

HOW TO ASSESS THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF YOUR PLACE OF WORSHIP

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Through the power of pastor-to-pastor sharing, the Internet, viral marketing and search engines—and the fact that it was free!—that twenty-three page document has been distributed to well over 3,500 churches world-wide.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TOPIC	Page
Introduction	3
Definition of a Security Assessment	4
Focus and Balance (Macro/Median/Micro)	5
The Security Assessment Team	7
Identifying and Using Other Resources	9
Assessment Variations	11
Special Event, Role and Function Assessments	14
Clergy Security	17
A Pre-Assessment Analysis	19
Supplies and Materials	22
Assessing Spaces and Places	23
Assessing Assets	26
Assessing Processes and Programs	29
The Assessment Report and Follow-up Plans and Procedures	32
Organizing the Assessment	34
Focus Points For Assessing	36
Perimeter and Parking	36
Building Exterior	42
Main Entrance/Foyer	45
Sanctuary/Auditorium/Main Worship Areas	46
Offices of Clergy and Staff	49
Classrooms	51
Kitchens and Social Areas	53
Childcare and Nursery	54
Other Rooms and Spaces	55
Mechanical Systems	55
Processes, Programs and Activities Background investigations, money collection and handling, bookstores and thrift stores, ceremonies and special services, counseling, youth activities, transportation, off-site activities, special events, inspection during main services.	56
Emergency and Continuity of Operations Plans	64
Summary about Security Assessments	69
About the Author	70

INTRODUCTION

This material was developed to:

- 1.) Give you the information, ideas and guidelines you need to conduct an effective assessment of your place of worship, as it relates to people, places, assets, processes and programs, as well as emergency planning and continuity planning.
- 2.) Encourage a focused and balanced approach to safety and security planning.

- There are so many variables in places of worship that no resource is applicable in every way. However, this information can be adapted to almost any place of worship. Create a customized assessment document using the material in *Focus Points For Assessing* (36-64) as your guide—eliminating or adding a few or many elements.

- You will find ideas here that you may not find elsewhere, because I wanted to share some tips and techniques that fit my approach and style—and might fit yours as well.

- Even if your place of worship has a formal security team, they may be more involved with threat analysis and response than with assessing and evaluating the facility, programs and processes. You can use this to supplement their work. Or, if you are part of a security team, this can add to your material and your efforts.

- Do not let the scope or details of this material discourage you. When you put it into practice you will find it to be a very logical and easily handled series of tasks, especially when working with others on your team.

- I often say (with a smile) that security assessing is not a sacrament and there are no commandments about how it must be done. There *are* requirements for the final product if you want it to be optimally effective. But, how you get to that point is up to you, your team and your church leadership. This material can help you develop something that works perfectly for your situation.

To make the material easier to use: If you receive this in an electronic file format, consider printing it out and placing it in a binder. The binder can become an excellent resource document for many other copied or scanned items.

Keep current: It's inevitable that this document will change over time as people ask for specific information (or as I recall something I meant to mention!) I will put the month and year of the current document on the front cover, and will put a note on my website when revisions have been significant enough to require an update.

Secure your material. Keep completed assessment materials in a secure location or in a computer file. A logical place to keep it is near the folders for insurance papers and similar information.

Best wishes to you in your safety, security and preparedness efforts!
Tina Lewis Rowe, Aurora, Colorado 2009

HOW TO CONDUCT A SECURITY ASSESSMENT OF YOUR PLACE OF WORSHIP

***A security assessment* is an inspection of a person, place, asset, process or program, to evaluate the current condition of safety, security and preparedness for an emergency.**

- **It considers risks, sources and nature of threats and criticality of harm.**
- **It considers the factors that would enable prevention, deterrence, protection, detection resistance and response.**

A thorough security assessment will include reviewing and inspecting:

- **Safety** (accidents, illness, injuries, potential harm to people or the organization.)
- **Security** (crimes, violence, loss or damage from any cause)
- **Emergency preparedness** (response and recovery related to any harmful event or situation of any kind—including plans to be a resource for assistance if an emergency occurs in the community.)
- **Continuity planning** (Preparedness to continue services and programs without significant interruption.)
- **The overall status of each component of a safe and secure place of worship.** (Anything related to the place of worship or its assets and activities that can be inspected, reviewed, inventoried or evaluated, as designated by church leaders.)

In this material, the term *security assessment* incorporates all of the terms sometimes used to describe the concept: site survey, audit, safety inspection, and emergency preparedness assessment.

FOCUS AND BALANCE ABOUT RISKS AND THREATS

The security program of a place of worship is ongoing, with priorities based on factors affecting the specific place of worship and concerns of church leaders. A thorough assessment can't be done in a day, a week or a month—it must be part of a continuous series of activities.

The Macro/Median/Micro Focus

There are reasons to be concerned about many potential problems. However, it isn't necessary to be in a lock-down mode to be reasonably secure and prepared. This material can help you keep a foundation of balance and focus.

Your security assessments and the entire security program will benefit from keeping a three-way view all the time:

- 1. Macro:** The big picture, the overall situation.
- 2. Median:** A segment of that big picture, a manageable portion for inspection.
- 3. Micro:** Close up inspection of the details that keep the big picture safe and secure.

It is also helpful to keep a sense of balance about threats and risks. When tragic or frightening events occur there is a justifiable sense of urgency to prevent *that* thing from happening. However, there are often more immediate threats to safety and security that also need attention.

People, Places, Assets, Processes and Programs That May Be Harmed Purposely or Inadvertently

Considering the potentials, historical data and the current situation in your community and elsewhere can help you establish priorities and have an effect on your responses and plans.

Threats and Risks

- Crimes against people and property
- Crimes against children.
- Violent actions (Shootings, bombs, assaults, etc.)
- Attacks by terrorists, gangs or groups.
- Attacks by individuals.
- Vandalism.
- Natural disasters and weather.
- Mechanical and utility failures and emergencies.
- Accidents, injuries and illnesses.
- Fires (And water and smoke damage).
- Loss due to robbery, theft or fraud.
- Threats (Phone, mail or in person)
- Disruptions: Intentional/unintentional.
- Vehicle damage or theft.
- Stalking of pastors, staff or members.
- Attacking pastors, staff or members.
- Domestic quarrels or other conflict, erupting at church.
- Staff issues.
- Anything else that affects the operation of the church or the safety and security of staff, members and visitors

People who purposely or accidentally cause harm may be strangers, guests, members of the congregation, former members, families of members, regular visitors, staff, volunteers or employees. The causes and motives are many:

- | | | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|-------------------|--|
| •Criminals | •Sexual predators | •Addicted | •Lacking information, knowledge or ability |
| •Vandals | •Resentful | •Custody disputes | •Miscommunication |
| •Pranksters | •Suicidal or homicidal | •Gangs | |
| •Terrorists | •Vengeful | •Hate | |
| •Protesters | •Attention seekers | •Frauds | |
| •Mentally unstable | •Litigious people | •Embezzlers | |
| •Angry | •Domestic violence | •Carelessness | |
| •Grieving | | •Negligence | |
| | | •Inattentiveness | |

That long list of potential human sources of harm reminds us to not make assumptions about people or situations when we consider safety and security.

Concern is helpful, obsessive fear or worry is not. An effective assessment team or security team will look for risks and hazards everywhere, while creating a more confident environment for the church family and visitors. One way to do that is to consider risk and threats while also considering prevention, deterrence, protection, response and recovery. Keeping the overall picture in mind will help keep a realistic approach and reduce unnecessary fear.

Safety and Security in Places of Worship

A balanced macro, median and micro focus on people, places, assets, programs and processes results in:

Safety, Security and Stewardship

THE SECURITY ASSESSMENT TEAM

Assessment teams may be comprised of all-volunteers or may be coordinated by a church leader or a full or part-time security coordinator. Security assessment teams work most effectively when each member is:

- 1. Knowledgeable about the place of worship.** If you are using non-church volunteers to help you (police officers, firefighters or others) brief them through written material or an interview about anything that is unique to your form of worship, the nature of services, and what might increase risks and threats.
- 2. Knowledgeable and generally familiar with what is desired for safety, security and preparedness.** Strong expertise in security matters is not as important as focus, balance and a commitment to the process. Most people with reasonable thought processes can assess and make recommendations effectively if they have some general guidelines to consider.
- 3. An effective and open communicator.** Discussion about concerns is a major part of the process. Even those with expertise in some aspect of security should be willing consider the concerns and ideas of others and avoid taking over the process.
- 4. Balanced in approach and not excessive about any one aspect of the process.** Each team member is likely to have a special area of interest or concern. This can be valuable as long as they can work with others and keep a reality-based approach.
- 5. Able to do the tasks required and to schedule the time needed.** Security assessing takes several hours in several sessions, at a minimum, and requires walking, careful observation, effective communication and a positive attitude. Those who cannot assist directly may be able to help in other ways: Word processing, phone surveys of members, reviewing reports, Internet research, etc.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- 1. Share tasks to avoid over-loading a few people.** Volunteer assessors have limited time and can't do it all. Tasks need to be shared and support teams may be needed. It can also be helpful to do some parts of the assessing with a series of questionnaires and checklists for people responsible for the areas or activities being assessed.
- 2. Schedule several assessing sessions.** Schedule the areas to be assessed into workable portions or sections (median focus) based on priorities, locations and time available. Sessions can be as short as an hour up to a full day or multiple days. Two to four hours seems to be the time span that is most effective for volunteer teams.
- 3. Have a plan.** There are many approaches to the process, based on your unique situation and your assessment team. It will help to have a schedule, a plan of action, the supplies you need, and a process to follow that ensures you assess everything effectively.

4. Designate a leader or co-leaders. The team works better when everyone has equal status. However, someone needs to coordinate, schedule, lead the way during the assessment and make sure the paperwork is done.

5. Keep each team small. Whatever the total number of people involved with safety and security, the actual assessing process works best with only three or four people.

If you have many people interested in assessing, create multiple small teams and assign projects for each of them. Or, break up a larger team into smaller ones and start at opposite ends of an area.

6. Be thorough. The way to prevent harm to people and property in the future is to consider potential problems as well as immediate concerns. That kind of thinking takes focused observation, purposeful inspection and enough time to be thorough.

7. Take useful notes. Take the time to write full sentences in a clear, orderly manner for ease of reporting and typing. Develop forms or adapt those you find in this material or other resources, to make the task easier.

8. Guard against team conflicts. The most common problems seem to be:

- Excessive hurrying by some and excessive time by others.
- Being excessive or unreasonable either about concerns or solutions.
- Losing interest and not participating.
- Focusing on being the first to find problems, rather than on helping the team assess both weaknesses and strengths.
- Considering assessment findings as criticisms of self or others.

9. Take action about what is observed. If something is a serious problem, fix it right then if possible or call someone to do it. If it requires other action, designate someone to get started on it and ensure it is done. If it requires approval or further research, designate someone to follow-up over time. Don't just make notes about something that should be corrected immediately.

10. Do the paperwork after the assessment. Take thorough notes and type a very brief report for church leaders, with a copy for security files. It should contain:

- Risks and problems observed.
- Positive observations if something specific was noted.
- Overall observations, opinions and comments.
- Recommendations and timelines if any.

IDENTIFYING AND USING OTHER RESOURCES

There are many *friends of the church* who may not attend your services but who want to keep places of worship safe and secure. You probably would not ask these people to help with an assessment, but they are good resources within their areas of expertise.

1. Law enforcement, the military and similar resources: You may have police officers in your congregation who would like to assist with security efforts. Your police or sheriff's department may have a Community Resource Officer or Crime Prevention Officer who provides information. Or, the chief or sheriff in your jurisdiction may wish to assign officers to provide assistance. Ask about what resources are available.

Even though most officers are not trained in security assessments, they can apply their experiences and insights to the process. They also may be able to provide information about crime patterns in your area or about incidents involving places of worship locally or in other communities.

Another good approach is to call the area police or sheriff's department and talk to a commander or supervisor. Ask to meet some of the officers who patrol your area. Get to know them and work with them about parking issues and traffic after services as well as about crime and safety problems.

2. Fire department: Your community fire codes may require regular inspections by the fire department. If not, contact them (or a member who is a firefighter) and ask them to visit your place of worship and provide insights about fire safety and suppression and the best responses for small fires after calling 911.

At the same time, they may be able to check fire extinguishers and exits and provide other information. Fire safety is vital in churches, so their expertise and experience is crucial.

3. Emergency medical assistance: The provider of emergency medical care or the fire department's Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) program is also a source of information and assistance, as well as providing training about CPR and first aid.

If you have a large number of members with specific medical conditions (on oxygen, with heart conditions, having diabetes, in wheel chairs, etc.) ask emergency medical technicians if there are special precautions or responses about which volunteers need to be trained. (Members with those conditions should keep others informed about special needs and responses.)

4. Red Cross and other emergency providers: If your place of worship is in an area that is hit by storms, floods, fires or other natural hazards, get to know the Red Cross officials with whom you might be working if an event happens. You may be able to prepare to assist, as well as having information about who to contact if assistance is needed.

5. Trades and craft professionals: Your location and situation may make it possible to have professionals give you an assessment related to their trades: Locksmiths, doors, plumbers, electricians, burglar and fire alarm companies, HVAC technicians, safes, etc. If you have a security alarm the company may provide security material.

6. Utility providers: Often electricity and gas providers offer energy assessments as well as other assessments. It may be beneficial to have them look at your place of worship to see if repair or replacements will likely be necessary in the future.

7. Your insurance provider: Every place of worship should be insured to the extent that is reasonable. Insurance companies nearly always provide information about safety and security measures.

8. Other places of worship within your faith or denomination. Use your network of friends in other congregations to find out what they have done about safety and security issues. If they conducted an assessment ask them about specific problems they discovered and how they fixed them, or ask to see a sample page or two, to help you decide about an effective format.

