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


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](#)
[Are You Prepared for Crime?](#) and [Security and Crime Prevention](#)

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

Resources for dealing with bomb threats:
[DHS Bomb Threat Checklist](#)
[Threatening Phone Call/Bomb Threat Checklist](#)
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