a segmented bid structure, so that they don’t lose out on everything if they don’t get the entire contract. Getting some service or sales, will allow them to continue to come back to inspect your goods and services and stay in dialogue with the institution’s administration. Perhaps they will get the “entire” contract next time. Occasionally, a small contract leads

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to increasingly larger responsibilities. As mentioned before, financial resources generally determine the amount of security services provided.

The way religious institutions make purchasing and contractual decisions is unique. No one church, synagogue, or mosque will be the same. Even within “like faiths,” there may be considerable differences. When you try to market your contract, find out who you will be dealing with, and who will be making the final decision—a committee or the congregation. Some purchasing and contractual decisions can be authorized beforehand by a committee, others require full membership.

This isn’t much different than working with many large businesses and corporations. The security contractor should get the name and telephone number of the contact person and call them back after an appropriate period. They may be able to help you with future bids. Worship center security offers a valued service in our society, both for the security profession, the service of man, and the service of God.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Anti-Defamation League. “Protecting Your Jewish Institution: Security Strategies for Today’s Dangerous World, 2005, p. 97.

<sup>2</sup>Karen M. Hess and Henry M. Wroblewski, *Introduction to Private Security* 2nd ed., (Saint Paul, Minn.: West Publishing Company, 1988), p. 25.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

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### EMERGENCY PREPARATIONS

In a disaster, local officials and relief workers cannot reach everyone immediately and in fact, it may take days to reach you. How will you survive during this time?

Developing a plan for emergencies to include all natural, human-made or medical emergencies that could disrupt your ministry. Natural emergencies could include floods, hurricanes, tornado, earthquake, inclement weather or a widespread illness. Human-made hazards include accidents, acts of violence by people and acts of terrorism. Medical emergencies could include everything from heart attacks, allergic reactions, chemical reactions, injuries and more. Other emergencies could include technology related hazards and the malfunctioning of systems, equipment or software.

The plan must address how to save people. Plan to help them prepare, survive and recover. Start with identifying resources/partners within your congregation and your community. Build networks with these individuals and have them on board and in-line should they be needed. Your plan must also address how to protect the facilities and property. Plan on how to survive and recover it as quickly as possible with as little interruption as possible.

It is important to have someone designated as the leader/point person. This person will be in charge of the situation and will make all necessary and immediate decisions, as well as, keeping the church leadership informed. They will coordinate with local responders and the media. In situations like this, you need a person that is a leader who can manage, handle pressure and stress, live on no sleep, and continually serve the needs of others.

The leader will also need a list of dependable volunteers that he/she can contact and they will be there. If they can't get there, then he will need to work with the individuals that are there. Delegate as much responsibility as possible and allow individuals the opportunity to choose responsibilities that matches their talents as much as feasible. Along with the list of volunteers, develop a list of First responders with as many phone numbers as possible. Include, police, fire, EMS, gas, electric, telephone, water and insurance company.

The Department of Homeland Security recommends the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) Standard for developing a preparedness program. A plan



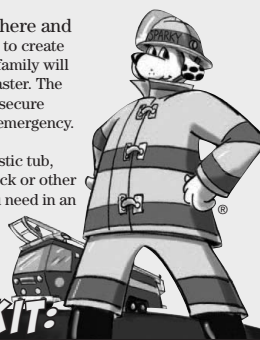
should include resource management, emergency response, crisis communications, business continuity, information technology, employee assistance, incident management and training. Each of these will be discussed in the following pages. Additionally, NFPA recommends that you have an emergency supplies kit.



# GET READY!

Disasters can happen anywhere and at any time. By taking the time to create an emergency supplies kit, your family will be prepared in the event of a disaster. The kit also helps children feel more secure knowing it is there in case of an emergency.

The supplies can be kept in a plastic tub, small suitcase, trash can, backpack or other container. To learn what else you need in an emergency supplies kit, go to [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov).



## EMERGENCY SUPPLIES KIT:

Sparky® is a registered trademark of the NFPA.