9. Other places of worship within your community. Perhaps you can develop a network within other places of worship in your community or state. Church facilities have very similar concerns, no matter what the faith or group within that faith. Ministerial Alliance groups are effective and so are groups focused solely on safety and security. Perhaps you can help form such a group!

10. Commercial and online resources: There are many websites and books that offer information. Private consultants and companies specializing in church security can also be useful resources.

11. Your church members: Consider using a questionnaire or survey or simply make an announcement, to identify those who have knowledge and skills in areas that could be helpful. They may not want to donate large amounts of time and labor, but might be available to give opinions or information.

12. Expand your own ability to be a resource. When you have developed a good process for assessing, consider contacting someone in your network and asking if you can provide assistance or share materials.

Assessment Variations

1. VARY ASSESSING TIMES

Most security consultants and most volunteers in a place of worship, assess the facility one time--often on a weekday--and call it done. A thorough assessment requires assessing during varied times and circumstances. This is another advantage of having several teams involved and breaking the process into manageable portions.

Plan on assessing at least part of the facility and some of the programs on weekends, at night, during the week, during services and during selected special events. Also plan on assessing in varied seasons and during holiday times. Each of those present different hazards and concerns.

2. WEEKDAY ASSESSMENTS

1. Interview staff and employees. Often the employees who are there every day have noticed security and safety issues but not shared them. You can also use the time to ask them about their emergency response plans.
2. Assess areas that are open to the public but have limited people present most times.
3. Observe the impact of weekday traffic, foot traffic around or through property, bus and school bus stops, staff parking situations, door security, pre-school, school or day care.
4. Meet with other resources who work during the day—fire, police, maintenance resources, etc.
5. Thoroughly examine most of the facility and perimeter in full light.

3. WEEKEND AND MAIN SERVICE ASSESSMENT

1. On page 46 there is a list of issues to consider when assessing during a main service.
2. The most common weekend assessing time seems to be Saturday morning. If services or activities are not in progress, this time can allow more access to every area.
3. Occasionally conduct a security assessment before, during and after a main service on Saturday or Sunday. This provides opportunities to see the security of equipment, people and activities that you could not observe otherwise. The movement of people throughout the place of worship is much different around service times than any other time and it is helpful to observe related problems. More about this on page 62.
4. Assessing around service times also provides the opportunity to talk with those who participate in various functions involving visitors and members—greeters, ushers and hospitality workers—while they are actually involved in the work.

5. Assessing during services allows a focus on potential risks and hazards involving the clergy, music teams, special activities, and problems, hazards and risks for the congregation as they arrive, participate and leave, etc.

4. NIGHT TIME ASSESSMENTS

This is a great experience! You can see the outside of your place of worship as it will be seen by vandals, criminals or those who are looking at access or exits. You can also check the interior of the building in different ways than in the day time.

Consider notifying law enforcement patrols that you are doing maintenance work in the building and that lights may be off and on at intervals. Or, consider putting a note on the main doors: "Maintenance testing in progress. Call (cell phone number) if needed."

- Start during a service or activity. This allows you to see the parking situation, where lights might be needed, places of concealment and even how the services affect the neighborhood at night. If you have lights outside, consider turning them off to simulate conditions if lights were purposely broken or simply burned out.

- If your place of worship has a full or part-time custodian, that person is a good resource about almost every aspect of the building and the systems in it.

5. ASSESS IN THE DARK

Switching off lights lets you see what it would be like if there was a fire with heavy smoke or if power went off or was turned off intentionally for any reason. The experience can help you consider ways to respond more safely in those situations.

Be cautious, to avoid accidents and injuries to assessment team members. (This is not the time to be joking or purposely frightening someone!) Everyone should have a flashlight and should stay together.

- Think like a visitor to your place of worship, someone with limited mobility or children separated from parents. Consider the choir or orchestra area, child care and nursery or other areas in which pastors, staff, volunteers or members and visitors might be if the lights went out or visibility was limited.

- Go to classrooms and see how adults, children and youth would be able to get out of the building or get to a safer location. See how easy it would be to find a fire extinguisher if that was needed, or to find flashlights or other emergency equipment.

- Check for blocked exit doors, chairs and tables that people might stumble over or anything else that would reduce safety.

- Check emergency lighting and battery operated back-up, if any. This may require turning off power at the fuse box. Have maintenance staff assist with this and use every safety precaution about shutting off the power and turning it back on. If you have a large

building this should be done in zones and your utility company should be notified, to avoid a power surge.

- Occasionally turn on the lights or a flashlight so you can keep the reduced vision aspect of your assessment.

6. ASSESS WITH AND WITHOUT NOTIFICATION.

Usually people who are responsible for classroom and other spaces should be notified of assessment plans. This often results in correcting a few problems before the assessing team reviews the area. (Open windows, safety hazards, etc.)

However, there are times when assessments can correctly be viewed as inspections and should be unannounced and conducted during routine activities or after hours.

ASSESS WITH APPRECIATION

The safety and security program of any organization requires cooperation and positive relationships. That is best achieved through a positive approach and sincere thanks for efforts to be balanced, focused and effective about safety and security.

**A security program is done *for* the people
in a place of worship, not *to* them.**

SPECIAL EVENT AND ROLE AND FUNCTION ASSESSMENTS

Assess special events with a focus on risk and threats for people and assets, liability concerns or problems of any kind. There is more about this kind of assessment starting on page 56. Events and activities might involve:

Holiday celebrations	Weddings, showers, funerals
Camps	Vacation Bible School
Cook-out or picnics	Open House
Athletic events or field days	Fund Raisers
Special ceremonies and services	
Conferences	

Any use of the building or any off-site activity sponsored by the place of worship is the responsibility of church leaders. An assessment of special events and activities should be part of a full security assessment and program.

SPECIAL FOCUS ASSESSMENTS

In these assessments the team focuses on a specific kind of threat or concern and how people in each part of the place of worship might respond if it were to happen. (Or, more effectively, *when* it happens.) Or, it might involve focusing on a specific asset or group or assets or people, and how they could be vulnerable as well as better protected.

These focused assessments may involve:

A fire	Condition of hardware and windows
A shooting situation	A list of high value assets
A dangerous weather emergency	Specific concerns such as childcare, money handling, etc.
A medical emergency	
A disruption	
An explosive device or explosion	

ROLE AND FUNCTION ASSESSMENTS

The document, “The Security Role of Greeters and Ushers”, which now is an addendum to this document, was developed for the specific roles those volunteers can have in emergency situations. Similar specific instructions could be helpful for many of the leadership and support roles of a place of worship.

Issues such as the training received, supplies provided (walkie-talkies, identifying clothing, flashlights, etc.), the courtesy and appropriateness of their approaches, and the overall security readiness of the team, can all be assessed and trained about.

Focused assessments are appropriate for all the many regular roles and assignments in services or activities.

Clergy and Assistants (More about Clergy security is on page 16.)
Directors/Board members
Congregational Leader
Educational Director
Business and Administrative staff
Teachers
Music Director/Cantor
Deacons
Trustees
Greeters and Ushers
Praise team/choir/vocalists
Orchestra/Band/Instrumentalists
Offering collectors
Nursery staff
Technological staff or volunteers

Child or youth workers
Bus or van drivers
Parking assistants
Maintenance team
Hospitality team
Bookstore or thrift shop staff
Kitchen workers
Chaplains
Counselors
Youth Leaders
Community outreach
Even the security team can be assessed!
Others in your place of worship

The value of assessing roles and functions: One of the great values of assessments is the personal communication with those involved in the many tasks of a place of worship. For some, the interview by the assessment team is the first time they have been given the opportunity to discuss their concerns or explain their work.

From the viewpoint of church leadership, it may also be the most effective way to provide or review standards for conduct, safety and security activities and requirements for reporting problems and other issues.

Using the assessment to develop the role or function: Another benefit of security assessment is to involve volunteers, staff and members in security awareness and planning. Use their knowledge and enthusiasm anyway you can, as long as it is guided and focused on the desired goals.

•**A two part role assessment:** It is usually most effective to do each role assessment in two parts. The first part involves the initial interview (fifteen to thirty minutes is usually enough for an individual, with a little more for a group.).

The second part involves follow-up, either personally or through written material, about any changes, requirements, compliments or plans, related to the work of the individuals or group involved. More time may be used if briefings or training are held (as they likely will need to be.)

•**Issues to be assessed:** The nature and scope of the interview and assessment by the security team will vary according to the setting, potential threats or hazards, recent concerns, the people involved and other issues. However, some basic concepts can be adapted.

Any recent events locally or elsewhere, related to the role
The concerns of those being interviewed, related to safety, security, and emergency responses.
Suggestions by those being interviewed
Usual activity before, during and after services

Guidelines and directions as they are understood by the person or group
Sample scenarios and sample responses
Concerns of church leaders
Recommended responses

Background investigations: Many roles and functions have such potential for concern that background investigations should be conducted before even apparently qualified people are entrusted with the task. There is more about background investigations on page 56.

CLERGY SECURITY

This aspect of the security program of a place of worship will depend upon the specific situation in your community and with your minister or leader and the pastoral team, and their activities. That is why it is helpful to conduct a pre-assessment analysis to determine what specific risks are present. Then, a Special Function assessment can allow judgments about how those risks are being reduced or mitigated.

Almost all places of worship should have a program of clergy security, since clergy are representatives of the place of worship and are often vulnerable because of that reason, and also because of their visibility during and after services.

The minister and other leaders should participate in working with the security coordinator to develop procedures, since all clergy in the place of worship might need similar assistance on some occasion.

SAFETY AND SECURITY ACTIONS

- The minister should have a code word, phrase or action to let security personnel know he or she needs assistance, in case it is not obvious.
- The minister and his or her family should be alert for suspicious events, packages, phone calls and other situations, and report them to authorities and/or security staff.
- In most situations, it is useful to assign one or more individuals to provide personal security for the minister before, during and after services. This does not have to be at a level that is uncomfortable, but should be focused enough that the leader can be:

Assisted immediately, if needed.

Helped (pushed, pulled, or accompanied) to safety if required.

Shielded from problem people or situations.

Escorted through crowds or in other situations as requested or required.

- The location of those responsible for clergy personal security should be decided based on the layout of the area and the most vulnerable times during service, keeping in mind that their presence should not distract those in the congregation or be very obvious.

Combining personal security with overall security can give the best protection. For example, there may be two people stationed on the front pews and two at the back, to allow immediate awareness of someone approaching the minister in a threatening way so that those close by can be alerted to assist the pastor.

- It may be helpful to have the minister accompanied to and from his or her vehicle.
- Personal security before, during and after services may also be worthwhile for the spouse or family of the minister.

- The minister should be encouraged to not have a pattern to his or her actions, especially around service times.

- All ministers, staff and volunteers can benefit from security reminders about:

Travel safety.

Package security.

Parking security and checking the vehicle after being parked.

Parking and walking in isolated or higher crime areas.

The need for observation and caution at the place of worship after hours.

Advice about non-lethal weapons such as pepper spray.

Consider preparing a document containing information from a variety of sources, as well as some precautions that are developed just for the situation of the ministers involved.

The document can be updated and discussed on a schedule, perhaps at a security briefing held annually.

RESPONSES IN AN EMERGENCY

In an emergency people will tend to look to the leader to see what he or she is doing or if there are instructions for action. Or, the leader can shout instructions and be heard through the sound system, even if people are in a panic.

Shouting instructions: Each person in a leadership role should be prepared at all times to shout a few basic instructions for safety and security. Usually these can consist of basic guidance like:

“Get down and get out!”

“Leave through the exits, now!”

“The building is being evacuated. Get out through the exits!”

“Children are already being evacuated. Everyone leave the building now.”

There may also be a need to shout for medical assistance or some other emergency help. The key issue is to be prepared to shout loudly and continue until people begin to follow instructions.

It may be that the minister or other leaders cannot shout instructions without jeopardizing their own safety. Those are decisions that usually must be made right at the time, considering the totality of the circumstances.

Flashlights: The pastor and others on the podium level, as well as greeters and ushers and security staff, should have flashlights available in case power is lost or the room is darkened with smoke or for any other reason. Flashlights can also be helpful if people have to evacuate the building at night or through corridors that may be dark, or if they must seek shelter in the building for any reason.

A PRE-ASSESSMENT ANALYSIS

CREATE LISTS OF ASSESSING NEEDS

Security assessments nearly always involve lists and notes—sometimes many of them. Fortunately, the first major assessment is the most time consuming. Before the first assessment, create a list of all the places, people, processes and programs that need to be inspected, assessed, audited or reviewed.

You will not be able to assess all the areas of risk at once or even in several sessions. But, it is helpful to see the big picture of what needs to be considered. You will probably add to the list as you and others go along.

Adapt the following information for your place of worship

1. Develop an assessing plan and a way to ensure you don't miss any area. The best way to do that is prepare a sketch or graphic of the facility with doors and windows marked. For multiple storied buildings draw a separate graph for each floor. Blueprints are often too confusing and difficult to read, and a simple sketch or graphic is just as useful. (Your place of worship may be too complex for this. However, it nearly always can be done in segments and is helpful.)



2. Develop a list of the usual purposes of an area, room or space, including closets and equipment rooms. One way to do that, in addition to using a church schedule if one is available, is to consider the activities and events each day through the week. Then, add special events and activities or mark the rooms in which those are usually held. (Youth party room, baby showers, club meetings, etc.)

Off-site: List activities that occur off-site that are sponsored by the place of worship.

3. Prepare a highly secured list of especially vulnerable people or situations and the risk factors involved. These may include crime concerns, medical issues or known problems of some other kind. (The material should be kept highly secured, of course.)

One way to develop that information is through a mental review of members and frequent visitors and their situations or talk to church leaders or Sunday School teachers about people of whom they are aware.

Another way is to occasionally remind members to keep church leaders or the security team informed about the status of the health of members and their families, any potential concerns, any recent problems or conflicts that might erupt at church.

Domestic violence and restraining orders: Members of the church family should be asked to let church leaders or security team members know if they have placed a restraining order against anyone or if there are issues related to child custody, business conflicts or similar situations that might erupt into violence at the place of worship. If the member is assured of confidentiality except on a need-to-know basis this is usually understood as a reasonable request.

