PROTECTING HOUSES OF WORSHIP: Security Considerations

This resource is a companion piece to CISA’s and the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI) co-branded Protecting Places of Worship: Six Steps to Enhance Security Fact Sheet, which highlighted the following steps:

1. Understand the Risk
2. Understand Your Space
3. Develop and Practice a Plan
4. Inform and Educate Greeters
5. Pursue Grants
6. Report Hate Crimes and Other Incidents

This infographic outlines low- to no-cost solutions to help implement these suggested practices and highlights ways to identify funding for security improvements. To learn more about layered security and other recommended mitigations, visit CISA’s Mitigating Attacks on Houses of Worship Security Guide.

### INNER PERIMETER

**Corresponds to Six Steps:** 1, 2, 3, 4

- **Create a Security Team:** Establish a working group to create and implement a holistic plan to mitigate risks, train volunteers, and put the congregation’s security plan into practice.
- **Maintain Situational Awareness:** Train reception staff and volunteers in identifying suspicious activity or behaviors at the point of entry and/or greeting. Maintain situational awareness of unknown persons or those whose behavior has previously indicated the potential for violence.
- **Shelter-in-Place Room:** Designate optimal shelter-in-place locations (thick/fortified walls, solid doors with locks, minimal interior windows, and first aid emergency kits). Ensure staff and congregants can identify locations through training and signage.

### MIDDLE PERIMETER

**Corresponds to Six Steps:** 2, 3, 4, 5

- **Fluid area that includes anything on property but outside the main building.**
  - **Awareness:** Station security team members beyond the building’s front doors to maintain situational awareness and identify behaviors of concern while greeting visitors. If possible, perform periodic exterior building sweeps to identify any discrepancies. Train security team members on reporting/notification procedures for rapid law enforcement response.
  - **Doors:** Install electronic doorbells to help identify visitors and/or detect intruders before they reach the inner perimeter. Use solid, thick doors to help limit/block access when congregants are inside, along with appropriate locking hardware. Ensure key control among current and former members.
  - **Windows:** Lock and install alarms on windows, ensuring they can be unlocked for emergency escape. Where feasible, use blast-resistant glass film. Install pull chain or center locking hardware. Ensure a visible security presence.
  - **Lighting:** Install motion-activated lighting throughout the campus. Provide security team and other key members with handheld radios, and ensure all congregants are well-versed in how to respond to alerts.

### OUTER PERIMETER

**Corresponds to Six Steps:** 2, 4

- **Area that includes surface parking and outline of primary and outbuildings at the property border, dumpsters, and organization-owned vehicles.**
  - **Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV):** If financially feasible, consider installing a surveillance system, including cameras offering a clear view of the facility perimeter and individuals approaching the entrance from outside. Consider installing monitor inside lobby and in administrative offices. Ensure remote access for select security team members and law enforcement.
  - **Landscape:** Remove any obscuring brush to increase visibility for staff, congregants, and potential first responders.

- **Lighting:** Consider strategically placing photo-cell (for dusk to dawn) and motion-activated lighting throughout the outer perimeter. Ensure proper maintenance for full functionality.

- **Traffic Management:** Use active and/or passive vehicle barriers. Position proper signage for parking and pathways. Engage trained and properly identified greeters, volunteers, and/or law enforcement to manage traffic. Consider using traffic cones, jersey barriers, and/or other barriers.
This product describes activities and behaviors that may be suspicious or indicate criminal activity. These activities may be constitutionally protected and should be reported only when there are concrete facts to support a rational conclusion that the behavior is suspicious. Do not report solely on protected activities, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or a combination of such factors.

### POWER OF HELLO
Alert employees can spot suspicious activity and report it. The power is in the employee, citizen, patron, or anyone who can observe and report. The OHNO approach—Observe, Initiate a Hello, Navigate the Risk, and Obtain Help—helps employees observe and evaluate suspicious behaviors, and empowers them to mitigate potential risk, and obtain help when necessary.

### ALL PERIMETER LAYERS
- **Observe**
- **Initiate a Hello**
- **Navigate the Risk**
- **Obtain Help**

#### RISK
Facilities face a varying amount of risk due to their unique physical layout and activity footprint. As the facility security team begins to determine vulnerabilities, consider how risk is defined:

**Risk = Threat x Vulnerability x Consequence**

**Risk**: The potential for an adverse outcome assessed as a function of hazard/threats, assets and their vulnerabilities, and consequences.

**Example**: Active shooter (threat) enters facility premises via a broken fence (vulnerability) and attacks staff and congregants, causing loss of life (consequence).

### Layered Security Approach:
Frame your facility’s security effort through a lens of outer, middle, and inner perimeters.

### Coordination:
Follow a cohesive and thorough security approach, addressing all layers of the perimeter and integrating suspicious behavior security training and skills.

### Conduct Vulnerability Assessments
Resources to guide personnel at houses of worship through a security-focused self-assessment to understand potential vulnerabilities and identify options for consideration in mitigating those vulnerabilities.

**Houses of Worship Security Self-Assessment**

**School Security Assessment Tool (SSAT)**

### Planning Considerations
Resources to enhance security before an incident and how personnel/volunteers should respond during and following an incident.

**Houses of Worship**

**Active Shooter Emergency Action Plan Product Suite**

**Active Shooter Preparedness**

**FEMA Guide for Developing Emergency Plans for Houses of Worship**

**Power of Hello**

**De-Escalation Series**

### Training and Exercises
Provide annual training for staff and congregants, including children’s care personnel and individuals with access and functional needs.

**CISA Tablet Exercise Package (CTEP)**

**Office for Bombing Prevention (OBP)**

**FBI-led Joint Terrorism Task Forces**

**State and Major Urban Area Fusion Centers**

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