- ☐ Water — one gallon per person per day for drinking and sanitation — store 3-day supply
- ☐ Ready-to-eat food, canned juices, comfort/stress foods — at least a 3-day supply
- ☐ Battery-powered or hand-cranked radio and a NOAA weather radio, and extra batteries for both
- ☐ Flashlights and extra batteries
- ☐ First aid kit
- ☐ Non-prescription drugs such as pain reliever, anti-diarrhea medication, antacid, laxative
- ☐ Prescription medications, contact lenses and supplies, denture needs
- ☐ Whistle to signal for help
- ☐ Infant formula and diapers, if you have an infant
- ☐ Water and pet food if you have pets
- ☐ Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- ☐ Dust mask or cotton t-shirt to filter the air
- ☐ Plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place
- ☐ Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- ☐ Can opener for food
- ☐ Aluminum foil
- ☐ A jacket or coat, hat and gloves
- ☐ A complete change of clothing including long pants, long sleeve shirt, and sturdy shoes stored in a waterproof container.
- ☐ Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person
- ☐ Rain gear
- ☐ Mess kits, paper cups, plates and plastic utensils
- ☐ Cash or traveler's checks, change
- ☐ Paper towels
- ☐ Tent
- ☐ Compass
- ☐ Matches in a waterproof container
- ☐ Signal flare
- ☐ Paper, pencil
- ☐ Personal hygiene items
- ☐ Soap
- ☐ Disinfectant and household chlorine bleach
- ☐ Important family documents such as copies of insurance policies, identification and bank account records in a waterproof, portable container. Remember to include emergency contact numbers.
- ☐ Passport, bank account numbers, credit card account numbers and companies
- ☐ Books, games puzzles, portable music device

**NOTE:** Replace food every six months. Re-think your kit and family needs once a year. Replace batteries and update clothes, etc.

### My Personal Pack Checklist

Have children create their personal pack. Have them include things like their favorite book or stuffed animal. These familiar things will help keep them comfortable during an emergency.

- ✓ Change of clothes
- ✓ Blanket
- ✓ Books
- ✓ Favorite toy
- ✓ Paper, pencils and crayons



For more information, visit the National Fire Protection Association at [www.nfpa.org/disaster](http://www.nfpa.org/disaster).  
Developed by NFPA. Funding provided by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Domestic Preparedness.

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An emergency plan should include an evacuation plan for each building in the event something should happen inside of the building. These maps should be posted in strategic places throughout each building to direct individuals to the exits. They generally note the exits, fire extinguishers, emergency phones and current location.

At any time, you could have a complete or a partial evacuation of your facility, depending on the situation. It is important that your staff knows how to respond and how to “shelter-in-place.” For example, if you have an active shooter in the sanctuary, the children’s areas could be evacuated or they could “shelter-in-place. It may be best to “shelter-in-place” until the police arrive and they can cover the children while they are evacuating from the building. They would also be able to keep the suspect in his current location, hopefully reducing injury to others.

It is also possible that you could need to detain your employees/visitors at your facility should some type of terrorist activity or a massive manhunt occur. This is beginning to happen on a much too frequent basis as our society becomes more violent and prone toward killing. As I am writing this chapter, a neighboring city, about 10 miles from my home, is on lock-down as the police search for a violent offender. (Bowling Green, KY).

There are three additional examples where communities have been put on lock-down/shelter-in-place. In Boston, Massachusetts, after the Boston Marathon Bombings, the communities of Watertown and Cambridge were told to shelter-in-place while police and military personnel searched for the two bombers. Officers went door to door searching houses, buildings, garages, cars, etc. The suspect was eventually found, hiding in a boat in a backyard.

In Pennsylvania, residents of Monroe County had to shelter-in-place for several days while the State Police searched the woods for a survivalist that had killed two state troopers. Following this event, a law firm began soliciting residents or “anyone who was unlawfully evicted from their home or if their vehicle was searched without a warrant” to come forward.<sup>1</sup> Officials opened temporary shelters for displaced residents and they had road closures, schools were closed and sporting events postponed.<sup>2</sup>

Additionally, in Ferguson, Illinois, residents were forced to shelter-in-place and follow a strict curfew following civil unrest between the community and the police department.

College campuses and local school districts are often placed on lock-down because of a shooting incident or a security threat. Luckily, most of these incidents

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are very short and the students can return to their classrooms. However in criminal incidents, students will not be allowed to leave (if they are a witness to the crime) or return to campus until the police have secured and completed their analysis of the crime scene. Sometimes this involves talking to many witnesses and it can take hours and days to complete.