New member packets should have general security information as well as a request for the new member to keep key members or staff informed about important issues that might affect safety or security.

Clergy security: The section on page 17 has ideas about clergy security. During the pre-assessment analysis detailed notes may be compiled about schedules or special concerns related to their roles, media attention or other issues. This information should be secured and maintained by the main security coordinator.

Special items in the place of worship: Worship objects, artifacts, silver, historic items, etc., require special attention. If the list itself is not secured do not describe them fully, since it could provide information to those with criminal intent. They *should* be fully insured and perhaps a strong security program will reduce insurance costs.

Examples of notes about increased risks and special concerns: (The following three examples demonstrate how each site has unique needs.)

•Example One:

Increased risk: Two local cases of church burglaries in the last year. Both of them involved vandalism and taking computers and other electronic items. Entry and exit through classroom windows. (Info from Officer Walker, PD.)

•Example Two:

Increased risk: Rev. Beck is well known in the community and has been photographed for the newspaper twice. He runs in the park every morning from 6-7. On Sunday he stands at the front for Altar Call and is closely surrounded by members and visitors. Music and singing are high volume and there is a lot of movement in the congregation.

•Example Three:

Special concern: Golden Girls and Guys Lunch, Fridays in Dining Hall, 11:00-1:00.

Average attendance, 30. Many use oxygen. Several have extreme medical concerns. (Don Kent is very frail.) Westland Nursing Home sends a van with 6-8 people and one assistant. We need to make sure the server team knows how to respond.

4. Develop a plan and a schedule for assessing. This can be done in any order that works well, as long as everything is assessed over time and in a timely manner. Even though it can't all be done at once, it should be completed in a reasonable to ensure that safety and security has been evaluated and improvements made if needed.

OPTIONS FOR PATTERNS FOR ASSESSING A BUILDING

Weather conditions, available time and recent concerns will usually be part of the decision. Some options:

1. Start with the exterior, roof, parking areas and buildings and objects outside.
2. Start at the front door, on the outside, and work inward.
3. Start at most vulnerable door and work inward.
4. Start inside at the sanctuary or auditorium and work outward.
5. Start in basement and maintenance areas and work upward.
7. Include one of each type of area in each assessing session:
Public areas, classrooms, side rooms.
8. Identify priority concerns and assess the areas in which those might occur, then move to second level priority, etc.
9. Assess one process or program, one space and one function, each session.

SECURITY ENVELOPES

It is sometimes helpful to think of people and assets as being in envelopes of safety and security, one inside another.

- The parking lot, grounds and architectural barriers to the building are one layer,
- The building itself is another.
- Within the building are more security envelopes, with perhaps several layers around valuable equipment, worship items, child care, money and other assets.
- Each section of the building is enclosed in secure spaces by using doors, lockers, closets, safes and procedures such as sign-in requirements.

This concept can provide ideas for making valuable assets (people, foremost) more secure, by enveloping them in additional ways. For example, hallways into classroom areas may be renovated to provide a door that can be locked if needed; artifacts may be enclosed differently; intercoms may be used before opening doors during non-service times.

The envelope concept may be a way to keep a median focus—to look at segments of your place of worship, then having a micro-focus to inspect.

Supplies and Materials

- 1. A flashlight.** Each person on the assessing team should have one if possible.
- 2. A full size flathead screwdriver.** There are often situations where it is handy to have something with a point or tip that won't easily be damaged, and with a handle that can be gripped easily.
- 3. Three ring binder and pen.** This is better than a clipboard or a legal pad, because you can flip back and forth through pages as needed. Contents can be plain paper or prepared questions and forms to document your work.
- 4. Digital camera.** You should be able to take many basic close-up photos. Have a fully charged battery with a spare.

A camera with an optical viewfinder (not only an LCD screen) allows easier viewing in a variety of light conditions. Many relatively inexpensive digital cameras work just fine and probably someone on the team has one or can get one.
- 5. Keys or other access.** You will need to be able to open up every door and space, unless it is a private office space. (The occupant of offices can use a checklist to assess the space if that is preferred. Have all the keys or have a maintenance person on the assessment team. Key control is a process that needs to be assessed as well.
- 6. A copy of any emergency plans or procedures for the space.** This is often overlooked as an item to have during assessment, but it is very important. Any directions, advice or suggestions to users of the space should be checked during the assessment to see if they appear to be valid and appropriate.
- 7. Cell phone and contact numbers in case there is a need for notification or questions during the assessment.**
- 8. Moist hand wipes.** These are very convenient and needed more than most people would realize. Thorough assessing can be very dusty or dirty work!
- 9. This document or lists developed from the information in it.** You will likely have to adapt a great deal of the information in this document, but it might be convenient to have excerpts from it for review.

Assessing Spaces and Places

1. Look at the space from the viewpoint of people who want to commit a crime, or disruption, attack people violently, or exploit people or the situation in some way, as well as from the view of someone who may inadvertently cause harm. This list was shown a few pages earlier, but is worth reviewing.

- | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| •Criminals | •Resentful | •Addicted | •Careless, |
| •Pranksters | •Suicidal or | •Custody disputes | reckless |
| •Terrorists | homicidal | •Vandals | •Negligence |
| •Protesters | •Vengeful | •Gangs | •Lack of |
| •Mentally | •Attention | •Hate | information and |
| unstable | seekers | •Frauds | knowledge |
| •Angry | •Litigious people | •Embezzlers | •Miscommuni- |
| •Arsonist | •Domestic | •Violent | cation |
| •Sexual predators | violence | | |

2. Look at the space from the viewpoint of all the people who might be in it, at any time, whether authorized or unauthorized.

- What ages are they?
- How many might there be?
- How will they be using the space?
- What might they do, accidentally or purposely, to cause harm?
- What are risks to them and threats to others?

3. Look at the space with the thought of what is beneath it, around it, in the walls and overhead, according to the area involved.

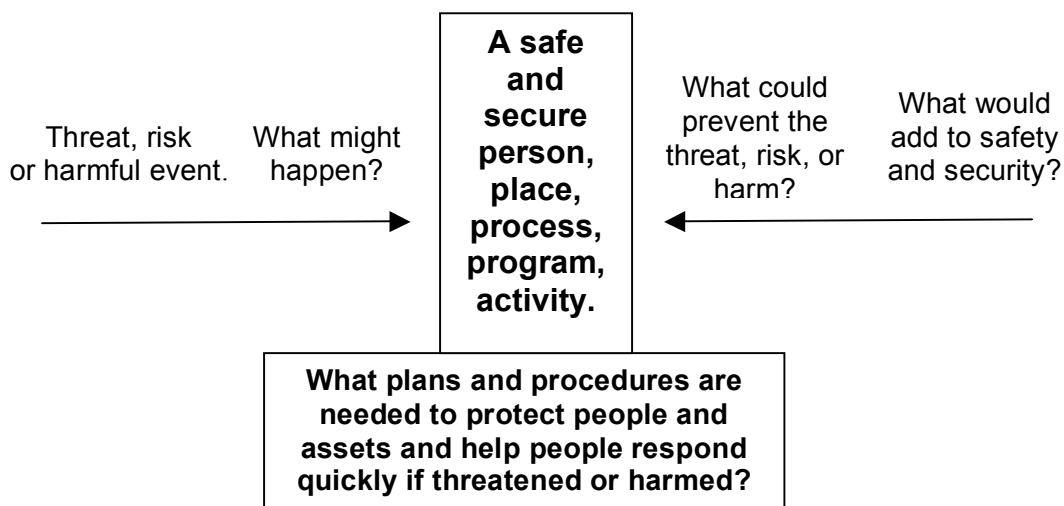
- | | |
|--|--|
| •Geological, water and weather possibilities. | •Vents, outlets, receptacles, pipes, wires, cords. |
| •Streets, driveways, alleys. | •Plumbing, pipes, water heaters, faucets, fixtures. |
| •Parking, parking lots, illegal parking. | •Stoves, flames, fumes, burners, coils. |
| •Fire hydrants, fire dept. access. | •Floors, walls, windows, doors, roofs. |
| •Trees, bushes, rocks, moveable or stationery objects. | •Machines, equipment, appliances. |
| •Barriers, barricades, items affording protection. | •Items that can fall, break, flood or contaminate. |
| •Things attached to the building, on top of it, beside it. | •Situations that cause accidents, injury, illness. |
| •Access from roof, basement, doors. | •Conditions that are unsightly, unhealthy or unsafe. |
| •Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC). | •Items with expiration dates, warranties, batteries. |

If you combine Lists #1, #2 and #3 you will have a picture of a wide range of potential problems. The purpose of your security assessment, in whatever way you conduct it, is to identify areas that need to be improved and to develop recommendations. Those lists will ensure you don't overlook anything.

4. In each space you assess, stand or sit and thoroughly look at each aspect of the room—floor to ceiling, all around. Consider obvious and not so obvious risks, threats and responses. You may find it helpful to have each team member observe and write, then share thoughts and notes. (Suggested issues to consider are listed at the end of this document.)

- Most of the time you will not find dramatic security failures or flaws, only a few things that might seem unsafe or that could be secured better. (Often you will observe “housekeeping issues” more than any other situation.) When all are combined throughout the place of worship, they present a picture of weak and strong areas.

- You will probably find the most useful thinking is done about “what if” discussions. These will help you consider emergency responses and how to make sure people know what to do, and do it.



- How is the space used? When?
- Who is responsible for the area?
- What harmful thing might happen?
- What could prevent it from happening?

- What actions might reduce the harm even if the event occurred?
- What emergency responses should be taken if the event occurs?
- Who needs to be trained or informed? How?

Take the *immediacy* approach. Rather than wondering *if* something will happen:
 What should people in or near this room do *when* _____ happens?
 How will they know to do it? Can it be done given the current situation?

5. Make notes about each space. (The following suggestions might not be appropriate for your place of worship or your security policies, but are generally applicable and can be adapted.)

(1.) *Potentially problematic conditions observed.* Is there a hazard that could result in injuries? Does some aspect of the space increase the risk of crime or other harm? Could some aspect of the space, equipment or other thing lead to problems of any kind that could affect the place of worship?

(2.) *Actions suggested to correct or reduce a problem that is observed.* These will probably be fairly obvious. They are always subject to discussion and approval later, so any reasonable suggestions should be considered.

(3.) *What written procedures might be useful for routine situations or emergencies?* Is training or information needed? By whom? How could it be provided? This kind of thinking about emergency preparedness takes time and will probably not be accomplished fully during the assessment. However, assessors are better able to consider situations when they are in the exact space being discussed.

(4.) *Other issues or concerns?* Is there something about the space, its maintenance, condition, the value and security of equipment or items, or any other situation, that should be brought to the attention of leaders, decision-makers or those responsible?

(5.) *In a violent, hazardous or threatening situation, is there an area that would offer increased safety?* Could the room be evacuated without using the door? Could the door be locked from the inside or barricaded, without increasing danger to occupants? Could fire suppression devices help if occupants were trapped inside? Are there supplies or equipment to assist in various emergencies?

(6.) *(If people are using the room during the assessment)* Are concerns observed about room usage, risks or other potential or actual problems?

6. Take photos. These can be used to document problems, for insurance purposes or to have as a record of assessing. Take an overall photo from the door or inside the room, as well as of problem areas or situations. Photograph items for insurance purposes, if that is desired.

Tip: Put a paper sign with an identifier in the first photo for a space, so the files can be more easily recognized when downloaded. (Many classrooms look alike.)

7. Before you leave the space: Make sure you can say you have looked at every wall, surface, item and aspect of a space before you move on. Do not rush, even in apparently obvious situations. Walk along each wall, look down, up and around.

- Have you considered all the potential hazards and threats when the room is being used or when it is vacant?

- Have you made notes about what is needed to improve the situation, especially if procedures or plans need to be discussed with the primary users of the space?

ASSESSING ASSETS

Assets may be considered in a general sense during the assessment of rooms and areas. However, a complete security program will include a focused inventory and evaluation of items and equipment, as well as making decisions about maintenance, safety and security, and plans for replacement when and if that is required.

LIST ASSETS

The easiest way to develop an inventory list is to have a notebook page for key categories, then go area to area, eventually developing a complete list that will include the items, locations, status and verification information.

Computers and Electronic Items

Item and Description	Location	Status/Concerns	Date/By
Desktop computer 2008 HP (Purchased 2008) Value: \$800)	Main office	OK. Used by Phil and Anne. Office door locked. Covered by CM Insurance policy rider.	10-15-08 T. L.
MSI Wind Notebook (Purchased 2-15- 09) (Value: \$500)	Phil's work computer	Phil takes it with him. Covered by CM Insurance Policy rider	10-15-08 T. L.
HP Printer (Gift from Stan and Barb Michaels in 2006) (\$125)	Main office	Works OK. In locked office.	10-15-08 T. L.
RCA CD Player/Radio (Gift in 2000) (Value: \$35)	Social Hall	Was out on a table. Should be kept locked when not in use. In good condition as of 10-15-08. Looks old, but works good.	10-15-08 S.R.
Roxometer Sound System (Unknown date of purchase) (Value about \$2,000)	Auditorium	This isn't used often. Mike Powers has the paperwork and is in charge of it. (Memo from him about replacement needs, is attached.)	10-15-08 S.R.

