

Security Procedures

Addressing Crime and Violence Issues



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

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, S.I. and FBI links:

[Armed Intruder Security](#) from Church Mutual
[Security measures for your place of worship cannot be ignored](#)

[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:

(Church Mutual resources)

[Preventing Fraud and Embezzlement at Your Worship Center](#) 
[Webinar: Preventing Fraud and Embezzlement at Your Worship Center](#)
[Fraud in Houses of Worship: What Believers DO NOT Want to Believe](#) 

(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:

[Bomb Threat Call Procedures](#) 