

THE MESSAGE

A Safety Bulletin for the Religious Sector
From Gallagher National Risk Control

Gallagher National Risk Control

produces The Message, an electronic publication promoting safety and covering insights relevant to our clients working in the religious sector. These bulletins will enable you to review your program and provide information to assist you in strengthening your risk management plans.

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Securing Your Site

Heightening Awareness of Security Risks at Your Religious Organization

Studies have confirmed a dramatic increase in crimes against religious organizations in recent years. Tragically, dangers such as arson, vandalism, assault or threats of assault, breaking and entering, and theft have become more common occurrences in churches. It's time for all religious organizations, small or large, to proactively evaluate their security risks and develop security and safety strategies.

Below are a few considerations to consider to reduce the possibility of theft or enhance security in your organization.

Practical Considerations

- Secure your entrances/exits
 - » Inspect all of your exterior doors to make sure the door frames are strong, the hinges are protected, and that they are able to stay secure on their own without any additional tools.
 - » While keeping a 24/7 open door policy can be effective for the mission, it leaves religious organizations vulnerable to theft and vandalism during off hours, and is ill-advised.
- Ensure windows are properly secured
 - » Windows are a common entry point for criminals and can be easily be left unlocked if not careful. Consider walking through your property and locking all windows or alternative routes for entry (including sliding doors). For added protection, consider investing in anti-penetration film to be installed by a qualified contractor. This clear protective layer that makes glass shatter resistant. This plastic film was engineered to withstand hurricane-force winds, rocks and break-ins.
- Light up your site
 - » Vandals, burglars and other criminals don't like to be in the spotlight. Keep them at bay with ample outdoor lighting. Place lighting around entry points, pathways, stairways, and any other vulnerable areas around your site. Not only will you make intruders skittish, you'll also cut down your risk of a stumble on your way up and down steps.



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- Ensure landscaping is well kept
 - » Overgrown trees, shrubs, and other plants could create places for vandals or burglars to hide. Trim down trees and plants close to your building that could be used for cover. Opt for smaller flowers and bushes instead. If you have trees or bushes near windows consider removing them.
- Eliminate attractive nuisances
 - » Tour your property and look for any large rocks, bricks or any other usable projectiles around your site. Also, ensure that all ladders, stools, and other methods of escalation are properly stowed away and out of site. These items can lead to impromptu thefts and break-ins because they are readily available. Be sure to remove these items especially if they are near any windows or doors.
 - » Keep dumpsters locked and out of sight at all times, as these are common spots for arson fires to take place.
- Invest in security systems and alarms
 - » In one study, 83% of convicted burglars admitted to checking a house or property for an alarm system before deciding whether to break-in, and 60% said seeing an alarm prompted them to move on to another house or property. Whichever security system you install, be sure to place the company's signs in visible areas so would-be thieves are on notice that breaking in will trigger the alarm, capture their image on camera, and notify the police.
 - » A functional and well-placed closed circuit security camera system that continuously monitors your premises can detour potential criminals and also aid in identifying them post incident. Cameras should be placed facing all entrances to the building, as well as covering areas like parking lots and other buildings on-site. Ensure that the system keeps the images on file for a minimum of 30 days. Most systems allow for cellphone alerts during off hours when motion is picked up, allowing you to monitor potential incidents in real time, enabling the police to potentially get involved before any damage is done.



Considerations to Expand Your Site's Safety and Security

View safety and security as a stewardship matter

Protecting the people in our churches and securing the properties and facilities that we all use demonstrates compassion and is simply good stewardship. An effective effort in this area is not a one- or two-year project. Ongoing security evaluations and regular reviews of safety procedures by parish leaders are crucial.

Consider enlisting the help of a selected group of qualified individuals who could evaluate the church's security needs, establish specific policies and procedures, coordinate training, centralize resources and monitor progress in implementation. This team could be called a safety and security task force.

Formulate a written safety and security plan

Under the direction of the task force, and with the input of other parish leaders, a comprehensive security and safety manual should be developed and affirmed by the deacons and congregation.

Establishing specific training for parish staff and leaders is helpful. For example, properly trained greeters and ushers can play a vital role in the church's response in an emergency—including the recognition of suspicious behavior and the prompt alerting of local law enforcement.

Reinforce training often. In order for the reactions of your employees and volunteers to be quick and accurate in a time of need, training should be touched on often to keep the practices and protocols fresh. Annual training will not suffice in the realm of security/emergency response.