Categories: Some general categories that apply in most places of worship:

1. Computers and electronics, including phones, copiers, cameras, etc.
2. Audio/Visual equipment (according to the numbers of these items they might be included in electronics.)
3. Furniture. (In office, sanctuary, classroom, social hall, etc.) This category is often overlooked, but information about the status of these items are important and should be evaluated at least annually. If the items were purchased through catalogs, the catalog page is good to add to the inventory file.)
4. Worship items. (This might include the items for sacraments, special ceremonies or other purposes.)
5. Hymnals and other materials.
6. Musical instruments.
7. Robes and similar items.
8. Artifacts and art, hangings, banners, posters and other décor. (These should be well insured, but some art and artifacts cannot be replaced at any price. A security assessment can focus attention on how to better protect these items.)
9. Appliances (large and small) and electrical, plumbing and HVAC systems. (Knowing the condition of these items is important for planning.
10. Vehicles.
11. Outdoor items (statuary, signs, maintenance equipment, etc.)
12. Other? (The list will vary based on the level of activity and items in a place of worship. For example, some places of worship may have a large inventory of athletic equipment while another may have a large amount of student supplies and classroom items, or many kitchen implements, dishes and flatware.)

EVALUATING THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF ASSETS

For each asset being inventoried, consider some key questions. These don't have to be written and answered in the actual assessment (although they may be used in that way). The answers can certainly point out concerns—or reassure you that everything is as secure as possible, given the realities of the situation.

Most insurance companies have material about inventorying and evaluating items, and some provide checklists. One way to approach this process is to think about what would need to be replaced to continue services and activities. However, be sure to include those things that have emotional and historic value, whatever their monetary values.

Questions to consider:

1. Detailed description of item and location. (Model number, appearance, brand, etc.)
2. When was it/they purchased or received?
3. What is the approximate replacement value? (If that is applicable for the item.)
4. Who is primarily responsible? (If that is applicable.)

- 5.** What is the overall status? (Condition, repair history, appearance, amount of use, warranty, usual life span of the item, etc.)
- 6.** What are general and specific risks? (Accidental and purposeful damage, theft, normal wear and tear, vandalism, misuse, malfunction, accident or injury to those using it or to others, access by children, etc.) Are these risks greater at some time than others?
- 7.** What might reduce the likely risks? Are methods or processes in place?
- 8.** Were the methods and processes being applied at the time of the inventory?
- 9.** Replacement if needed: Cost, methods, difficulty, insurance, etc.
- 10.** Recommendations, if any?

ASSESSING PROCESSES AND PROGRAMS

With the exception of financial records, most processes and programs are established and simply kept going, without review. These are often foundational to your place of worship and should be assessed regularly. Page 56 has additional material about assessing processes and programs.

Challenges: The processes and programs of a place of worship are usually coordinated or directed by one or a few individuals. By its nature assessing is a critique—and that can create conflict and discomfort for most people. The following guidelines can make the assessing process be viewed as a positive activity.

•**Limit assessing to the factors that relate to the scope of the security program.**

The key areas of assessment discussed in this section should be the main focus of assessing: Safety and security for people, assets and the facility and the overall well-being of the place of worship. Other concerns should be conveyed to church leaders, but it might create conflict if the security team critiques them to the person responsible for an area or program.

•**Work in partnership with leaders and coordinators:** Use the gifts, knowledge and skills of staff and volunteers who are involved with the program all the time. They often have concerns or ideas they have not expressed, and certainly want their part of church activities to be safe and secure.

•**Be caring, respectful and positive.** The safety and security program of a place of worship should be done *for and with* everyone involved. The actions of the security assessment team should be focused on serving others. This is especially true when assessing programs and processes.

HOW TO ASSESS PROCESSES AND PROGRAMS

1. Develop a list of the processes and programs to be assessed *in areas related to safety and security*. These may include:

Worship service activities
Money handling procedures
Key control
Security of equipment and files
Counseling protocols
Policies for working with youth and children
Training staff and volunteers
Vehicle operation and maintenance
Ceremonies and special services
Background investigations for select staff and volunteers
Nursery protocols and worker training

Youth activities, on-site and off-site
Camps, conferences, athletics
Social functions
Community outreach or charitable functions
Kitchen activities
Events, planning and production
Social functions
Building and grounds maintenance
Anything that might have a safety, security, emergency response or continuity of operations need, now or in the future.

2. Interview in person or in writing, those in charge of the process or program.

Ask those in charge what areas they think have the potential to be problems or that have been problems in the past. This interview or survey can be guided with some basic structure and questions, based on the process or program involved. You might also want to interview some who have participated in the program in the past or who are regular participants.

The following are not necessarily the actual questions you would ask, but are examples of the types of things you need to know. You may have others, based on your knowledge of the programs of your place of worship.

•All programs:

What are the threats and hazards that could cause harm? (What might go wrong?)

What are the highest risk times or situations?

What plans, procedures, rules or protocols do you use as guidelines now? Are they in writing?

If you were going to train someone for your work, what are the main rules for safety and security you would tell them? (Equipment and supplies, people, participants, other volunteers, activities, risks and hazards, potential threats, worries you have had, etc.)

What has happened in the past here, or other places of worship?

What would you do if(provide a few potential crisis or emergency situations to discuss—without making it sound like a test!)

What is usually happening in the rest of the building while your program is taking place? Are doors open or locked?

Do you know how to get assistance from staff, maintenance or others, in an emergency?

•Programs involving money: How can we ensure money is accounted for and kept in a safe place? How can we avoid even the appearance of mismanagement or wrongdoing?

•Programs involving people: What emergencies might happen?

Considering the rooms or spaces you use, is there anything in them that could be harmful either normally or if misused?

How can we make sure everyone is safe and secure at all times during the activity?

How can we make sure no one causes harm to others or the facility?

What methods are used for discussing safety and security issues with participants?

3. Be present during the process or program activities. It is very difficult to assess something you have not seen in action. It can be done by using the information provided by those in charge, but it is preferable to see how a program or process works.

The assessing team can be divided into sub-groups or individuals can be assigned to observe. Notes should be shared with the person in charge, to dispel concerns about the assessment focus.

4. Keep the three way focus:

- The big picture of this process or program:** How does it look from an outsider's perspective? Is there a potential for harm or problems that should be considered? What worries you, as someone who is focused on safety and security?
- The mid-range focus:** Break the process or program into segments that work for the situation—the timeline for activities, different activities during a program, moving people from one area to another, what it takes to make the program or process work.
- The micro/close-up focus:** What could cause harm? What if an emergency happened? What could protect the program or people?

Look at the place, the space, the people and the potentials to consider if there are ways to improve safety and security or to be better prepared for an emergency.

5. Prepare the assessment report. The information in the next section provides an overview of the assessment report. However, an assessment of processes and programs may be somewhat different than for a space or place.

A structure for a report might involve the following issues:

- Description of the process or program
- People usually in charge (may not be a specific person)
- Who is usually involved as a participant?
- Potential threats and hazards. These might be stated in general terms, but should also include specific issues that assessors or those in charge want to mention. This should include safety and security as well as liability concerns any other situation that could bring harm to the place of worship, in any way.
- Criticality of harm: What are the most negative results that could happen if there were to be a crime, accident, injury, disruption, or accident or error involving this process or program?
- Concerns noticed during the observation assessment.
- Positive issues noticed during the observation assessment.
- Emergency preparedness. Based on your questions and the statements of those in charge, does it seem there would be effective responses to most emergencies? Have any plans or guidelines been given to those in charge? Do participants have information they need for safety, security and emergencies?
- Continuity of Operations. Does this program need to continue immediately, even after emergency disruption? If so, are there plans for making that happen?

THE ESSENCE OF A PLACE OF WORSHIP

Most people only think of major emergencies, violence or crime by strangers when they think of safety and security. However, worship and fellowship activities and service and administrative aspects are the essence of a place of worship, because these are the things that affect people. Give them the attention they need during safety and security assessments.

THE ASSESSMENT REPORT AND FOLLOW-UP PLANS AND PROCEDURES

After you have completed an assessing session, prepare the report as soon as possible to ensure you can still read your notes and recall the information and ideas discussed.

1. Keep it brief: You and others will find the report more useful if you avoid lengthy introductory statements and long paragraphs (such as those you find in this material!). Simply report the basics:

- A list of problems, concerns, negative observations or potential problems.
- The opinions and concerns of your team about anything you noticed.
- Recommendations and suggestions. (May only be ideas to be researched.)

2. Be thoughtful and reasonable about your comments and recommendations.

This document could be reviewed by others for a variety of reasons. Keep the well-being, reputation and liability issues of your place of worship in mind.

For example, do not use phrases that indicate the current status of the building, processes or programs are so unsafe as to be reckless to continue them. If you believe that to be true, take action through personal conversation about it.

One way to approach suggestions is to list the optimal solution then what would be a possible option. For example, it might be optimal to install an alarm system but an option would be to secure areas with valuables better or to install brighter lights.

3. Not all problems have immediate solutions. Your team may discover a problem situation that does not have an easy or immediate solution. For example, the kitchen may be in an open area that is not able to be locked. As a result, the appliances and water are accessible to anyone, presenting a possible hazard as well as a problem about misuse or vandalism. However, that situation will probably not be changed unless renovations are done.

It is still worthwhile to mention as a concern, with a commitment to consider ways to make the area more secure.

4. Most observations will involve “housekeeping” or general safety matters.

Almost every security assessment discloses concerns about such issues as extension cords stretched across an area, food that attracts insects, dirty bathrooms, wasted supplies, evidence of people being in places they should not be, and similar situations.

These are valid subjects for assessment because they address issues that lead to lack of care and maintenance for the facility and the potential for other negligence. They also often disclose severe safety issues and issues effecting the reputation and welfare of the place of worship.

5. Suggest plans, procedures and rules that might be needed. Emergency response plans and safety and security guidelines do not have to be extensive, but they should be in writing and they should be reviewed with leaders, staff, volunteers, teachers, and others who would need to assume a leadership role. Some aspects of plans—those involving emergency responses, for example--can be copied for every church member.

- Church leaders working with the security assessment teams should develop a basic checklist of safety and security actions and requirements in the event of an emergency or a violent situation, for distribution to staff, volunteers, teachers, group leaders and others.

Suggestions for emergency responses can be developed by police, fire or military resources, or security team coordinators or members, or found through on-line sites, books and other resources for places of worship.

- There may be a need for rules to prohibit certain actions. (For example, two non-relatives must be present when money is counted. Or, no candles capable of being lit are allowed in classrooms unless an adult is present and the candle is doused before leaving.) Excessive rules will probably not be received well, but there are nearly always requirements with which everyone should comply, for the safety of all.

6. The report should ensure follow-up. Not all suggestions will be implemented immediately—if ever—based on time, money, practicality or the decision of church leaders. However, some basic actions can be done fairly easily. Consider assigning specific team members to follow-up on each item.

7. Report as each assessing session is completed. If the security assessment is going to be conducted in several sessions, it may be helpful to make brief reports about priority areas or situations. The important thing is that action items are considered as soon as possible, rather than waiting until all assessing is completed.

8. Create a security file and locker. If you and others keep a file for your materials and supplies you will be ready to assess and it will be more likely that you and your team will assess often. Make security assessments a frequent and ongoing activity, rather than an infrequent event that requires a lot of time and effort just to get organized.

ORGANIZING THE ASSESSMENT

This section includes potential questions and concerns for rooms, areas and spaces in a place of worship. Some questions and answers will apply to every space and may only need to be considered once, at the beginning of the assessment. Others will require close inspection in each space.

You may wish to create a list, spreadsheet or word processed table or form that each assessor can use to structure the assessment, while one assessor makes notes for the report. Some assessors find it just as convenient to simply write notes and transfer them to a typewritten copy.

Keep a record: The important issue is to have a record of your observations and notes, and to structure it in such a way that it forces you and other assessors to be thorough about:

- Every area or room.
- Features of the space.
- Items or group of items in each area.
- Mechanical and utility elements, hardware and other “invisible” features.
- Potential hazards or concern.

An effective approach during the assessment: How could this space, item, process, program or the people using it be harmed to any degree, minor or critical?

Consider how the space, the people in it or the entire place of worship could be purposely or accidentally harmed because of:

- Vulnerabilities of the area or the people using it.
- Weaknesses in the condition of safety and security features or compliance.
- Hazards based on any current or potential factor
- Actions by people—purposely or inadvertently—that could cause harm.

CONSIDER THE PRESENCE OR ABSENCE OF PEOPLE WHEN ASSESSING

What are the concerns when this space is empty? What if it is full? What if only one or two people are present? Those questions help you consider a variety of risk factors, preventive measures and responses.

•For example: A parking lot presents a different set of concerns at night, in the day time, when only parked vehicles are present, when only one person is present or when several people are present.

•Another example: There is a different risk if a criminal leaves an area when a person enters, compared to if the criminal is purposely concealed and waiting for someone. Considering both situations can help in the assessment process as well as in planning to prevent a crime.

Consider a room or space in your place of worship from these perspectives:

Source of Harm	When no one is present	Usual occupants
Burglar, thief, vandal or other criminal.		
A sexual criminal or sexual predator, or sexual activity.		
Litigious person (Looking for a reason to sue or complain.)		
People who are violent, angry, homicidal, suicidal, unstable, addicted.		
Situations involving the curious or snoop, loiterers, or clandestine activities.		
People who are careless, reckless, negligent, preoccupied, untrained.		

Other questions:

1. Is there an obvious condition that seems to be unsafe, insecure or not correct for some other reason?
2. Now or when the space is in use, what items or issues are/will be a special safety or security risk? For what reason? Are reasonable changes or improvements possible now or over time?
3. Is something present or lacking that is a violation of a church policy, rule, requirement or expectation?
4. Is there any aspect of the space, activity or situation that does not present the place of worship in the correct way or that is a negative element for some other reason?
5. Does it appear there are items or issues that, while acceptable now, will need to be improved, replaced or changed in the future? What and how?
6. Is the safety and security of this space or situation acceptable, exceptionally good, somewhat lacking or insecure/unsafe? Status of other issues being assessed?

