

The United States has approximately 345,000 religious congregations consisting of about 150 million members. These members comprise more than 230 different denominational groups. The number of people coming and going from religious facilities during the week varies with the size of the congregation living nearby. In rural areas, congregations are generally small (100 members or less). In large metropolitan areas and suburbs, congregations can exceed 10,000 members. Some religious facilities also provide educational resources for students in prekindergarten and kindergarten through 12th grade

Identifying and evaluating a known or potential threat to a given facility is a preliminary component of a security assessment, the results of which will guide the process of developing a security plan. A proper plan will aim to deter a threat or mitigate a threat by reducing the religious facility's vulnerability to those threats. Potential threats to religious facilities can originate from disaffected individuals (e.g., employees, former members) or groups, outsiders, criminals, or domestic or international terrorist groups.

As events over the past several years have demonstrated, deliberate attacks on religious facilities are a real threat that can inflict considerable harm.

Religious facilities are vulnerable to pre-planned attacks of targeted violence committed by individuals using a variety of tactics to inflict harm on a religious facility. Individuals who target a religious facility for harm could use firearms; improvised explosive devices (IEDs); vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs); or arson in order to inflict a number of casualties and damage to religious facilities. Perpetrators have a wide variety of weapons and tactics available to achieve their objectives and have demonstrated the ability to plan and conduct complex attacks against multiple targets. Attacks can be carried out by individuals, small teams of a few perpetrators, or larger groups acting in a coordinated fashion.

Individuals who target a religious facility for some act of violence could use conventional firearms, automatic weapons, explosives or similar weapons to harm individuals or take hostages. As past events have demonstrated, deliberate attacks on religious facilities are a real threat that can inflict considerable harm.

The scheduling and predictability of times when members gather to worship, and the attractiveness of religious facilities as a "soft target," lead to the security and protection-related challenges.

Since religious facilities generally provide an open atmosphere, facilities are vulnerable to deliberate acts by outside perpetrators. Religious facilities and their members have been targets of violent attacks. These incidents have served to point out vulnerabilities and have offered valuable lessons for protecting these facilities, the people who attend them, and the employees who work in them. In addition, the perception that religious facilities are "soft targets" and have little security may make them a more attractive target for individuals looking to carry out an attack on a large group of individuals.

In general, religious facilities are open to all, at least during the conduct of religious services. Depending on the type of structure, the nature of access restrictions and other security measures that may be in place, religious facilities may or may not be able to control access to the facility by potential adversaries. Some high risk facilities employ private security guards, trained volunteers, and/or local police to assist in access control.

Religious facilities are also vulnerable to attacks outside their main building, such as in contiguous parking areas, where vehicles have unrestricted access and are generally not inspected, and in auxiliary buildings such as educational facilities. The layouts of most religious facilities permit close proximity of vehicles to buildings and areas where people congregate. These include parking areas, driveways on facility grounds, and nearby streets. There are usually no vehicle barriers near the main entrances or other vulnerable parts of the buildings.

Individuals who deliver parcels or are hired to do construction or repair work are often given unescorted access to religious facilities, and the contents of packages they deliver or materials brought into the facility are not inspected. Additionally, religious facilities are generally not secured, leaving HVAC units and other critical building utility supply components (e.g., water, electric power, natural gas service) easily accessible.

Religious facilities attract a group of people of like faith into a single location at specified times. This makes the facility a ready target for an adversary seeking to attack that particular group of people. This vulnerability is increased by easy identification of the specific faith, either by facility configuration or signage. Religious or customary garments, clothing or other items worn or displayed by persons of a particular faith may also increase identification of individuals belonging to a particular faith. In addition to religious services and special events, congregants often gather outside of religious facilities before and after religious services where little or no security or protection is afforded

In that most religious facilities are nonprofit, many have very small budgets that are used to pay for the basic operation of the facility and to provide services to the congregation and surrounding communities. Many do not have the financial resources to implement extensive security measures, especially physical security equipment. Thus, for example, workers and volunteers may not undergo background checks.

In addition to man-made or man caused incidents, natural and other hazards (tornadoes, floods, and hurricanes) can affect the safety of religious facilities, as well as the religious facility's ability to carry out normal operations. Emergency action plans and business continuity plans should also provide the foundation for responding to unexpected or catastrophic events.

Security practices should address the threats deemed most likely to occur or have the potential to result in the greatest damage. Potential threats to religious facilities can originate from disaffected individuals associated with the institution, but can also originate from outside the community.