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Keep the congregation informed

The value of an informed congregation in emergency response situations cannot be overstated. Therefore, some churches have formed safety communication teams to help keep their congregations informed. Others make literature available—in the lobby or even in the worship center itself—that summarizes the safety and security plans the church has established.

Conduct a site security risk inspection

An essential part of identifying any gaps in your site security and safety is by conducting a risk assessment to identify any uncontrolled exposures. Consider touring your safety and security task force around your property and identify any risks. Also, consider involving local law enforcement in your security walkthroughs, as they may be able to provide additional considerations or identify other security/safety risks. Use the checklist in the pages to follow as a guide to identify any uncontrolled exposures.

Disclaimer: Gallagher provides risk services consultation that is tailored to our clients' particular loss history, industry risk factors, and insurance program structure. Our services, summaries and recommendations can include claim advocacy, evaluation of loss frequency and severity, loss prevention strategy, sufficiency of self-insured retentions, risk transfer options, identification of risk exposures, and insurance coverage for particular claims. Our work can also include collaboration with carriers, our client's legal counsel, loss prevention or actuarial consultants. We emphasize that any of the above risk services, risk management opinions, and advice provided directly to clients or to clients' third-party vendors, is both confidential and intended for our clients' use and not for distribution. We also only offer the advice from an insurance/risk management perspective and it is NOT legal advice or intended to supplant the advice or services provided to clients from legal counsel and advisors. We recommend that our clients seek advice from legal counsel and third-party professionals to become fully apprised of all legal and financial implications to their businesses.

Security Self-Inspection Checklist

Self-Inspection Guidelines

The inspection team or designated safety coordinator must always conduct themselves in a manner that encourages safety awareness.

Problems should be approached from a positive rather than a negative perspective.

Before beginning an inspection, the inspection team or designated coordinator should:

- Review previous inspections for outstanding problems and recommendations.
- Review previous security investigation reports.
- Use known accident/problem information to plan inspection goals/focus.
- Emphasize identification of hazards related to accident/problems.

During the inspection, the safety members should:

- Correct minor hazards as they are observed.
- If hazards are observed that cannot be addressed right away, post a warning.
- Record their observations on the self-inspection form.
- Follow up to make sure that previous recommendations have been completed.
- Solicit safety recommendations from department heads and employees.

After completing the inspections, the safety members or members should:

- Discuss observed problems and recommendations with the safety committee.
- Refer the improvements to the appropriate individual or department for handling.

Site Security Self-Inspection Checklist

Location Name:			
Address:		Date of Assessment:	
Person Conducting Inspection:			

Instructions: Answer each item with Yes, No, or N/A (Not Applicable). Support all "No" items in the follow-up section and indicate the date when corrective action is planned to be completed.

ACCESS CONTROL	N/A	YES	NO	NOTES
<p>Are all entry points physically supervised?</p> <p>This allows staff to monitor who is coming in the building, and delay or prevent entry of unauthorized individuals. An analysis of shooting events demonstrates the effectiveness of delaying or restricting access. Consider having a single entry point which will make it easier for staff to monitor access.</p>				
<p>Are all visitors asked to sign in and provide proof of identification?</p> <p>For visits to the parish office, parish staff or site walkthroughs.</p>				
<p>Do all doors and windows close completely?</p>				
<p>Do all doors and windows have working locks? Do sliding windows have anti-slide locks?</p>				
<p>Are all deliveries and delivery personnel monitored while on the property?</p>				
<p>Are all vendors monitored while on the property?</p>				
<p>Is access to the roof secured?</p>				
<p>Is access to critical areas such as mechanical, electrical, storage and telecom rooms secured?</p>				
<p>All keys accounted for?</p> <p>If keys cannot be accounted for, locks should be re-keyed and a key control policy instituted. But prior to making any changes to the key or lock system, undertake a study to determine whether it would be cost-effective to convert the system to a computer-controlled card access system. One major advantage of card access systems is the ease with which codes can be changed to delete lost or stolen cards from the system.</p>				

