ASSESSING CHURCH SECURITY

Presbytery of Western Kentucky
February 9, 2021

INCIDENTS OF TARGETED VIOLENCE: 2009 TO 2019

While still the exception, acts of targeted violence against houses of worship are real events and deserve planning and consideration.

PLANNING FOR THE UNLIKELY

Even given the low likelihood of an incident of targeted violence impacting your congregation, it makes sense to assess your congregation's current security policies and update or develop a strategy to protect you church and your members.

The Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) provides helpful resources that can assist a congregation in evaluating their current security measures as well as developing and implementing a security strategy.

Security Framework

ESTABLISH ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Security Coordinator
Responsible for implementing the security strategy.

Security Planning Team
Supports the Security Coordinator with planning and executing the security strategy. Security experience preferred but not required.

Safety Team
Includes greeters and volunteers as the first line of defense in identifying and reporting suspicious activity.

DEVELOPING
YOUR SECURITY STRATEGY

Develop Security Plans
The planning process will prepare for specific incidents and should be updated regularly. Some key plans to include are:

Emergency Action Plan
Active Shooter Plan
Business Continuity Plan
Incident Management Plan
Short-Term Recovery Plan
Long-Term Recovery Plan

PLANNING AND
ASSESSMENT GO
HAND-IN-HAND

Conduct Vulnerability Assessment
The vulnerability assessment is the first step to understand your security needs. This will identify vulnerabilities and risks to help prioritize security steps. This should be conducted by a security professional to examine all physical and cyber processes critical to security.

IMPLEMENTING
YOUR SECURITY STRATEGY

Cybersecurity
Types of Cyber Attacks · Creating a Culture of Cyber Readiness · Cyber Hygiene · Online Safety · Security Practices and Awareness · Combatting Specific Threats

Daycare and School Safety Considerations
Assess the Facilities · Procedures and Protocols · Physical Security · School Climate · Behavioral Health · Training · Funding Resources

Protecting Your Facilities
Outer Perimeter · Middle Perimeter · Inner Perimeter

Building Community Readiness and Resilience
Best Practices for Your HoW Community · Specialized Policies and Long-Term Planning · Engaging the Wider Community

PRIORITIZE ACTIONS BASED ON
VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT AND SECURITY PLAN

STEPS TO DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE SECURITY STRATEGY

1. Establish Roles and Responsibilities
   - Determine who will be responsible for developing and implementing your security strategy.
     - Significant involvement from the Session/Deacons and pastor

     - Possible Additional Roles to Consider:
       - Security Coordinator: responsible for implementing the security strategy

       - Security Planning Team: support the Security Coordinator with planning and executing the security strategy (members with security experience could be useful)

       - Safety Team: Greeters and volunteers to assist in identifying and reporting suspicious activity

   - Roles and responsibilities will change and take shape as the congregation assesses its vulnerabilities and determines what is needed.

1. CONDUCT A VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT

- Before you can develop and plan for security, you have to know your congregation's particular vulnerabilities and special considerations

- Allows the congregation to identify and prioritize security steps – advisable to have a professional assist with this (security professional, law enforcement, etc.)

- CISA has also prepared a self-assessment checklist for congregations to use
  - Contains 49 questions with notations to assist a congregation in assessing its security and planning

Each Question has 2 parts: The question and then different levels of options to address each question

Security and Safety/Emergency Management					
Question	Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very High
1. Does the house of worship have a security manager or security committee to make security management decisions?	The house of worship does not have a security manager or committee.	The house of worship has a security manager or committee, but security management activities are sporadic.	The house of worship has a security manager or committee. Security management activities are regularly scheduled, but not coordinated with other committees, departments, or groups (e.g., special events planning, childcare).	The house of worship has a security manager or committee. Security management activities are regularly scheduled and coordinated with other committees, departments, and groups, but additional personnel are needed to support the facility's security mission.	The house of worship has a security manager or committee. Security management activities are regularly scheduled and coordinated with other committees, departments, and groups, and staffing levels fully support the facility's security mission.

Security and Safety/Emergency Management					
Option for Consideration	Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very High
	Designate an individual as a security manager or a group of individuals as a security committee, and ensure that person or group is responsible for developing, implementing, and coordinating all security-related activities. If the manager or committee members have no security or law enforcement background, make sure they reach out to local law enforcement to become acquainted. Provide security management training and/or access to training materials and resources.	Schedule regular meetings to review security procedures and incidents.	Coordinate safety and security planning with other committees, departments, and groups.	Hire or appoint additional personnel to support the facility's security mission.	Regularly assess the facility's security management program. Conduct security surveys, risk assessments, and threat assessments of the facility and neighboring areas. Implement best practices based on collaborative relationships and new or updated resources.