FOCUS POINTS FOR ASSESSING

PERIMETER SPACE AND PARKING AREAS

Most places of worship have adjacent parking. Other aspects of the perimeter space may vary widely. A place of worship may be situated on a small lot or on multiple lots or acres of land. It may have:

Playgrounds and equipment	Cemetery or memorial garden
Athletic fields	Surrounding land with dense or sparse vegetation or trees.
A garden or other landscaped areas	Open space or vacant lots
Scenic walkways	Sidewalks or alleys
Lawns on one or more sides of the building	Urban, rural, business or residential surroundings
Picnic or cookout areas	
A pond or stream	

These areas are often open and accessible all the time and may increase risk for the place of worship because of crime, inappropriate activity, accidents, injuries, loss or damage. You will need to develop a site-specific plan for inspecting and assessing the safety and security of the area around your place of worship.

CPTED (Cep-ted): Crime prevention through environmental design is a well-researched concept that should be considered for new development and for maintenance and improvement of existing areas. CPTED principles provide guidance for keeping an area attractive while reducing the risk of crime and inappropriate use. You can find information in libraries and bookstores as well as on the Internet.

Goal: All of the outside space and property of a place of worship should be kept clean and well maintained. It should be inspected often enough and thoroughly enough that church leaders can be informed about problems and action can be taken.

- Multiple security assessments should be conducted to reflect status changes with time of day, day of week, season and activities. Open land or areas with natural growth should be inspected as much as the terrain and vegetation allows.
- Look for evidence of loiterers or inappropriate or unsafe activities. (Cigarette stubs, litter, graffiti, clothing, blankets, odors, paraphernalia, or disturbed areas behind shrubs, trees or out buildings.)

Within reason for the specific setting and situation of a place of worship, the following elements are preferred:

- The property line should be clearly defined with signs, fences or other indicators of private property. In large areas, multiple private property signs should be posted, with a statement that legal action will be taken for trespassing. (Be clear that you won't forgive those who trespass against you in those situations!)
- Effective seasonal maintenance of driveways, sidewalks, trees, shrubs and other elements of the grounds, perimeter and parking.
- Shrubs and trees immediately around the church building should be cleared or trimmed enough to prevent concealment, fires, or other damage.
- Within reason there should be no items that can be used to further crime or that would be an attractive hazard for children or others. Rocks, water features, open storage buildings, unused vehicles, secluded areas, statuary that is not firmly fixed, all should be assessed and at the least, monitored closely.
- Within reason, there should be no items that could block vision for vehicles or pedestrians or allow concealment of people or hazardous items.
- The area should have enough lights to light up the perimeter, parking spaces, exterior of the building, doors and areas of potential concealment.
- Sheds or storage should be kept locked, even if maintenance staff or others are gone for only a few minutes.
- Maintenance items, liquids, seasonal chemicals, etc., should have safety labels, and safety signs should be posted.
- There should be no hazards to traffic flow, vehicles or pedestrians.
- Signs assisting visitors and emergency responders are beneficial: Arrows to main entrance, contact numbers, parking row or section identifiers, etc.
- No illegal parking by members or guests should be allowed. Overflow parking should be directed to legal parking areas.

POTENTIAL QUESTIONS ABOUT PERIMETER AND PARKING

1. Surrounding area

Are there any aspects of the community, neighborhood, terrain, geology or other issues that might affect the safety and security of the place of worship? (Water, rocks or other natural elements, weather patterns, crime in area, traffic, threats, etc.)

Are there preventive or protective devices or elements in place specifically for any of those, if beneficial? (Earth barriers, walls, shelters, water channels, alarms, pumps, graffiti resistant paint, removal of elements that attract unauthorized people, etc.)

2. Surveillance or patrol of area

Overall status?

•Cameras? Operable? Located optimally?

Who monitors and when?

Is this program effective?

•Patrol?

Is the property line of the place of worship patrolled, including open spaces or natural areas? Is that conducted at least weekly and more often if needed for the area?

Is it done on foot or by vehicle?

Can some areas be observed from inside the building? Would occasional more close-up patrol be helpful?

Who conducts patrol?

Hours of patrol?

Training? Documentation?

Is this program functioning effectively and without liability concerns?

3. Parking

Status and condition?

•How many vehicles can be parked in marked parking spaces?

•On average, how many are present during services?

•Lines and markings clear?

•Signs as needed? (Emergency reminders, phone numbers, directions to entrance, etc.)

•Pedestrian risks?

•Risks to children? (Are there play activities in parking area at other times?)

•Snow/ice removal status?

•Any parking spaces more risky than others for any reason?

• Are staff or pastoral vehicles obvious to strangers? (Note: This may be acceptable or not, according to the situation.)

- Parking assistance?

Who is in charge? Training? Documentation?

Is this program functioning effectively and without liability concerns?

4. Lighting for perimeter and parking

Overall status? (Type and location)

- Are most parking spaces reasonably illuminated at night?
- Lighting controls secure?
- All lights operable and at reasonable brightness level?
- Are they tamper resistant and appropriate for weather?
- If lights are motion activated are they set for effective distance and movement?

5. Driveway(s):

Overall status? (Location and number)

- Visual barriers or distractions?
- Traffic concerns expressed by members or visitors or by motorists?
- Issues that might cause vehicle damage or impair movement?
- Emergency vehicle access marked if needed?
- Fire hydrants clear?
- If exit is into alleys or similar throughways, are signs needed to encourage caution about pedestrians, motorists, limited sight, etc?

6. Fences, borders, walls, other perimeter markings

Overall status?

- Is the perimeter of the property clearly defined?
- Are fences and walls well maintained and free of damage or graffiti?
- Is there some reason the height or material in fences creates a concern?

7. Outbuildings, sheds, items

Overall status?

- Are they in use? Empty? Used for storage but not accessed often?
- Potential hazard for children, others?
- Secured so not accessible to anyone other than authorized staff?
- Electricity in the sheds? Is it safe and operable?
- Propane or other fuel tanks? How are these secured? Can they be used as a place of concealment?
- Air conditioning units and fans and similar equipment: Condition? Safety factors?

8. Grounds care

Overall status?

- Are grounds well cared for seasonally to give the appearance of attention not neglect?
- Are items locked up or stored in a secure manner?
- Are all items inscribed with identifying information?
- Fuel or other liquids in safe containers?
- Safety signs and labels as needed?

9. Trash receptacles other bins, cans or containers

Overall status?

- Away from buildings?
- Fire resistant?
- Any combustible hazards anywhere on the grounds?
- Do dumpster or bin contents create potential problems?
- Are dumpsters or other containers located to make it difficult to get behind them?

10. Decorative items (Flags, banners, statues, symbols, crosses, etc.)

Overall status?

- Potential hazard for children or others?
- Updated and well maintained?
- High value? Could they be replaced with lower value items if they are unique and thievery is a concern?
- Off-season items. Are they secure and protected from damage?

11. Trees, bushes, shrubs and other landscaping features

Overall status?

- Trimmed to avoid blocking views, windows, doors, and to prevent easy concealment under or in them?
- Are tree branches trimmed for reduced weather damage or falling on buildings or vehicles?
- Any features that present hazards or potential for crime, vandalism, etc.? (Water, rocks, planters, etc.) Can they be made more secure?

12. Vehicle barriers, barricades and access

Overall status?

Are there natural, decorative or other barriers to prevent vehicles from crashing into doors or windows, driving into pedestrian areas, blocking doors, driving up close to allow quick crimes and escapes?

13. Parked vehicles

Overall status?

•List routinely parked vehicles such as busses, vans, carts, other fleet vehicles.

Who is responsible for their care and maintenance?

•Locked at all times when no driver is present?

•Maintained: Clean inside and out,
equipment working, operable, parked safely?

•If not used often, are they checked at least weekly?

•Long-term parked vehicles (List and list reason for having them in the parking area.)

Kept clean and maintained to prevent an unsightly abandoned appearance?

Locked at all times?

Trunks filled to prevent children from getting inside? (The trunks should be locked, not just have the locking mechanism removed.)

14. Sidewalks and stairs

•Are stairs and sidewalks to all entrances well-maintained and lighted?

•Are stairs clear on either side or without concealment areas?

•Railings in good repair?

•Stairs going into basement areas lit, clean and safe?

•Wheelchair ramps clear and lighted?

15. Playgrounds, basketball courts, etc.

Overall status?

Are these on areas that are also driveways? What precautions are used?

Are these easily observed to provide security for children and others?

Is it well lit, if it is used at night with church approval?

16. What other issues about the perimeter, grounds, parking or the general area, should be inspected? Any other areas of concern about crime, accidents or injuries or property loss or damage?

BUILDING EXTERIOR

Among the issues regarding safety and security are: building age, architectural features, patterns of use and the design and materials of the exterior. Many of the following questions can be adapted to fit the specific features of your place of worship.

Goal: All buildings should be well maintained, locked and lighted in a way that deters crime and unauthorized access and increases safety at entrances and exits. It may be appropriate for exteriors to be strengthened against hazardous weather conditions for the area or to have extra protection at doors and windows for other reasons.

- Doors and openings to buildings should all be able to be locked and usually should be locked between services and activities, unless there are other customs in your place of worship.
- Private entrances or other access points should be locked after every use, even between short intervals of use. No doors should be propped open.
- Devices such as peepholes and intercoms may be helpful, to allow screening on appropriate doors.
- As few entrance doors as possible should be unlocked and used any time.
- Entrances not used should be as well lit and maintained as those that are use often.
- Easily visible signs should direct people to preferred entrances.
- Windows and doors should be locked and able to be seen by patrols.
- Alarm systems should be obvious and working, and should be tested on a schedule. (Alarms are not always a practical answer for securing an entire place of worship. If they are used, consider having a mechanism for having flashing lights to accompany the alarm, to attract more attention.)

Hiring a locksmith or other repairman (or enlisting the help of a knowledgeable member of the congregation) to evaluate doors and locks may be helpful if the equipment is old, has not been well maintained or maintenance records are not available.

Potential Questions about the Exterior

1. Overall appearance and condition?

Are any portions damaged to the extent that it could be a hazard? (Loose stones, splintered wood, nails showing, sections missing, loose decorative features on roof or gables, etc?)

- Are drain pipes, trellis, decorative letters and symbols and other attachments to the exterior solidly attached?

2. Roof

How can the roof be accessed? Can it be secured?

- If access is gained, what is on the roof that could present a hazard to the person accessing it or to those in the place of worship?
- Is there anything to be stolen? (Copper, conduit, etc.)
- Are skylights and transom windows closed and locked?
- What is the status of vents, electrical equipment, HVAC installations, loose objects? (Check for repair needs or any apparent tampering.)
- Status and condition of roof? Water or wind damage visible? Fire hazards?

3. Generators, fuse boxes and other equipment

Compliance with codes and safety regulations?

- Locked when allowed by code? Inspection records maintained?
- Evidence of tampering?

4. Lights

• At doors: Are they tamper resistant? Sufficiently bright?
Are they steady burning or on sensors?

• Other lights: Are there enough of them to help reduce risk to windows and doors? Are they placed correctly to be effective for their purposes?

5. Doors

(Starting at one point and working around the building, at each door)

- Condition of door, parts and hinges as to repair, sturdiness, maintenance?
- Locking mechanism: According to the type of lock being used, is it workable, in good repair? When it locks, does the door lock solidly?
- Condition of door frame?
- Are emergency exit doors clear and operable?
- Is the timing of automatic and handicapped accessible doors appropriate for all times and conditions? (Should be long enough to allow exit, but not so long that the doors stay open after the person using the door has left, if others are not present.)
- Is there a method of knowing and controlling who has keys and how they are used? Have there been any concerns about key use or control?

6. Windows

Inspect all ground level windows, including those that cannot be opened or that are decorative.

- Are there indicators that anyone has tried to gain access? (Keep window frames repaired to make this more obvious.)
- Bathroom windows or other small windows locked when no one is present?

- Window coverings prevent seeing in when rooms aren't being used?
- Upper level windows secured and unable to be accessed or opened?
- Basement windows secured and in good repair?
- Are window wells clean and covered?

7. Other

Any other aspect of the exterior that needs to be assessed?

MAIN ENTRANCE/EXIT AND FOYER AREA

Places of worship vary considerably in configuration of entrances/exits, foyers, waiting areas, book stores, information desks and architectural features. Adapt the following suggestions by walking through the area and listing the elements in it that could be harmed or effected by safety hazards or security threats.

Goal: The interior of foyers and lobbies should be well-lighted when the doors are unlocked and the building is in use. Candles, electronic items and décor should be displayed or used in a safe, secure manner. Staff stationed in the lobby or foyer should have a way to contact assistance if needed.

Items of value: Many places of worship have displays, furniture or décor that are costly or have historic or emotional value. Members may be so accustomed to them they do not realize their appeal to collectors or criminals. Vandalism is also a threat.

- Items on display should be in easily observed, well-lighted locations and as secured as possible, or in a way that would make removal attempts obvious.
- Consider replacing real items (antique bibles or books, art work, chalices, silver candle holders, tapestries and other artifacts) with facsimiles or photographs.

Emergency preparedness: Issues for the main entrances and exits might include:

- Are light controls in a protected area or disguised?
- A procedure established for opening all front doors in the event of an emergency.
- Is there a procedure for quickly locking-down the building to prevent an attacker from entering? (While not creating a safety hazard in the event of fire or panic.)
- Consider the size, weight and location of furniture and fixtures that could be used as protective barriers if needed. Ushers and greeters should be aware of what areas might provide the best cover or be most easily secured in the event of a violent situation.
- Consider having a cabinet or nearby closet with emergency equipment: Flashlights, first aid kit, air horns, identifying vests and anything else that would be appropriate for the setting in potential emergencies. (Consider having enough flashlights to be able to distribute some to the congregation if needed.)
- Fire suppression items? Who is trained to use it? Have the items been tested?
- Are doors and hallways leading into private areas locked or kept closed if they must be kept unlocked? (Consider self-closing doors or doors with buzzers to alert staff.)
- Plants, furniture or other barriers may be useful to prevent people from standing next to large expanses of glass. This may be helpful in a weather emergency or if the glass is broken in any other way.

Assessing at varied times, days and seasons is the best way to fully consider the safety, security and emergency preparedness factors of the foyer and lobby area.

