

# Security Action Plan for Houses of Worship

Houses of worship, such as churches, synagogues, and mosques, are often located in isolated or rural areas and left unattended for extended periods of time. This makes it difficult to properly secure the facility. A security loss control program can help to reduce the potential for arson, bombing, vandalism, and burglary of houses of worship. The following general strategies should be considered in implementing a program:

## Reduce Vulnerability

- Keep plants and shrubs trimmed to provide good visibility of the building and surrounding property.
- Request assistance from law enforcement, fire personnel, and area residents to help increase observation of the property.
- Have adult members of the congregation randomly check the building daily, or consider the use of a guard service.
- Install a protective lighting system that automatically turns on at sundown to illuminate the exterior of the building(s), the grounds, and interior areas, which are visible from the outside.
- Check credentials of outside maintenance personnel.
- Control access to air intakes of heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems to prevent attempts to introduce contaminants into the system.
- Remove potential fire hazards from the grounds, such as trash, lawn clippings, and other debris.
- Do not leave cash in the facility.

## Install Security Equipment

- Install dead-bolt locks on all exterior doors and assure doors and frames are solidly constructed and installed.
- Carefully control the distribution of keys to the building.
- Protect valuable stained-glass windows with burglary/vandal-resistant glazing.
- Install a central station fire and burglar alarm system that provides for remote monitoring.

## Handling Threatening Situations

- Develop a written crisis plan for actions to be taken when a threat is

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received, such as a bomb threat.

- If suspicious persons or vehicles are observed, obtain a detailed physical description and report it to law enforcement authorities.
- If a suspicious package or letter is received, immediately call law enforcement officials. Do not handle the parcel. Be alert for letters or packages that display an excessive amount of postage, contain grease stains, or have unfamiliar or missing return addresses.
- If threatening correspondence is received, handle the documents as little as possible, place all materials in a clear plastic bag, and contact law enforcement authorities.
- Post emergency contact information at all telephones.

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301 E. Fourth Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202 F13809-LP (01/13)