- **Background:** Security or safety managers (or volunteer security or safety personnel) are responsible for the effective implementation of security/safety policies, programs, directives, and training within their house of worship. Security or safety committees (also known as volunteer security teams or volunteer safety teams or departments) are a group of people working together to fulfill this same purpose. They may include religious leaders, congregants, security professionals, and first responders.
- **References:** (1) ASIS Houses of Worship Committee, *Recommended Best Practices for Securing Houses of Worship Around the World*, 2017, accessed January 13, 2020, https://www.asisonline.org/globalassets/get-involved/councils/documents/best-practices-securing-houses-of-worship.pdf (2) Interagency Security Committee (ISC), *Facility Security Plan: An Interagency Security Committee Guide*, 1st edition, 2015, accessed January 13, 2020, https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ISC-Facility-Security-Plan-Guide-2015-508.pdf.
- **For more information:**
  - U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency (CISA), "Hometown Security," 2020, accessed April 29, 2020, https://www.cisa.gov/hometown-security.
  - State of New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, *Role of Security Coordinators*, undated, accessed January 14, 2020, https://static1.squarespace.com/static/54d79f88e4b0db3478a04405/t/5a4d52ee53450af96083504f/1515016942789/Role+of+Security+Coordinators.pdf.

BASIC ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- What are our threats and vulnerabilities?

- What is the likelihood of any given threat to occur? (allows you to prioritize your security planning)

- What are consequences if the threat occurs? (Tangible losses / social damages)

- What is our congregation's tolerance for the associated consequences?

- What is our congregation's attitude toward security practices?

- What personnel resources do we have to direct, manage, and oversee security operations?

- What is our budget to support security initiatives, both immediate and long term?

2. DEVELOP A SECURITY PLAN

- Using the results of the congregation's assessment, develop a security plan

- While an overall security plan is important, remember to plan and prepare for specific incidents and phases:

  Examples:

  1. Inclement Weather

  2. Active Shooter

  3. Emergency Action

  4. Business Continuity

  5. Incident Management

A BALANCE BETWEEN CONVENIENCE, OPENNESS, AND SECURITY

- It can be difficult to determine what line to set for security initiatives

  - No congregation wants to be an unwelcoming fortress, but each congregation can strike its own appropriate balance to create a safe and secure environment that is still welcoming

  - The key is for the congregation to always be in a constant process of discussion and evaluation

    - Keeps the security program up to date, while also keeping all members engaged and knowing they are heard

    - Communication is key:

      - Communication between leadership and members

      - Communication between members

      - Communication between the congregation and security services / law enforcement

3. IMPLEMENT THE SECURITY PLAN

- Build Community Readiness and Resilience – Creating a Culture of Safety

    - Align security goals with the congregation's core values and provide constant messaging to reinforce with the congregation

    - Establish community expectations related to security: what do members expect and what is expected of them?

    - Implement a clear information sharing process: empower members to report; timely respond to concerns; confidentiality

    - Provide training to members: either internally or by using outside resources (online, presentation by local police, etc.)

    - Document all security guidelines and protocols so they are easy to find and easy to share with members

DETECTION AND PREVENTION

Outer Perimeter

- lighting, fencing/gates, video surveillance, communication with emergency services, landscape

Middle Perimeter

- Doors and Windows (material / locks / strategic use of locks)

- Access Controls (security systems, alarms)

- Emergency Generator

Inner Perimeter

- Train members in evacuation routes and procedures

- Create and inform members of a shelter in place room

- First Aid availability

- Fire Alarms and Fire Suppression systems

- security for children's areas

RUN / HIDE / FIGHT

- For situations where early detection of possible threats isn't enough, consider training members in the Run, Hide, Fight protocols:

    - Run: attempt to evacuate if there is an accessible escape path

    - Hide: If evacuation is not possible, find a place to hide

    - Fight: As a last resort and only when life is in imminent danger, attempt to incapacitate the attacker

Instruct members in all of these options in a way that is specific to the congregation (building layout, congregation size, etc.)

RESOURCES

- Mitigating Attacks on Houses of Worship Security Guide

https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Mitigating%20Attacks%20on%20Houses%20of%20Worship%20Security%20Guide_508_0_0.pdf

- CISA Security Self Assessment:

https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/DHS%20CISA%20HoW%20Self-Assessment%20Survey_508_05.04.2020.pdf