SANCTUARY/AUDITORIUM/ OTHER WORSHIP AREAS

Goal: The main worship area and other areas used for worship should be maintained in a safe and secure manner during and between use, and emergency response options should be known by members. The space should be evaluated for hazards or concerns, maintenance issues, exit in case of emergency and for areas of protection in the event of harmful situations.

Features that do not change: Some general information may not change over time: Maximum occupancy, average attendance (or, actual attendance if the assessment is being conducted during a service) location of exit doors and location of light and temperature controls. However, having those items on the assessment list or form reminds assessors to evaluate current concerns about each of them.

Potential Questions for Main Worship Areas:

1. Overall space and seating:

- Maximum occupancy? Average attendance (or current attendance)
- Is the layout of the space or the placement of any item likely to be hazardous during an emergency exit? (Musical instruments, people standing or sitting in aisles, etc.)
- Status of light controls, thermostats, electrical outlets, etc.?
- If seating is on levels, are all levels able to be observed by ushers or others? Concerns?
- Hazards related to steps, furniture, candles, activities, large numbers of people, etc?
- Handicapped area status? Clear route to emergency exits?
- Seating: Condition of seats or pews and in and around seats. Status of books, materials, cards, etc. and holders. Hazards, concerns?
- Are there hazards related to clear movement (carpet condition, kneeling rails, congregational activities, etc.)? How can those be limited or eliminated?

2. Use and status of space

How is the space used on a daily basis, other than main worship times--daytime or nighttime? Have assessments been done during those times?

•If the space has other functions, is there a process for clearing and securing it between uses, if that would be beneficial?

•If the space is open for other purposes when few people are present:

Are emergency exits clear and open during that time?

Are valuable items secured?

Is there a way to contact staff quickly in an emergency? (Buzzer, intercom, etc.)

•Other concerns about how the space is used?

3. Entrances and exits to auditorium:

- Are side rooms or hallways locked to prevent the auditorium from being entered without the being observed?
- Are emergency exits lighted and marked and the path cleared?
- If emergency exit doors lead to other hallways or rooms, then to outside exits, are those doors and paths clear?
- Can doors be locked from either or both sides? If so, what is condition of lock, frame and hinges?

4. Windows

Overall status?

- If entrance could be gained from outside, are they locked, with locks and frames in good repair?
- If windows are decorative, are they firmly in place and in good repair?

5. Choir, musician waiting areas, etc.

Overall status or potential hazards?

- Are waiting areas secured to prevent access by unauthorized people?
- Are valuables secured?
- Are musical instruments secured?
- Fire suppression and other emergency equipment available?

6. Rooms or spaces adjacent to sanctuary or auditorium

Overall status?

- Are these rooms secured to prevent unauthorized access, or cleared after use?
- Are there areas that could easily offer concealment for people or items?
- Fire hazards?
- If the door is not always locked, when is it locked and how?
- Windows locked?
- Other issues of concern about the space or room?

7. Platform, pulpit area

Overall status of area?

- Is the area free of potential safety hazards (cords, loose rugs, steep steps, etc.)?
- If there are potential hazards have they been protected against in an effective way (located away from movement area, covered, barriers, warning signs, etc.)
- Are candles maintained safely? Is fire suppression equipment nearby?
- Is the path clear from the platform or pulpit to an emergency exit?

- Is an emergency exit available for choir, musicians, others on the platform?
- Is there an area of concealment or protection for leaders or others, if needed, either on the platform or in a side room?
- Have those who are on or around the platform during services, been briefed about potential responses in various emergencies (Review the Emergency Plan as part of a process assessment.)

8. Offering Collection

- Is there an effective protocol for collecting, removing and counting the money? (This can be reviewed under assessments of processes and programs.)

9. Areas for special activities during services: (List each)

This may include baptismal areas and altars as well as activities such as communion, prayer groups, altar calls, children's church, etc.

Possible hazard or other concerns, either during services or when the sanctuary is not in use?

10. Emergency Preparedness

- Is there an Emergency Plan that provides suggested responses to a variety of emergency situations (Fire, medical emergencies, accidents, violence and other crimes, weather emergencies, mechanical and utility emergencies, etc.) that has been distributed to key people and about which adult members are familiar?

(Review the Emergency Plan as part of a process and program assessment.)

- Is there someone present at all services who could provide CPR or other life saving actions? Are there guidelines or schedules for these people?
- Are there designated helpers for children and those with impaired mobility?
- Are ushers, greeters or other observers usually present during services, with designated emergency response assignments?
- Can ushers or others observe people who enter before or during services?
- Is there a security person or team designated to observe the pastor or pastoral team, and provide protection and assistance if needed? (Review the procedures through a process and program assessment with those in charge.)
- Are there any specific aspects of the service that increase threats or hazards?
- Is there a written plan about responding to emergencies that is reviewed regularly at least by the pastoral and worship teams or key members and leaders?

OFFICES OF CLERGY AND STAFF

These offices are prime targets for crime and should be assessed with a view to a wide variety of concerns. Usually the regular occupants want to be present when their personal space is assessed. During nighttime assessments you can limit your assessing to checking doors and windows, unless there is some aspect of their work areas that need to be checked more thoroughly. Then, perhaps they can be present for this unique perspective!

While assessing staff offices it is convenient to assess the overall safety and security program of clergy and staff. They are mentioned in the section on assessing special functions and some information will be provided here.

During this assessment you may also recognize liability concerns, concerns about some aspects of their work or a need for more oversight or accountability as it relates to money or some other function. Work with church leaders to be effective in these areas.

Concerns about offices:

- The presence of electronic equipment, office supplies, petty cash, a safe for large amounts of money, furniture, art, books and personal items is a temptation for burglars as well as for those who might commit a crime of opportunity.
- When the offices are occupied there may be purses or other valuables left out in the open.
- The clergy and staff may be vulnerable to attack or harassment.
- Often they are in more isolated parts of a building and may not be aware of intruders or visitors.
- The cars of staff are usually parked in obvious locations, which can signal how many are present.
- Places of worship are often visited by those who want financial assistance or those who have other problems. If assistance isn't available (or even if it is) they may react violently.
- The staff are more likely to be present if a mechanical failure occurs during the daytime and may not know what to do about it unless they have been trained.
- Visitors and others may seek assistance and not be able to contact staff persons if business areas are locked to prevent intruders. (Which is why they are often not locked.)

Assess with a view to vulnerability of people and items, as well as potential access to the rest of the building. Consider the space when people are present, after hours, during services, during special events, and all the other times when the offices may be at risk.

CLERGY AND STAFF SECURITY IN OFFICES

Consider how to make office areas more safe and secure against intruders during the day time, while still allowing required activities.

- Among the best methods are to have buzzers and intercoms (even very basic portable ones can work) and peepholes.
- Guidelines should be developed for who can be allowed in and under what circumstances.
- There should be sign-in sheets or other ways of letting staff know if teachers, kitchen workers or others are in the building. This will not only avoid nerve-rattling surprises but also allows the staff to know who is present in the case of a fire, medical emergency or other emergency situation.
- Staff should be trained about the mechanical and utility systems of the place of worship in case there are no maintenance staff or others present to do an emergency shut-off.
- Parking areas and doorways should be well lighted and staff members should avoid going to cars alone after dark in settings that may be hazardous.
- It is usually advisable to not mark parking spaces as belonging to specific people. This avoids the use of a name to gain further information and also prevents targeting cars.
- Clergy and staff should have a code word or phrase to help them communicate a need for assistance if they do not feel comfortable doing so openly.
- Prevention of intrusion is focused mainly on doors and windows. Window coverings that prevent people from seeing the contents of offices should be used after hours.
- All staff members should be aware of how to help visitors and others get to a shelter-in-place in the building, in the event of a weather emergency or a threatening situation of any kind. A safe room or area should be identified and supplied with emergency items, including flashlights, walkie-talkies, weather radios if that is needed, water and first aid supplies, among others.
- All emergency plans should be maintained in hard copy in staff offices. Computer files may not be available in an emergency and staff people should be able to grab a binder, leave, and have names and numbers of key contacts, as well as recommendations for responses in a variety of emergencies.
- Staff cell phones should have key contact numbers for maintenance, emergency response and church leaders, programmed into them.
- Whether or not staff members should have a non-lethal weapon such as pepper spray, may be part of the guidelines provided by church leaders. Everyone having them should be trained to use them correctly and they should be aware of the potential results. For example, the results of using pepper spray in a small space should be discussed.
- The business and church functions of each individual staff person should be evaluated to ensure safety and security. For example, the person who takes money to the bank, the person who stays late to lock up after meetings, etc. Often those people already have concerns as well as ideas for making the situations more safe.

CLASSROOMS

Goal: These rooms are used for bible study, church school and similar programs, usually for designated age groups. For those reasons they may present special concerns and those responsible for them should be briefed about how to keep them safe and secure.

Classrooms should be orderly and free of safety hazards. They must also be kept secure between use, since classroom windows are often closed for sound control and windows are opened for ventilation. Everyone should be aware of exit paths and teachers should be prepared to provide leadership in the event of an emergency.

POTENTIAL QUESTIONS ABOUT CLASSROOMS/MEETING ROOMS

1. Overall space

- Who usually uses this space (and does that present specific safety and security issues?)
- Who is responsible for opening/lock up or other security related to the space?
- Maintenance and appearance: Anything noted for improvement or change?

2. Doors and windows

- Windows locked, whether or not entry could be gained through them?
- Are locks in good condition? Can windows be moved on their tracks even though locked?
- Any aspect of areas outside windows that present hazards or threats?
- Do windows have screens if appropriate?
- If there are window coverings, are they kept closed when classes are not being used?
- Are doors able to be locked? Who has the key?
- Are doors locked when the room is not in use, if that is protocol?

3. Materials and furniture

- Are papers and materials orderly, off the floor, away from heating vents and not covering areas or items that need to be visible?
- Are scissors and similar items secured or out of reach by children?
- Are all walking areas free of any obstructions or items?
- Are all parts of furniture in good repair? (Do drawers have safety catches to avoid having them pulled out all the way? Are trims and metal solidly attached?)

4. Closets, storage

- Are doors locked when not in use, if there is equipment or valuables? Who has keys?
- Are valuables inscribed or labeled?

5. Fire and other hazards

- Are electrical appliances, cords and outlets in good repair?
- Are appliances unplugged if no one is in the room?
- Are extension cords rolled up and put away or at least not draped or stretched on or through areas where someone could trip on them or pull the appliance off a counter or shelf?
- Is any item that is capable of creating heat kept secured when no adult is present?

6. Emergency preparedness

- Is there a method for getting emergency assistance? (Buzzer, members use cell phones, phone in room, near other classrooms, etc.?)
- Is there a flashlight for emergency use?
- Is there an Emergency Plan and does the teacher or leader know his or her role in the event of an emergency? (Review the plan as part of Process Assessment.)
- Could the room be locked from the inside if necessary? If so, are there ways to prevent them from being locked in normal circumstances?
- If regular emergency exits could not be used, is there another way out? If so, is that way clear of obstructions and is it marked in some way?
- Upon leaving the room, are emergency exit routes to the outside clearly marked?

7. If there are protocols for opening and locking up the area, are those posted clearly to avoid mistakes?

8. If the space is occupied during the assessment, are there any concerns based on activities, classroom control, security or safety, etc.?

9. Are there written protocols for rooms used by children, with regards to such issues as leaving only with adult supervision, not allowing unplanned pick-up by non-custodial adults, etc.?

10. Are there other observable concerns about the space or use?

KITCHEN AND SOCIAL AREAS

Goal: These areas are gathering places during planned functions and often at other times. The areas should be kept as secured as possible between use to avoid accidents, removal of items, or purposeful damage, especially if there are electrical appliances and sinks or many food items or valuables.

POTENTIAL QUESTIONS ABOUT KITCHEN AND SOCIAL AREAS

1. Who is responsible for maintenance and use of the area?
2. Are there written protocols and requirements for those who use it?
3. Are there sign-in or scheduling requirements and are those maintained?
4. Are there clean-up protocols and are those posted?
5. Are cabinets and storage areas that contain valuable items or supplies locked?
6. Are there items or areas that would be particularly hazardous to children or those who do not know how to operate the equipment? If so, are those secured?
7. Are there ample fire extinguishers and are they in working order?
8. Are there several flashlights available in case of power outage when many people are present?
9. Are written instructions posted or readily available for using appliances or turning on electric or gas ranges or refrigerators?
10. Are chemicals or cleaning items kept secured?
11. Are cabinets organized sufficiently to avoid spillage when doors are opened?
12. Is the area free of rodents and insects? If not, are there specific efforts being made to control the problem?
13. Is the refrigerator clean, without spoiled or old food?
14. Are all cords and plugs in good repair?
15. If there are hot water heaters or other systems in the area, what is their status as to maintenance, age and condition?
16. Is all furniture clean and in good repair?
17. Is there a way to get emergency assistance? (Buzzer, cell phone, regular phone?)
18. Are exit doors unobstructed? Are exits marked clearly?
19. Is there a protocol that doors to the outside will not be propped open for ventilation if it will allow unsafe conditions? (This can prevent assaults on kitchen workers as well as unauthorized access to the rest of the facility when staff is not present.) Look for propping devices by the doors.
20. Are windows and doors secure?
21. If people are present during the assessment, are there circumstances that indicate a concern about safety and security for people or the facility?
22. Are there other concerns about the space?

CHILDCARE AND NURSERY

Note: The issue of protecting children and youth is a tremendously important one for places of worship and involves much more than the scope of this document. The following material is limited to assessing the spaces used by childcare and nursery workers, rather than advising about check-in and check-out policies, approving childcare workers, medical emergencies and similar issues.

Goal: To have a space that is clean, well maintained and free of hazards, and for which there are protocols and requirements related to safety and security. The same issues assessed in other spaces generally apply to these.