When conducting an individual assessment, three factors should be considered:

- Identify any individual(s) whose behavior may cause concern or disruption and that may affect members of the community.
- Assess whether the identified individual(s) possesses the intent and ability to carry out an attack against the institution or member of the institution, and if the individual has taken any steps to prepare for the attack.
- Manage the threat posed by the individual, to include disrupting potential plans of attack, mitigating the risk, and implementing strategies to facilitate long-term resolution.

Attack indicators are observable behaviors that may precede an attack and may be detected as an individual prepares and plans for an attack. Indicators may include, but are not limited to: the perpetrator conducting surveillance, engaging in training, and/or beginning mobilization activities in advance of an attack.

Understanding behaviors that are unusual, concerning, or suspicious, as well as behaviors that may be indicative of surveillance or imminent attack are essential in the efforts to protect communities from threats of violence.

Individuals who threaten to carry out an attack may engage in a number of behaviors that raise concern in others who know the individual. These behaviors should be looked at in the context of an individual's life and current situation, such that an individual who displays several of these concerning behaviors and is also dealing with a negative life event may be of concern and warrant some intervention. With respect to active shooter situations, investigations and analysis show that many active shooters were described as social isolates, harbored feelings of hate and anger, and/or had some reported contact with mental health professionals. Mental illness is commonly referenced as a potential contributing factor, but its causal impact on the attack can only be speculated. Common catalysts or triggers observed include: loss of significant relationships, changes in living arrangements, changes in financial status, loss of job, major adverse changes to life circumstances, and/or feelings of humiliation or rejection on the part of the shooter.

Some individual behavior indicators may include:

- Socially isolated
- Threats of violence
- Unsolicited focus on dangerous weapons
- Unstable emotional responses
- Intense anger and hostility
- Loss of significant relationships
- Feeling either arrogant and supreme, or powerless
- Expressions of paranoia or depression
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Depression or withdrawal
- Talk of suicide

Surveillance indicators may provide evidence that a religious facility is being monitored and/or assessed by individuals planning an attack. Indicators of potential surveillance include persons in the vicinity of religious facilities attempting to gather information about the facility, its operations, and/or its protective measures. Some potential indicators that religious facilities may be under surveillance include:

- Persons using or carrying video/camera/observation equipment in or near the facility over an extended period
- Persons parking, standing, or loitering in the same area over a multiple-day period with no apparent reasonable explanation
- Persons excessively inquiring about practices pertaining to the facility and its operations or the supporting infrastructure (telecommunications, electric, natural gas, water)
- Persons observed or reported to be observing facility receipts or deliveries
- Employees observed or reported to be willfully associating with suspicious individuals, changing working behavior, or working more irregular hours.

Certain indicators may demonstrate that an attack is imminent and that immediate action needs to be taken. Indicators of an imminent attack include people, vehicles, or packages that demonstrate unusual or suspicious behavior that requires an immediate response. If an attack seems imminent and an immediate action is required, call 911 immediately and follow all emergency operations plans.

Some potential indicators of an imminent attack include:

- Suspicious persons in crowded areas wearing unusually bulky clothing that might conceal explosives
- Unexpected or unfamiliar delivery trucks arriving at the facility
- Unattended packages (e.g., backpacks, briefcases, boxes) or suspicious packages and/or letters received by mail

The religious facility environment is best managed by creating layers of protective measures in collaboration with community partners that allow religious institutions to deter, delay and detect threats. These layers allow an institution to consider a threat as soon as possible and to more effectively respond to, further deter, eliminate or mitigate that threat. Technological sensors such as surveillance cameras or alarms (fire, smoke, tornado, and intrusion detection) may assist in decision making. Barriers, whether locked doors or parking bollards, and facility personnel should be utilized to delay a threat and afford more time for effective decision making. For example, a locked door creates time to better understand the situation and to make a better response decision. Pre-arranged responses to identified threats is also a mechanism to manage time during a crisis as a well-rehearsed response to a threat (e.g. fire drill) allows a more effective response under stress in minimal time.

As information is received during an emergency situation, a number of factors influence leaders' ability to make appropriate decisions. Time, or the lack of time, is a principle disrupter of effective decision making. Strategies to improve responses during a crisis should focus on time management. An effective security plan should expand the window of time available to leaders

to make a good decision. A strong security plan will provide institution leaders opportunity and time during a crisis to make decisions about providing for the welfare of their community.

