

Increasing Awareness

Suggestions for enhancing safety and security within your church

Though not every violent act can be prevented, the suggestions offered below can help your church respond more effectively to criminal acts at church and improve your ability to communicate critical information in a crisis situation.

1. Consider establishing a risk management ministry team to assess vulnerabilities in your church and formulate a risk management plan
2. Develop a security plan as a part of the overall risk management program
 - a. Consider the use of a security consultant with expertise in church security
3. Conduct a security audit of your church; preferably by an outside security expert
4. Establishing a security team
5. Enlist, engage, and train you church staff, leaders, and volunteers (deacons, greeters and ushers) to become the “eyes and ears” of the security program
6. Ensure that all staff know of and understand the church’s security plan
7. Do not allow staff to work alone or in isolated situations. Always ensure that there are at least two employees present at all times
8. Establish an internal distress code that will alert others in the office to your need for assistance
9. Keep all church doors locked except when in use and then limit access points as much as possible
10. Consider installation of a “panic button” for frontline workers such as receptionists
11. Ensure adequate lighting is provided for the interior and exterior of all buildings, parking lots, and walkways
12. Ensure that staff and volunteers that leave the premise after dark park their vehicles in well-lit and visible areas
13. Make sure that all staff, leaders and volunteers know the location of telephones, exits, and escape routes
14. Prepare for the worst case scenario and you’ll be ready for lesser emergencies

These suggestions are provided to spur discussion and consideration about safety in your local church. Using these suggestions is no guarantee against an act of violence. However, addressing these issues will help you be better prepared for the unexpected.