1. Overall status of space: Is the area clean appearing and smelling, free from litter and with floors and surfaces clean and orderly? Is all furniture clean and in good repair? Are all fabrics clean and repaired? Is trash and litter handled appropriately, especially soiled items? If there are municipal regulations regarding childcare, are these being followed?
2. If children are present during the assessment are there any issues related to their care or safety that should be corrected?
3. Are exit doors clear of obstructions and marked?
4. Can lighting be made bright for clear observation of infants and children and their status?
5. Are all electrical appliances, cords and outlets secured or childproofed in some way?
6. Are there methods in place to prevent children from leaving the area without adult knowledge?
7. Are supplies and valuables kept in secured areas when no one is present?
8. Are there fire extinguishers and are they operable?
9. Is there a flashlight for each worker?
10. Is there a first aid kit or appropriate first aid items?
11. Are windows locked when the area is not in use?
12. If windows are unlocked or open for ventilation, could someone enter easily? (If so, can this risk be reduced by making the window open only part way?)
13. Can emergency assistance be obtained easily? (Buzzer, cell phone, regular phone or intercom?)
14. Are there other aspects about the nursery or child care area that needs to be corrected or considered?

OTHER ROOMS AND SPACES TO ASSESS

Every room, closet and space should be looked at and evaluated as to safety, security, potential problems or how it could be used in the event of an emergency. Do not neglect to review every area in your assessment.

- Some places of worship have specific areas for worship items, artifacts and art, sacred documents or items, musical instruments, special rooms for counseling, worship or administering sacraments or rites, etc. The safety and security of these areas should be closely inspected, since they often attract the attention of the curious as well as those who want to harm people or property or to steal items.

- In very small places of worship there are few rooms, but those are often multi-purpose rooms that are used by many people and not always maintained safely or securely. It is especially common to have children return to their unlocked Sunday School classes when they are there during the week.

- Any rooms, areas or buildings that are historic or that contain art or artifacts are made more vulnerable because visitors may enter ostensibly to view the item or sanctuary or to take photos, but may also take anything that is in the open and can be concealed before they leave.

OTHER ASSESSMENT AREAS

MECHANICAL AND UTILITY SYSTEMS

The scope and nature of inspections and assessments will vary based on the complexity of the systems. Custodians or maintenance staff may be the point of contact for these systems, however the overall facility is still the responsibility of church leadership and oversight and assessment is appropriate.

Inspections by professionals: These should be conducted on a schedule to ensure the systems are well maintained and present no safety hazards. The areas in which equipment is maintained should be clean, easily accessible and well lit.

- Operating information, warnings, emergency shut-off information and repair information should be posted clearly, with a flashlight nearby for reading in darker areas. The same information should be maintained in security plans elsewhere, in case an emergency prevents getting close to the equipment.

- Systems should be secured as effectively as possible, in compliance with zoning and fire and building regulations, to prevent unauthorized access.

- Optimally, there should be restrictions on who can operate, adjust or maintain the systems, and there should be a log of activities and access.

- Instructions should be provided to those who regularly use the building about how to respond to various situations, including smelling a gas leak, finding a hot water heater or pipe that is broken and flooding an area, or observing some other system failure or problem.

PROCESSES, PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

Overview material about this topic is on page 29. Every place of worship has different needs based on their services, ceremonies and routine and activities involving members as well as the community. Consider a routine week as well as special events, to determine a list of situations that might present risks and hazards.

The following material is not meant to provide all the safety and security guidelines needed for these processes and programs. It is meant to be a discussion starter about assessing them, recognizing concerns, and working with others to develop ways to improve safety and security.

1. BACKGROUND INVESTIGATIONS FOR SELECT STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

There are some programs and processes that should be entrusted only to those whose character and history is above reproach. Among those are:

Bookkeeping or money handling
Childcare and nursery workers
Teachers, leaders or volunteers of children and youth
Transportation volunteers or staff
Counselors and others in high liability positions.

Those who will be responsible for valuable equipment
Those who are hired to perform tasks for which their knowledge, skills and work history should be verified.

In those situations, even if family members in the church vouch for an individual, or if they were former members in good standing, applicants and volunteers should be subject to some level of background investigation.

- For some jobs it is enough to get references and work history resumes, combined with an interview and perhaps a work sample to test their abilities.

- Other volunteer or staff positions require more thorough investigation, to include criminal history records or driving records. Check with the state criminal investigation bureau or local law enforcement where you live to find out what records are available and how you can obtain them legally and ethically.

An Internet resource: An excellent resource about background investigations is on the U.S. Chamber of Commerce site in their section for small businesses. At the time of this writing, the specific URL is: http://business.uschamber.com/P05/P05_1500.asp. However, their entire series of articles on hiring employees is useful for review.

2. MONEY COLLECTION AND HANDLING

A protocol should be established that ensures safe and secure handling of cash and checks and immediate accounting of funds, as well as safe storage of funds and safe transport to a bank.

What is considered safe will vary according to the location and the people available. This is a situation in which most people can use intuitive thinking to evaluate concerns

and develop at least a degree of improvement. Resources provided by insurance companies, banks and others, can be helpful.

3. BOOKSTORES, THRIFT STORES, WELFARE FUNDS

These programs can be a temptation for visitors or members, since money is often collected hurriedly and not kept secure. Protocols should be established that require using receipts, having two people present when funds are counted, and keeping an inventory when practical. Those in charge are often most able to develop policies and procedures. However, the programs should be audited and evaluated by others, to ensure objectivity.

4. CEREMONIES AND SPECIAL SERVICES

Any function that involves potential risks such as filled baptisteries, candles, unusual worship items or artifacts, dimmed or darkened areas or similar situations should be assessed prior to the activity and occasionally while a ceremony is being conducted, to see if there are obvious security needs.

- Each ceremony and special activity should be considered by security coordinators and those involved in the programs, to assess what and how there could be harmful actions or results from accidents, injuries, inappropriate behavior, crimes of opportunity, planned crimes, or anything else that could harm the place of worship of the people attending the function.
- During special events children often are more likely to play in around the building and in side rooms. This is a hazard for them as well as for church property and should be limited through locking-off sections if possible, or by having staff patrol through the building.
- These programs are often attended by guests and others who do not know their way around a building, which means extra greeters may be needed to assist.
- Purses, equipment and other valuables should be kept secured. For example, keyed lockers or a storage closet in rooms used by wedding parties, choir members, clergy or staff can protect items that are often left in the open during ceremonies.
- It may be wise to assign a specific individual or group to security posts in high risk areas during ceremonies and special services.

5. COUNSELING

Programs such as counseling for couples and individuals should have protocols established to prevent justified or unjustified accusations about the actions of counselors or clients. These might involve requiring other staff to be present in the area or to only conduct counseling during business hours or with two counselors present.

Counselors themselves are usually the best sources of knowing what might be of concern and how those concerns could be reduced. However, church leaders or the ministerial team can also determine guidelines based on those used in other places of worship or specific issues for the locale.

6. YOUTH PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

These are among the most potentially problematic of all programs. Among the issues to consider are the requirements for adult supervision of all activities as well as selection and training of youth leaders—who are often young adults themselves. The well-being of youth, leaders and the place of worship depends upon oversight and caring but concerned control.

It may be helpful to have the youth participants assist in developing guidelines and emergency response plans, since they are often more aware of potential problems than their leaders might be. Problem areas may include:

Transportation safety	Criminal acts by participants or by strangers against participants.
General safety in the environment (such as at outdoor activities).	Conflicts, arguments, relationship issues.
The presence of inappropriate or unwanted items or substances.	Actions that could potentially bring discredit to the place of worship.
Inappropriate or unwanted activities of any kind.	Accidents, injuries and illnesses.
	Getting separated from the group.

Among the ways to reduce hazards and risks in youth activities:

- Youth should receive written instructions about safety and security before significant events, especially those involving large crowds or unusual settings.
- The group should stay together.
- Leaders must be notified when someone leaves the area and when they return.
- A leader should generally not be alone with individual youth.
- Both youth and the leaders should receive clear guidelines about acceptable and unacceptable behaviors in many areas of concern.
- Leaders should provide a strong leadership role and observe closely to ensure safe, secure actions by youth, as well as to be prepared for emergencies.

The best way to assess these processes is to occasionally be present to observe or to occasionally conduct interviews of youth and youth leaders.

7. TRANSPORTATION

Busses, vans and cars used to transport anyone involved with church activities should be well maintained and driven safely, with ample time for rest for the driver on longer trips.

A review of accidents involving such vehicles, as well as information from other churches, automobile associations and insurance carriers, will provide many ideas for guidelines for both vehicles and drivers.

Everyone who transports people on behalf of the church should be approved using reasonable criteria focused on driver experience, history and acceptance of church requirements or prohibitions for the situation.

8. OFF-SITE ACTIVITIES

Conferences, camps, special events, concerts and retreats, are all areas of responsibility for church leadership if the events are sponsored by the church. These events and locations vary tremendously, but some general guidelines can help you develop detailed ones for specific events.

When assessing off-site activities consider these issues to decide what might improve the safety and security program.

•**Safety and Security Coordinators:** One or more people should be assigned to coordinate safety and security activities for off-site activities. Their responsibilities should be clearly defined and they should be prepared to focus their attention on issues related to their roles:

- Awareness of the overall environment
- Identification of potential threats or hazards or safety or health threats
- Knowledge of basic precautions related to concerns
- The general location of participants at all times
- Being available for regular contact and making status reports
- Having emergency contact information for participants and for church leaders and local assistance if available

•**Leaders, counselors or other volunteers:** These people represent the place of worship and should be well known by church leaders or approved through a process that ensures they are dependable and trustworthy.

They should receive written material about their responsibilities, including concerns to be alert about and responses to them. When possible they should be contacted by security coordinators ahead of time, so their concerns and those of the church leadership can be discussed.

•**Participant information and responsibilities:** Participants should be briefed verbally and receive written guidelines or information ahead of time about safety and security during the event. In the case of children and youth, a separate communication should go to parents. Information may include:

- The role of security coordinators and other leaders
- The overall environment of the locale or event
- Threats or hazards related to the event or location
- Precautions related to concerns
- Their responsibilities for conduct and for reporting problems
- Any prohibited items or conduct.
- Contact information to give to family or others

•General safety and security guidelines:

The following guidelines do not cover every setting and may not apply to all off-site activities, because the situations vary so much. However, it can provide a starting point for further discussion by leaders in your place of worship.

- Guests who are not well-known to staff should be observed for problems as well as being given extra attention and assistance to ensure they feel safe and secure.
- When members invite guests to off-site events involving travel or overnight situations, event leaders should be notified in advance, in case extra information must be provided or obtained.
- At indoor events everyone should be made aware of exits and hazards related to the venue. If possible, get a floor plan ahead of time so the coordinator is familiar with it. If possible, attendees should gather for a briefing at the site.
- Develop plans and requirements based on safety and security as well as on reinforcing positive messages about conduct during off-site events. This is especially true for youth groups or when many guests will be participating.
- At hotels and other overnight locales, it is particularly important to stay aware of the location of participants and to ensure they do not leave the area without notification. (And also that they do not disturb other guests.) Coordinators should identify themselves to counter staff and security personnel, if any, and provide a cell phone for emergency contact if needed.
- Cell phone numbers of participants should be programmed into the coordinator's cell phone to allow for quick contact. In some settings, walkie-talkies will be needed to stay in contact, and enough should be used to allow groups to stay in contact.

Outdoor or camp events:

- At outdoor events or in camps or similar settings, no one should leave the immediate area or go outside cabins or tents without the knowledge and permission of leaders or coordinators. This is particularly important with children and youth. Even seemingly benign walks in the dark can have harmful results in unsupervised settings.
- In outdoor nighttime settings, coordinators should have several flashlights as well as access to first aid items and a way to get emergency assistance.
- Rustic buildings, dorms and tents should all be inspected for safety and security. Fire safety is crucial, but so is safety regarding fumes from generators and heaters, electrical systems that may be subject to damage during off-seasons, structural damage, fire pits near buildings, and stairs, railings and balconies that need repair.
- Camp kitchens and bathrooms or toilets should be checked for cleanliness, safety regarding chemicals, fixtures, appliances in need of repair, and other factors that are often neglected in facilities that are not used often or are used by a variety of groups throughout a season.
- The best way to assess these activities is to visit the site well in advance of use if possible. If that is not possible, try to find a way to be present during at least one similar

activity elsewhere, to observe concerns there. Or, contact others who have had activities in that location.

As with other events, have participants and coordinators prepare a list of considerations related to safety and security, to allow for planning the next time. Unfortunately, some of the concerns may be too late to help at the time, which is why pre-assessment is so important.

9. TRAVEL

The destination and method of travel will have an effect on the information needs of those who attend events off-site. At least one briefing should be held a week or so before the travel, to allow for questions about specific issues to be researched if needed. Among the issues to consider are:

- The overall safety and security of the location and travel methods.
- The culture of the location as it relates to foreigners or travelers.
- Precautions related to crime or terrorist activities in the locale involved.
- General guidelines about safety in groups as well as alone.
- In some countries bomb awareness and safety information should be provided.

Information can be obtained through Internet resources, by talking to contacts at places or worship who may have visited there in the past, from church members with knowledge or the locale, and through travel clubs.

The information should be updated after the event so it can be used by coordinators the next time.

10. SPECIAL EVENTS

These may include special services, music programs, bible conferences, guest speakers, large dinners, awards banquets, seasonal programs, holiday programs, and other functions that may attract attention, be attended by large numbers, or are open to the public.

- Develop a list of special events and schedule a time for safety and security planning as well as assessing. Assess during these events, as a way to be better prepared for the future and to see if there are problems that need to be corrected at the time.

Among the security activities that may be helpful:

- Someone specific to assist in the event of a medical emergency should be on-site at all times when possible.
- An announcement may be made to point out exits in the event of an emergency.
- Greeters and ushers should be particularly observant to note visitors or strangers who exhibit unusual behavior, and be ready to get assistance if needed.
- Areas of the building that are not being used as part of the program should be closed to public access if possible.
- Parking lots should be patrolled or checked often to prevent break-ins.