Protective measures that deter, delay, and detect threats include equipment, personnel, and procedures designed to protect a facility against threats and mitigate the effects of an adverse event. Many different protective measures are available for deployment at a facility and in the areas surrounding a facility. Some are applicable to a wide range of facilities and against various threats, whereas others are designed to meet the unique needs of a specific facility or a specific threat. In addition, some may be tactical in nature, while others may address long-term strategic needs. Some protective measures are designed to be implemented on a permanent basis to serve as routine protection for a facility. Such measures are sometimes referred to as “baseline countermeasures.” Others are either implemented or increased in their application only during times of heightened alert. The relatively open access to religious facilities building and grounds makes it difficult to secure them. Protective measures should be comprehensive, integrating equipment, personnel, procedures, and information sharing to ensure that all employees and all members are involved. Including all employees and members in religious facilities security operations, and properly training them in observation, increases the number of eyes on the issue and improves the chances of detecting a threat.

Knowing what to do when faced with a crisis can be the difference between calm and chaos, between courage and fear, and between life and death. To best prepare your staff, members, and possible visitors for a crisis, create an Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), and conduct training exercises. Together, the EOP and training exercises will prepare your staff and congregation members to effectively respond to an incident and help minimize loss of life. Facility readiness requires that leadership develop and exercise response plans that apply general preparedness and response protocols to specific types of emergencies and facility capabilities (including security resources). EOPs need to be customized to communities and facilities to meet the unique needs of a religious facility. Additionally, it is incredibly important to review, update, and practice the EOP regularly. Good plans are never finished; they can always be updated based on experience, research, and changing vulnerabilities or threats.

One of the first steps in planning is developing a mechanism to notify members and religious facility personnel that an incident is occurring and to instruct them on what to do. There should be specific methods for communicating an incident internally to staff, members, and facility visitors.

When an incident occurs, quickly determine whether facility personnel and facility occupants need to be evacuated, locked down or assume shelter in place. Evacuation requires all occupants to leave the building. While evacuating to the facility parking lot makes sense for a fire drill that only lasts a few minutes, it may not be an appropriate location for a longer period of time.

Lockdowns are called for when a crisis occurs outside of the facility and an evacuation would be dangerous (e.g., escaped criminal). A lockdown may also be called for when there is a crisis inside and movement within the facility will put facility occupants in jeopardy. All exterior doors are locked and occupants stay in an enclosed area. Windows may need to be covered. Shelter-in-place requires staff, members, and visitors to immediately find a room with no or few windows,

and take refuge there. All windows, exterior doors, and other openings to the outside should be closed and locked.

Emergency actions plans should provide for the needs of all facility personnel, members, and visitors with disabilities and other functional and access needs. This is especially important when considering evacuation procedures. Predetermined evacuation routes and staging areas for those with disabilities should be considered.

As soon as a crisis is recognized, it is important to account for all facility personnel, facility members, and visitors. Emergency responders treat a situation very differently when people are missing.

A crisis is the time to follow the emergency operations plan, not to make a plan. During a crisis, leaders need to project a calm, confident, and serious attitude to assure people of the seriousness of the situation and the wisdom of the directions being given. It is also important to communicate accurate and appropriate information.



HOUSE OF WORSHIP SECURITY SELF ASSESSMENT



NEIGHBORHOOD

| QUESTION | YES | NO | COMMENTS |
|--|-----|----|----------|
| Can the house of worship be observed from surrounding facilities or streets? | | | |
| Are neighborhood streets and walkway in the immediate vicinity well lighted? | | | |
| Are the property boundaries of the house of worship easily recognizable by visual means? | | | |

EXTERNAL GROUNDS

| QUESTION | YES | NO | COMMENTS |
|---|-----|----|----------|
| Are designated parking lots or parking areas well lighted? | | | |
| Are pedestrian walkways and building entrances particularly well lighted? | | | |
| Are all signs of the building illuminated by exterior lighting? | | | |
| Are motion detector activated lighting located near doors and windows? | | | |
| Are exterior lights associated with the house of worship controlled by a photoelectric cell? | | | |
| Does someone have the specific responsibility for checking the operation of all outdoor lighting? | | | |
| Are lighting repairs made in a timely manner? | | | |
| Are switches, breakers or electrical panels inaccessible to the public? | | | |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| Is foliage prevented from obscuring exterior lighting figures? | | | |
| Are bushes, shrubbery or other plant growth trimmed in an appropriate manner so as not to serve as a hiding place? | | | |
| Are informal pathways lighted to prevent them from becoming a security risk? | | | |
| Is the line of sight from the house of worship to parking lots, pedestrian walkways unobstructed by landscaping and/or plant growth? | | | |
| Are exterior or detached storage buildings well-constructed and secured? | | | |
| Is the dumpster area well lighted? | | | |
| Have any steps been taken to prevent any exterior building recesses or alcoves from serving as hiding places? | | | |

