

Legal Issues

Employees and Volunteers



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
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Protecting Employees – Security Procedures in the Workplace

Congregations should evaluate their security procedures. Although violent acts cannot always be prevented, appropriate security review should be a part of a congregation's risk management. For more information on risk management issues, see these Church Mutual Insurance Company and FBI links:

[What To Do When Violence Strikes](#)  from Church Mutual
[Workplace Violence - Issues in Response](#)  from the FBI

More on Violence in Churches:

Did you know that according to recent research* that there is an uptick in church related shootings - 6 in 2007, 18 in 2008 and 17 for the first half of 2009. Typically, 46% of church violence cases occur during a church event, 53% occur during off hours. 64% occur inside a church building and 36% occur outside on church property.

Here are the reasons why church violence occurs:

- 10% - gang related
- 17% - domestic conflict
- 19% - robbery
- 28% - personal conflict
- 26% - random/other

*Sources: National Safety Council, Strategies International, Charles Chinn – Security Consultant

It is well known from many tragic church related incidents that a determined gunman can cause serious harm. Nevertheless, here are a few things that congregations can do to try to prevent their churches from becoming the sites of crime:

1. Prevention Steps -- **Leadership & Local Authorities**

- Build a relationship with the local police and ensure that they have current blueprints and photos of the church building, including interiors.
- In consultation with local police, develop an emergency contact list and distribute it to staff.

- Arrange to have the police regularly patrol the church property and notify them of upcoming special events.
- When traveling to other locations, try to do so in pairs and keep cellular phones handy for emergency calls.
- Do call the authorities as soon as possible during or after any incident, don't wait.

2. Prevention Steps -- **Staff & Volunteers**

- Develop an emergency plan to address threats of violence, including a building evacuation plan.
- Communicate plans to key staff and the congregation.
- Make sure First Aid resources are available and offer First Aid/CPR training.
- Instruct ushers and greeters to establish eye contact with all who enter the church and report concerns.
- Watch for strangers and monitor persons exhibiting strange or suspicious behavior, including persons with bulky clothing, trench coats and the like.
- Make sure all ushers have cell phones and are able to call police/EMS immediately in the event of an emergency or unusual circumstance.
- Recommend that people arrive and depart the church in pairs or groups, especially after dark.

3. Prevention Steps -- **Building & Grounds**

- Trim hedges and clear any obstacles to eliminate places a perpetrator could hide.
- Ensure all outdoor lighting on building and in parking lot is bright and operating properly.
- Limit number of entryways into the church and have ushers continuously monitor entry activity.
- Ensure that all exits are clearly marked, unlocked, and well lit.
- Secure any potential access windows and nonessential doorways.

For further information, see also the following Church Mutual links:

[Self Inspection Safety Checklist](#) 
[Crime-Proof Your Worship Center](#)

Embezzlement (ELCA Resources):

["Eleven Things I Have Learned from Dealing with Embezzlement"](#) 
[What Information Insurers Require](#) 

ATF and Homeland Security Resources for dealing with bomb threats:

[ATF Phoned Threat Data Sheet](#) 
[Bomb Threat Call Procedures](#) 

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