

Increasing Church Security and Awareness

The role of church security is to have the resources ready to effectively respond to the unexpected; whether it's a medical emergency, fire, or violence. Developing a church security ministry will help the church prepare to limit exposure to risk, reduce the potential for harm, and minimize the impact of disruptions and violence. The suggestions below can help you respond more effectively to the unexpected at church, improve your ability to communicate during an emergency, and manage crisis.

1. Establish a risk management ministry team to assess vulnerabilities in your church and formulate a Comprehensive Risk Management Plan
2. Conduct a security audit of your church; preferably by an outside security expert
3. Develop a security program to increase effective response
 - a. Consider the use of a security consultant with expertise in church security
4. Establishing a security team that includes, active and former law enforcement, military, and other volunteers with the right mind-set and willing spirit.
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 church staff and volunteers understand the church's security program
7. Do not allow staff to work alone or in isolated situations. Ensure that there are at least two employees present at all times
8. Establish an internal distress code to alert others of your need for assistance
9. Keep church doors locked except when in use and then limit access points as much as possible
 - a. Consider installing a "panic button" in critical locations
10. Provide adequate interior and exterior area, parking lot, and walkway lighting
11. Ensure everyone that routinely leaves after dark park in well-lit and visible areas
12. Make sure that all staff, leaders and volunteers know the location of emergency equipment (fire extinguishers, AEDs, etc.), exits, and escape routes
13. Prepare for the worst case scenario and you'll be ready for lesser emergencies
14. Educate staff and volunteers to recognize the warning signs of possible hostile activity
15. Manage parking to keep vehicle away from buildings and from blocking ingress/egress points

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