BUILDING PERIMETER

| QUESTION | YES | NO | COMMENTS |
|---|------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Is there a marquee or other signage visible from the adjacent roadway that identifies the house of worship? | | | |
| Are visitor entry points clearly identified? | | | |
| Do visitors have to check in at an administrative office or desk before they can access other parts of the building? | | | |
| Are exterior doors not used as designated entry points locked to prevent entry from the exterior? | | | |
| Is there a strategy to prevent exterior doors from being propped open? | | | |
| Are perimeter doors full metal or solid core wooden doors with deadbolt locking devices? Must comply with all applicable fire regulations | | | |
| Are all locks functional and in good repair? | | | |
| Are exterior doors equipped with high quality cylindrical locks with a deadbolt of at least 1” in length? | | | |

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|---|--|--|--|
| Is there more than 1/8" clearance between the exterior door and their door frames to prevent plying? | | | |
| Are all exterior windows easily locked? | | | |
| Are double-hung windows and horizontal sliding windows equipped with an auxiliary locking device or interlocking sashes to prevent a small flat blade sliding between the sashes to unlock the window? Must comply with all applicable fire regulations | | | |
| Are horizontal sliding windows or doors equipped with screws or devices to prevent the sash or door from being lifted from the track? | | | |
| Is there a clear procedure and person designated for unlocking and locking the house of worship on a daily basis? | | | |

ELECTRONIC INTRUSTION DETECTION SYSTEM

| QUESTION | YES | NO | COMMENTS |
|--|------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Does the house of worship have an intrusion alarm system? | | | |
| Does the alarm cover all exterior entry points? | | | |
| Is the intrusion alarm activated every night? | | | |
| Are there clear signs and/or decals posted on the exterior of the building indicating the house of worship is equipped with an intrusion alarm system? | | | |
| Is the intrusion detection system monitored from a central location? | | | |
| Are appointed members and staff formally trained on arming and disarming procedures? | | | |
| Is preventative maintenance and periodic testing done on the intrusion alarm system? | | | |
| Is there a process or procedure to upgrade or grow the system as needs dictate? | | | |
| Are the arm/disarm codes for the intrusion alarm system periodically changed? | | | |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| Are the names and call numbers of persons on the central monitoring station current? | | | |
|--|--|--|--|

VIDEO SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM

| QUESTION | YES | NO | COMMENTS |
|---|-----|----|----------|
| Does the house of worship currently have a video surveillance system? | | | |
| Is the video system in good working order? | | | |
| Does the video system record? | | | |
| Is the video system used to view parking areas? | | | |
| Does the video system monitor the exterior of the building? | | | |
| Does the video system cover all points of entry? | | | |
| Does the video system also cover internal areas of the building? | | | |
| Is routine maintenance and testing done on the video system? | | | |

INTERNAL BUILDING AREAS

| QUESTION | YES | NO | COMMENTS |
|---|-----|----|----------|
| Are all interior hallways and rooms well lighted? | | | |
| Are doors secured sections when not in use? | | | |
| Are areas under stairwells enclosed or otherwise inaccessible? | | | |
| Are the lockable hardware of all interior doors routinely tested to ensure doors properly close and lock? | | | |
| Are locks on mechanical rooms locked and access controlled? | | | |

KEY MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL

| QUESTION | YES | NO | COMMENTS |
|--|------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Is there a single person responsible for key issuance, retrieval and record keeping? | | | |
| Is there an accurate record of who has keys to the facility? | | | |
| Is the issuance of master keys closely controlled? | | | |
| Is key duplication prohibited? | | | |
| Are key holders required to sign for keys? | | | |
| Are duplicate keys stored in a locked cabinet with limited access? | | | |
| Are affected locks replaced or rekeyed whenever a key is lost or stolen? | | | |