PROTECTING YOUR CONGREGATIONS AGAINST AN ACTIVE SHOOTER

The opinions of the presenters do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Church Mutual Insurance Company, S.I.

Presenters:
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AREAS IN FOCUS

- Do congregations really need a plan?
- Case study & decade of shooters
- Mentality of a shooter
- Shooter factsheet
- Considerations for a robust security and response plan
- Other important considerations
- Q&A Session
DO CONGREGATIONS NEED A PLAN?
CASE STUDY
Sept. 15, 1999
Church in Texas

- Over 150 teenagers at church singing hymns.
- Suspect entered and shot 14 people.
- Ended up killing 7 people and injuring another 7 before killing himself.
March 12, 2005
Church in Wisconsin

- Suspect opened fire on the congregation, killing 7 and wounding 4 before taking his own life.
- He was described by people that knew him as a normal guy with no warning signs.
Dec 9, 2007
Church in Colorado

- Suspect was asked to leave a youth center.
- Returned, opened fire killing 2 and injured 2.
- 35 minutes later, he went to a church and killed 2 people.
Suspect walks into the church and shoots the pastor dead, point blank.

Several church members confronted the shooter with aggression and overpowered him.
A male suspect fatally shot 6 people and wounded 4 others in a mass shooting.

The suspect committed suicide by shooting himself in the head.
March 31, 2013
Church in Ohio

- A suspect killed his father at the church.
- Afterward, he shouted about Allah and God.
- The suspect was later arrested by the police.
U.S. Faith Based Shooter by State
Inside the Sanctuary (1999-Present)

64 deaths

GA 4
MO 4
CA 3
WI 2
ID 1
UT 1
CO 1
TX 1
LA 1
IL 1
MI 1
OH 1
KY 1
TN 1
FL 1
NY 1
NJ 1
Active Shooter Defined

Armed person(s) whose action is immediately causing death or great bodily injury.
Mentality of a Shooter

- Will continue until stopped
- Primary Motive: Revenge
- Other Motives:
  - Hatred, domestic or marital issues, child custody dispute, congregation dispute, denied services, disappointment in leadership’s decision, physical/mental illness, financial trouble, mad at the world
  - Or it could simply be anything
  - Are there pre-indicators?
Key Findings:

- Unless person communicates intent directly
  - Predicting an active shooter incident is difficult
  - More difficult in large congregations
SHOOTER FACTSHEET
Shooters by Age

44%

52%

4%

Under 18

19-50

51+
Shooters by Gender

- 90% Male
- 10% Female
The idea may brew for weeks or months
Pre-implementation 2 days prior to the attack
Higher risk on Sundays
Period of Choice on Sunday

- Usually after service begins
Time of the Day

- Can happen at any time
- **Key Factors:** Occupancy and opportunity
Shooter Outcome

- Most incidents end before police arrive
CONSIDERATIONS FOR A ROBUST SECURITY AND RESPONSE PLAN

The following are considerations for a robust security and response plan and does not cover every conceivable situation or all variables.
Your plan

- Initial assessment
- Promote awareness among your congregation
- Preparedness for key staff
  - Recommended course of action
  - Post-incident course of action
    - Evacuation process & assembly point(s)
    - Post-incident counseling process
    - Media protocol
- Considerations for armed security
Initial Assessment

Factors to consider:

- Size and layout of facility
- Size of the congregation
- Internal & external risk factors
- Lockdown capability
- Number of exits
- Location of children’s ministry or other programs
- Unarmed or armed security & state laws
- Pre-established emergency response protocols
- Training for congregation, staff, & security
- Communication methods
- Police/sheriff/medic response time
- And many more
Promoting Awareness Among Congregation

- Be proactive about engaging your congregation
  - Larger congregation may want to consider promoting awareness with everyone or by groups
  - Smaller congregation could address their congregation as a whole
  - Or via Newsletters/brochures
Content

- Recommended Action
  - Before any incident
  - During incident
  - Post-incident
Before any incident

- Urge congregation to maintain general awareness
- Encourage them to report unusual situation to staff

During an active shooter incident

- Include recommended course of action such as
  - Get out if safe to do so
  - Call for help
  - Unable to get out, then hide horizontally
  - If viable, lock door
  - Face to face contact, go for weapon
Post active shooter incident

- List evacuation expectations inside your brochure
- Indicate services available
  - Counseling and prayer time
- Cooperation with law enforcement
  - Police may need to speak to witnesses
Prepare Key Staff

- Leadership
- Ushers
- Children’s ministry staff
- Youth ministry staff
- Volunteers who play critical roles

Course of action should cover:
- Shooter on premises but not at key staff location
- Shooter enters key staff location
Shooter on Church Premises

Applicable key staff options:

- Identify the general location of the threat
- Alert others
- Call 911…seek shelter or lockdown in a safe place
- Lock door or blockade with any furniture
- Turn lights off
- Lead people to hide between or behind furniture
- Ask congregation/others not to huddle together
What If You Are Outdoors?