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SECURITY EQUIPMENT	N/A	YES	NO	NOTES
<p>Are security cameras on and recording?</p> <p>Using closed-circuit television (CCTV) systems to monitor potential criminal activity and for surveillance purposes helps deter crime. Non-working surveillance cameras should be repaired or removed.</p>				
<p>Do security cameras capture all entrances and exits, pathways, parking areas and common areas?</p>				
<p>Are the security cameras nighttime capable?</p>				
<p>Are all doors and windows on the perimeter of the building alarmed and monitored?</p> <p>It is recommended to interconnect the alarm systems with the CCTV system so that, on activation of an alarm, a recording of the scene is made.</p>				
<p>Does the security system have a duress function, commonly called a panic alarm?</p> <p>Consider these for the front desk area and offices for site staff.</p>				
<p>Are entrances, pathways and parking lots equipped with emergency communication equipment that links to a centrally-monitored or policy system?</p>				
<p>Do the alarm, security and/or CCTV systems work properly, and are they tested and serviced in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions?</p> <p>These systems require maintenance and upgrades during their life cycle.</p>				
<p>Does the building have policies and procedures for staff responding to alarm activations during operating hours and after hours?</p> <p>Staff could be walking into a potentially dangerous situation and need to be aware of what actions to take.</p>				
<p>Are the alarm arming and disarming codes ever changed?</p> <p>On a regular basis or as staff separate, codes should be changed.</p>				

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PHYSICAL SECURITY	N/A	YES	NO	NOTES
<p>Is the building visible from the street during both the day and night so that roving patrols can conduct external security checks?</p>				
<p>Are all entrances and exits visible from a distance and well-lit in the evening?</p> <p>Such visibility provides a deterrent to crime and assists employees in the event of an evacuation.</p>				
<p>Are plants/shrubbery cut to mid-point of windows or lower?</p> <p>Low shrubbery discourages crime and provides a safer environment.</p>				
<p>Are tree limbs cut at least 6 feet from ground level?</p> <p>This policy increases visibility and helps deter crime.</p>				
<p>Are fences in good condition?</p> <p>Providing perimeter fencing, as feasible, limits access from other properties. 6-8 foot high fences provide theft security.</p>				
<p>Are the gates in good working order and able to be secured by a locking device?</p>				
<p>Are design features of buildings such as alcoves and stairwells that could be hiding places for criminals fenced off or otherwise secured?</p>				
<p>Motion-activated lights around entrances and exits in working order?</p> <p>This type of lighting has been shown to deter criminal activity.</p>				
<p>All entrances, pathways and parking areas well-lit?</p> <p>These areas should be well-lit so that people can be recognized from 25 feet away.</p>				
<p>Are entrances, pathways and parking areas patrolled?</p>				
<p>Are there any signs of vandalism or graffiti?</p> <p>These may be indications of future, more serious problems, and any graffiti or vandalism found should be removed right away. Failure to do so may attract more graffiti or vandalism.</p>				
<p>Are there appropriate warning signs (e.g., no trespassing, CCTV in use) displayed around the perimeter of the premises?</p> <p>Security signage can provide a psychological deterrent to criminal activity.</p>				

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COMMUNICATION	N/A	YES	NO	NOTES
<p>Does the property have security policies and procedures that have been distributed to staff and volunteers?</p> <p>If not, develop security policies and procedures so that volunteers and staff understand their security responsibilities, their role in maintaining the integrity of the security program, and where to report suspicious activity.</p>				
<p>Do you meet with staff and volunteers to discuss security issues?</p>				
<p>Do you encourage church members to raise their concerns about security?</p>				
<p>Is there a plan in place to communicate with volunteers and staff during an intrusion?</p>				
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS	N/A	YES	NO	NOTES
<p>Has local law enforcement inspected the building with management to conduct a safety assessment and establish communication with site staff?</p> <p>Have police become familiar with the property layout to allow for timely response in the event of an emergency. Utilize local police and emergency management agencies to provide safety and crime prevention training programs to staff.</p>				
<p>Is staff familiar with the best evacuation routes and safe meeting places to reassemble?</p>				
<p>If the building has security cameras, is there a safe room that could be set up in advance so that ongoing reports can be provided to law enforcement on the location of the intruder using cameras and PA systems?</p> <p>An assigned individual can provide this ongoing communication.</p>				
<p>All keys accounted for?</p> <p>Have there been meetings with church members for their input regarding their special situations (e.g., physically handicapped and cannot exit building without assistance)?</p>				
<p>Are staff trained, and have they practiced/exercised their response to handle emergencies in the last twelve months?</p> <p>Emergencies to plan for include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active shooter • Shelter-in-place • Hazardous environmental conditions • Suspicious bags/packages • Severe weather • Lockdown • Evacuation • Bomb threats • Fire • Workplace violence 				

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ADDITIONAL COMMENTS			
Reviewed By:		Date:	

While the checklist above is not a comprehensive list of every hazard associated with your operations, it's a great starting point.

Please adjust the form to ensure that you encompass all areas within your property. Your Gallagher contact can provide further instructions and alternative checklists, if interested.



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