What would happen if there were people at your facility and you received an order that people could not leave? What would you do? Would you have food and water for individuals? Would you be able to make their stay as pleasant as possible? During the Boston Massachusetts search, several news stations showed a clip of a law enforcement officer delivering a gallon of milk for a family with a baby. Think of how you could survive with the supplies and food that you currently have stored in your church. Consider the possibility that the water supply could become contaminated. The Department of Homeland Security recommends that you have at least enough food, water and supplies for 72 hours.<sup>3</sup>

Your emergency preparedness plan should include specifications about shutting off the utilities. Take a look at your heating, ventilation and air conditioning system to determine if it is secure or if it should be upgraded to better filter potential contaminants. Know how to turn these systems off in the event of contaminated air coming in through the systems. Prepare written instructions and photos, if appropriate, on where/how to turn off the natural gas and the water. Do you have a generator in the event that electric is off? Do you have an emergency radio? Electricity, gas, water, sewage treatment and telephones may be off for hours, days, or weeks.

It is very important to develop a relationship with your local emergency responders, police and fire. Invite them to come and meet with you to discuss the risk assessment and what can be done to reduce and/or prevent crime. They will be the first responder to any crime. You want them to be familiar with your organization and you can offer them the use of your facility as a command headquarters, pre or post disaster, a distribution center, or a place for responders to rest, or write reports. Keep the first responders informed of special events and when to expect changes. Invite them to community events to help build relationships.

Also, you should meet with your local fire officials and have them review your facility and your fire plans. In the event of a fire, your workers and volunteers need to know where the fire extinguishers are located. They need to know how to evaluate the classrooms and sanctuary in an orderly manner to avoid panic and injury. Be prepared to assist the elderly and individuals in wheelchairs or walkers.

Churches with daycares should have a plan which includes specifications as to how they will communicate with families during a crisis. Most facilities use social

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media to get the word out quickly. However, it is possible that cell towers could be destroyed, thereby crippling our communication systems. You should have a printout of names and phone numbers that you can take with you should you have to leave your facility and resort to using an old-fashioned landline.

Likewise, children's ministry workers need to know how to evacuate the classrooms and account for children during an emergency. They need to know where to lead the children and how to "shelter-in-place" and/or lockdown. Workers should have a list of the children's names along with parental contact information that can be carried with them, if at all possible. If you can collect medical information (such as allergies and medications) that will be helpful in the event you cannot return to the classroom.

For many people, the most difficult part of an emergency is not knowing if your family and/or friends are safe. If you have children at daycare or school, you want to be with them, regardless of the risk to your safety. If you have teenagers at college, you want to know if they are safe. If you have elderly parents, you want to be there. Develop a communication plan with your family to have a central location on where to report. Your church may play a role in helping the community, should your facility be available for people to leave messages. After 9-11, people put up fliers on temporary fence panels around the Manhattan area. There needs to be a location where people can come to find help.

Listen for warning sirens and signals, but don't let this be your total source of news. In the event of a hostage situation or shooting, they will not be activated. Often times, they do not work properly and some areas do not have them.

It is generally required by state law that your facility must have an **evacuation plan** that is posted throughout the building. All exits must have lighted exit signs, with electric current and a battery back-up, so individuals can find an escape route in the event of a power outage and/or fire.

**Medical emergencies** create many challenges. You can expect everything from a heart attack to a sprained ankle. If you have doctors and/or nurses in your congregation, ask them to serve as volunteers in this part of your ministry. You should have medical rooms designated with the appropriate medical equipment including a defibrillator, first aid kits, gloves and a stretcher. During the planning process, you should identify times in which you may need additional medical personnel on hand, for example, during little league ballgames.

If your facility can afford to have an ambulance at the facility during services and special events, that is an excellent addition to your preparedness. If you cannot afford to have one on site and it becomes necessary to call for EMS, notify your

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security director so that someone can be watching for the ambulance and can direct them quickly to the victim.

Additionally, it is recommended that you train some of your security team in basic first aid and CPR. Hopefully you will never have a situation with multiple victims, but having additional first responders will only ensure that more people survive.

Churches must keep a log of any injuries that occur on the property and you should keep a record of anyone that is transported off of the property to a medical facility. This information must be reported to your insurance company and you will need names, address, description of what happened, witness contact information, etc. Always prepare for a lawsuit and pray it never happens. It is important to realize the extraordinary service these individuals provide our communities. Good relations will help to ensure thorough and timely investigations and responses.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Nick Falsone. "Law firm targets Pennsylvania State Police for handling of Eric Frein man-hunt." The Express-Times. 23 September 2014. <http://blog.lehighvalleylive.com>.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Department of Homeland Security. [www.dhs.gov](http://www.dhs.gov).