- Exits should be kept clear of people, musical instruments or other items.
- As with all services, the pastor or leader of the service should have someone specific who is responsible for observing and responding to assist if the pastor is threatened or needs help in some other way.
- Any large event usually means there will be activities and situations that are unexpected, and that systems and people will be pushed to the maximum. There is a temptation to eliminate some security or safety requirements as too difficult to follow. This is the very time when those requirements are most important.

For example, when items are being brought into the building, rather than propping doors open, someone should stand and hold the door, or the door should be relocked each time it will be left unobserved.

Discussing safety and security with coordinators of events may reduce problems and help everyone stay more safe and secure.

11. OTHER PROGRAMS

You may need to get information and schedules from several sources to ensure that every program is reviewed. Your goal is not to critique the programs, but rather to work with coordinators to ensure there are written guidelines and that safety and security is a priority when the place of worship is the sponsor of an activity or function.

12. INSPECTION DURING MAIN SERVICES

During every worship service, a brief inspection of key elements should be conducted, to ensure that safety and security is being maintained at a high level. Without this inspection, assessment is limited to reviewing the space when it is empty—not very realistic!

Among the things to consider:

- Is the parking lot orderly and are all the safety features working correctly?
- Are people able to move safely from parking areas into the building?
- Is there any aspect of traffic, movement or activity outside the building that could be a safety and security concern?
- Are greeters and ushers and other volunteers and staff in their places and performing their tasks appropriately, especially as it relates to safety and security?
- Are security staff relatively unobtrusive and not disruptive?
- Are emergency items in place? (Flashlights, first aid, etc.)
- Are doors opened or locked, according to the security plan?
- Are off-limits areas locked?
- Are there valuables left in the open and at risk? Can they be better secured?
- Are there any activities inside the church that appear to have the potential for harm—either inadvertent or purposeful?

- In the sanctuary, are reasonably clear path to exits maintained throughout the service?
- Are the choir and musicians able to exit safely and quickly?
- Are the security staff who are assigned to focus on the security of the pastor and/or his family, in place and performing their tasks appropriately?
- Is there any aspect of the service that could result in harm or that could prevent emergency responses as needed?

Interviews: Consider occasionally interviewing members (and perhaps guests, in some carefully chosen situations) about their observations regarding safety and security measures. It is also beneficial to have a few non-stressful, quick quiz questions for staff and volunteers, to test their safety and security knowledge.

For example, assessors might ask the following questions of greeters or ushers:

- 1.) If there was an emergency right now, where is the closest exit, other than the front door?
- 2.) If you were asked where someone should go if the building was evacuated due to smoke, where would you tell them to wait?
- 3.) Where is the safest room near this position, if you had to lead people to shelter inside the building?

Guests or members might be asked:

- 1.) Did you notice the signs in the parking lot, reminding people about safety for their vehicles? What did you think about that or how did it make you feel?
- 2.) How comfortable were you with the greeting you received when you first came in the door?
- 3.) Did you notice anything before, during or after the service that concerned you about safety or security?
- 4.) Were you aware that we have an extensive safety and security assessment program and a variety of security plans that all leaders, staff and volunteers are trained about?

Photos: Within reason, take photos to document positive and negative issues in every area assessed during the main service. Sometimes a photo will dispel a concern or reinforce the need for action, far better than the statement of the assessor.

Emergency and Continuity of Operations Plans

One of the benefits of plans, apart from using them to train people about how to respond in emergencies, is the process of planning, in its own right. That is why many people should be part of the planning. It helps everyone think more clearly about all the details that are required for effective emergency responses.

There are many joking comments about having plans that are never read or used. That situation usually occurs when there is no requirement or encouragement to read or use them. A review at least three months is helpful and may be part of staff meetings, deacon meetings or special briefings before or after services, according to the nature of the plans.

Staff who are present in a mechanical, weather or medical emergency may not have access to computers, so the plans should also be in hard copy format and tabbed for easy reference and review. Consider having most security plans in a binder that also contains phone numbers and other information that may be accessed often, so staff are more likely to have them handy.

Copies should be distributed to all church leaders and regular volunteers. Every church member should at least have material that applies to them and their activities.

Among the plans and information that should be part of a church security program are:

1. General guidelines and information about safety and security in every aspect of activities, processes and programs.

Over time there should be guidelines developed for leaders and participants in all of the major activities of the place of worship. This takes time, and it may be that the information is needed before the planning is completed. That is why a routine focus on safety and security is so valuable. Even without written guidelines, people are more likely to have given some thought to their personal emergency responses.

2. Instructions and plans for specific people, leaders and volunteers.

These instructions may be general or very specific, according to the tasks being done by the people involved. For example:

In the document that follows this, "The Security Role of Greeters and Ushers" a suggestion is made to use a code word, name or phrase, so Greeters and Ushers can communicate the need for assistance if a suspicious person is nearby.

There may be a schedule established for a pair of observers to patrol the building during services, or to check the bathrooms at regular intervals, or similar inspections that need to be assigned specifically.

Those on the platform may all be instructed to be prepared to yell directions about evacuations or to shout at people to get down and get out, in the event of an emergency.

3. Evacuation plans:

- What would be the cause of an evacuation? How will notification be made?
- What should parents do about their children, if they are in another building or area?
- Where should people go after they leave the building?
- Who will assist visitors and those who are less able to assist themselves?
- If primary routes are blocked, what exits could be used?
- Will there be a method for notifying people when or if they should return?
- Who will be coordinators for various locations where people will gather? What is that person's role?
- Will weather have an affect on how evacuation takes place and where people should go for safety?

4. Bomb threat or other threat plans:

There are several governmental and internet resources with information about responding to phone threats. A plan should include guidelines for the call taker as well as for who makes the decision to evacuate, especially if the call appears to be a hoax (a child's voice, for example). There should be information about where to evacuate and how far away should everyone stay after evacuation.

If the threat involves someone saying a device is hidden in the building, someone may need to assist responders by identifying suspicious items.

5. Emergency medical plans:

- Who can provide emergency medical help until regular help arrives? Will there be training provided for those people if they are not professional medical responders?
- Have non-professional medical responders been given guidelines?
- Is there equipment available and who has access to it?
- Are there specific medical needs that should be identified?

6. Fire and smoke: These are routine plans that generally call for evacuation and emergency notification. However, such plans might also involve notifications to church members, special instructions for specific areas, assignments for specific individuals to notify others in the building, etc.

7. Response to violence: In these situations there is usually no warning and there may be no way to prevent the event from happening. However, having a core group of people who have thought about responses may lessen the harm to many people.

A plan for responding to an violent attack, especially if weapons are involved, should focus on getting people down to avoid gunfire or the attention of the attacker, and out of the building if possible.

Even if the police are called to the scene, it may be many minutes or many hours before they enter the building. Leaders and security team members may need to support,

assist and comfort people or provide medical care throughout that time. This is at least somewhat easier to do if there is a feeling that responses have a purpose.

A violence response plan might include:

- Guidelines for when doors should be shut to keep individuals or groups out.
- Lists of safe areas for concealment or furniture that could provide short-term barricades.
- Guidelines for locking off areas of the church and assignments for doing so.
- The location of safe rooms or areas that can be secured quickly and with extra reinforcements.
- Advice for those who have a leadership role in safe rooms.
- Assignments for leaders and members about specific areas of responsibility, or specific people or groups to assist. Assignments should be reviewed regularly to ensure everyone is aware of their roles.

Weapons and other responses:

- An individual or group may decide to confront an attacker directly, no matter what the threat to their own safety. However, others may decide to try to stay concealed or help people to safety. The situation will usually dictate the options and available responses.
- Whether or not weapons, including non-lethal weapons, should be carried by members other than police officers is a decision to be made within a specific place of worship and based on the law in that location.

It is likely that some members may carry concealed weapons (guns, knives, pepper spray, etc.) without approval from church leaders. The risks and liability involved should be discussed openly enough to alert those people to the concerns.

Firing a weapon in close quarters can result in unintended death or injuries to innocent people or may not be justified for the situation. There is tremendous moral and legal liability associated with the wrongful use of a deadly weapon. On the other hand, using a weapon against an assailant may stop him or her from further deadly action against the congregation.

If a decision is made to specifically approve having some members carry concealed weapons, strict precautions should be taken about the legality of the action, who is involved, the training they have received, and the knowledge others have of their armed status.

Some places of worship have members who are active or retired law enforcement officers. Church leaders have varying views about whether they feel more comfortable with the officer in uniform or not. Those issues should be discussed by everyone involved.

8. Weather and natural emergencies: These will vary according to the setting, but might include:

Shelter-in-place information.

Supply lists.

Instructions for moving some items to safer places in the facility.

Call lists to alert members who can respond to help.

Similar information according to the nature of weather and natural emergencies in the area.

9. Mechanical emergencies: As was mentioned in the section about mechanical systems, it is worthwhile to have contact and emergency shut-off information in a binder or manual away from the potentially hazardous system and also posted near the system itself.

Directions should give step-by-step instructions for turning water, utilities or other systems off or on, as well as contact phone numbers for maintenance people.

Staff and people who are frequently in the place of worship could be given hands-on training about turning off hot water heaters, checking fuses and other mechanical first-responses that are not dangerous.

10. Community emergencies: If an emergency occurs in the community, the place of worship may be asked to assist in varied ways. If that is likely in your place of worship, a plan for quick response should be in place, according to the potential emergencies in the area.

These plans might include methods for setting up a shelter site, providing food, securing the rest of the building while others are using it, extra cleaning and maintenance, and similar issues. Keep a list of contact information for local and regional emergency responders (Salvation Army, Red Cross, etc.)

11. Continuity of operations plans (COOP): If you were not able to meet in your place of worship starting right now, where would you meet for the next service, and how would you notify people about it? What would you do about the assets of the building? That kind of information is part of continuity planning.

The plans will vary according to whether the place of worship is still accessible and has items that can be transferred to a new location, or if it has been destroyed or is damaged severely.

Continuity of operations plans may also include plans for dealing with such varied issues as the emergency absence of the pastor, temporary lack of electricity or water or damage to roofs or windows,

Plans can include information about for restoring computers, reestablishing programs, contacting insurance providers and similar issues.

12. Communication plans. There is often a need to communicate quickly with members and the community. Quick and frequent communication can stop the spread of rumors and misinformation as well as explaining what will happen next.

- Who, besides the pastor, is authorized to speak for the church in the event of an emergency? Has that person received training about the task, at least as it relates to liability concerns about statements?

- Is there a way to use a website to inform the public about events related to emergencies or events at the church? Who would ensure that happens?

- Is there a radio station that can make announcements? If so, who is the contact person?

- Is there a phone, computer or personal network of contacts to inform people about emergencies? What if the most obvious methods of communication don't work for some reason? (Phone lines down, cell phones in dead cell spots, etc.)

SUMMARY ABOUT SECURITY ASSESSMENTS

The material in this document can help you get started assessing the safety and security of your place of worship. As with all activities it requires effort and a degree of knowledge and skills. However, anyone with the commitment to be thorough and focused, yet well-balanced and reasonable, can do an effective job.

Use this material in conjunction with Internet and library resources, information from other churches and the intuitive judgments of you and your team of leaders and volunteers.

An ongoing process: At the beginning of this material the statement was made that safety and security assessments are ongoing and must be continuous and consistent in focus and balance. The same is true about advice and ideas for conducting assessments. This material is a good foundation, but you will find many ideas through other resources, and some of that will change over time—especially as technology changes and becomes more affordable.

Target Hardening and the Target Hardening Trap: Briefly stated, *target hardening* is the process of making a target (something or someone that could be harmed) so resistant that harm is deterred, delayed or can be detected. It incorporates protection, prevention, resistance and response. The *target hardening trap* is spending large amounts of money, time or effort to prevent something harmful from happening *again*.

One of the challenges of security is keeping the macro focus that is neither excessive nor unconcerned, but that always has the big picture and ultimate goals in mind. At the same time you must have a micro focus to ensure you do not make assumptions about safety and security, but instead that you inspect and assess closely.

The Three C's: The three C's of safety and security planning are to be, Continuous, Consistent and to Communicate openly and often. A security assessment process is one of the key elements of each of those elements.

You can have a tremendous leadership role in your place of worship when you work with others to know the safety and security status of every aspect of the people, places, assets, processes and programs of your church and work to improve them in reasonable, effective ways. You can also have a leadership role by helping everyone be prepared for potential problems and emergencies.

The goal of this material: The goal, as stated in the introduction, was to:

- 1.) Give you the information, ideas and guidelines you need to conduct an effective assessment of your place of worship.
- 2.) Encourage a focused and balanced approach to safety and security planning.

I hope you will let me know if you find the material helpful and if you have ideas to share. Best wishes!

About the Author

Tina Lewis Rowe had a thirty-four year law enforcement career, first with the Denver Police Department where she served in every division and was a captain in charge of the Academy and Internal Affairs before retiring after serving as the captain of Patrol District Two, northeast Denver. She served for eight years as the Presidential-appointed United States Marshal for Colorado.

One of her challenges as the United States Marshal was to develop and provide oversight for security in the trials for Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, who committed the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, OK, April 19, 1995. The explosion took the lives of 168 people--including 19 children--and injured over 500 others.

Tina has been an inspirational and informative presenter and trainer for forty years and has spoken to thousands of audiences. She started her own training company in 2002 and now is involved full-time in presenting, training, writing and assessing the effectiveness of people, programs and processes. Her focus is on professional and organizational development in government, criminal justice agencies, businesses and organizations.

She is one of the Workplace Doctors on the *Ask The Workplace Doctors* website, developed by William Gordon, Ph.D. (www.workplacedoctors.com), a site that answers workplace communication questions from around the world.

Tina is the author of a book on preparing for assessment centers, *A Preparation Guide for the Assessment Center Method* (Charles C. Thomas, publisher), as well as hundreds of workbooks, guides and templates related to effective supervision, communications, security assessments and planning, and professional development.

Her online training journal is at www.tinalewisrowe.com.