Guide congregation/children to:

- Seek shelter in any safe building nearby
- If not practical to do so:
  - Run with group toward opposite/safe direction
  - Spread out in small pockets
  - Run between objects
  - Upon arriving at safer location, remain there
Shooter Enters Your Location

Congregation should implement safety options

Applicable key staff should:

- Consider the following factor
  - Shooter’s distance from staff, congregation, & children
- Key staff/others close to shooter should act
- Call 911 as soon as possible
Post-Incident for Key Staff

- If evacuation is necessary
  - Key staff should guide people to assembly point(s)
  - Assist with headcount if applicable

- Counseling process
  - This may entail prayer & encouragement
Post-Incident for Key Staff (continued)

- Media protocol for Key Staff
  - Staff/others should know your media protocol
  - Control your message

- Social media factor
  - Key staff should Discourage people from posting info on social media
  - May cause confusion and make it more difficult to manage situation at hand
Are These Measures Enough?

Recent Assessment:
- Awareness & staff response plans great...
- A New Factor – Advanced First Aid training
- More robust security response plan needed
  - Security team
The Basics of a Security Team

- Very complicated subject & process
  - No easy path. State laws vary
- Options to discuss with legal team:
  1) Internal armed security team via:
     - 2nd amendment
     - CCW
     - Security guard certification
  2) External armed security guard company
- Involve consultant or legal team
## Armed Guard Certification by State

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- ♦ Most Regulated
- ◆ Less Regulated
- ◈ Minimal Regulated
Internal Armed Security Team

If congregation decides to arm & state laws permits:

- Decide if plain clothes or uniformed security
  - Current/retired Police officers is a good option
- Establish a committee system
  - They decide the # of armed persons needed
  - Establish a process to approve or disapprove requests
- Possible Committee representation:
  - Board members
  - Senior pastor & elders
  - Legal counsel
  - An expert or experienced person
Selection criteria & protocol

Some considerations:

- Do you arm every interested person?
- Establish a standard selection criteria
- How does the leadership select who is authorized?
Establish use of force policy

Some Considerations:

- How strict should your policy be?
- Get input from legal team and the police
- Direct and straight to the point
  - State your goals
  - Define lethal and less lethal weapons
  - Define danger to life or great bodily injury
  - When should less lethal weapon be considered?
  - When can lethal force be used?
  - Who provides the weapons to security team?
- Must be in compliance with the law
- Identify liabilities/risk factors if lethal force is used
Training your armed security team

Considerations:

- Establish standardized training program
- Initial or ongoing training could entail:
  - Orientation to facility or layout
  - Use of force policy
  - Briefing & communication methods
  - Weapons training
  - Active shooter response training
Who manages the internal church security team?

- Consider putting this in place
- The manager should:
  - Have strong leadership skills
  - Be reliable, experienced & well trained
  - Have excellent critical thinking skills
- Responsibilities may include:
  - Compliance with the law & church rules
  - Handle scheduling
  - Handle training of armed and unarmed staff
  - Restock brochures for congregation
  - Liaison with law enforcement
Partnership with local police

- Meet with them periodically
- Initial meeting could entail topics of mutual interest such as:
  - Orienting the police to facility and property layout
  - Access to your facility (issued keys?)
  - Their arrival time
  - Communication methods
  - Discuss how to identify your armed security (if you have one in place)
External Armed Security Company

- State laws vary
- Pro and cons
- Vetting is necessary
OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Advanced first aid training for key staff
- Have multiple exit points at sanctuary/event centers
- Make sure exit signs are installed
- Maintain staff presence inside the lobby during service
- Depending on the size of your church, consider monitoring the parking lot as well
- Invest in a low cost camera system
Due to the high volume of questions, presenters will not be able to respond to every question submitted.

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