

Appendix F

Tips for the Safety/Security Team

Worship Without Worry: Safety and Security for Places of Worship (Tina Lewis Rowe)

Liability concerns:

- Anyone may choose to respond in an emergency or a suspicious situation, whether they are authorized to do so or not.
- **However**, if a person or group is designated by church leadership as a security responder, or **if it is known** a person or group intends to be responsible for that role, the church may be liable ethically, morally, and illegally, for the actions taken.
- In addition, the reputation of the church can be harmed by over-zealous responses, or by ill-judged actions, or untrained actions.
- The church leadership should seek input from the insurance providers to know your coverage as it relates to such issues.
- The church leadership should ensure full compliance with all related laws.
- Consider consulting with an attorney who understands, or who can research, the issues involved.
- Talk to security leaders or directors in churches who have already done research about the matter.
- Make regular training on a variety of security and use of force topics an ongoing requirement of participation.

Common Functions of a Safety/Security Response Team:

- Usually given specific assignments: Provide protection for the pastor (shadowing) or for others during and after services, patrol parking lots, check halls, maintain a post in the sanctuary, etc.
- Respond to various emergencies (safety, security, weather, mechanical and medical) and call for 911 assistance when needed.
- Assist during and after building evacuations.
- Work with greeters, ushers and others to observe at entrances, in the sanctuary, throughout the building, parking lots, etc.
- Evaluate situations to determine the level of threat and response needs.
- Handle non-violent disruptions through intervention, communication, containment or diversion and get 911 assistance if appropriate for the situation.
- Respond to violent incidents in the way that is appropriate for training levels and capabilities of the team. For example, police and military members or an armed person or team, may intervene directly while calling for assistance. Those without those capabilities may call for assistance, then assist as many people as possible.
- Use safety equipment, flashlights, AED devices, first aid kits, etc.

Expanding the work of the Safety/Security Response Team:

- Take advantage of team expertise for other individuals and groups
 - AND provide the team with continuous activities to involve the team

- Train or provide material about travel safety (commercial travel or vehicles) event safety and security, liability concerns and issues related to high-risk or high-threat programs (counseling, child-care, special needs, money handling, food banks, shelters, etc.)
- Research and train about recent events, nationwide and locally. Provide information on how to prevent similar situations and how to respond if they occur. (Violent incidents, criminal actions, accidents, problems related to staff and volunteer issues, serious emergencies, etc.)
- Provide training to interested people about community crime concerns, personal safety, home safety and security, computer safety, and related topics, based on the expertise and interest of team members.

Training for a Safety/Security Response Team: Training may be provided by law enforcement or fire service personnel or by credible volunteer individuals or groups or businesses who specialize in such training.

- It is also effective for team members to research topics and present the training, as long as their resource material is balanced and appropriate. Church insurance companies and related publications are good resources for many safety and security topics.
- Among the training that would most likely be beneficial:
- Requirements, policies, liability concerns, scheduling, attire, conduct.
- Situational roles, hand signals, observation and reporting techniques and methods, etc.
- Evacuation procedures for each area.
- Quick lock-down or lock-out procedures.
- Identification of barricades, barriers, shields and concealment, throughout the facility. Identification of shelter-in-place locations and how those might be used.
- Develop plans for a variety of situations. (Have team members research events in other churches to develop realistic scenarios: Minor and major disruptions, fires, violent situations, explosives, threats, illnesses and injuries, etc.)

Special training for handling disruptions:

- **Purposeful disruptions:** Individuals and groups may disrupt services or events in a variety of ways, some more disturbing and frightening than others: loudly chanting, standing silently, holding signs, filling the worship area with supporters, doing a “flash mob” down the aisles, shouting, trying to get the microphone and through other methods.
- A disruption may also be caused by someone who wants to speak to the congregation or engage the pastor during services. These can be dangerous situations, because the person may not be mentally stable and may be react violently to attempts to stop him or her from speaking.
- In most cases that have been handled effectively, some deacons, ushers, security team members and others have kept the congregation calm while others have positioned themselves between the disrupting people and the congregation and pastor.

Unintentional disruptions: A disruption may also be caused by an emotional or excited member or guest who sings, cries, shouts, dances, talks or does other disruptive things without a violent intent.

- Make sure that the pastor and the team agree about at what point the team should take action about a non-violent and apparently non-threatening situation, even though it may be somewhat disruptive. This will vary by place of worship and the situations there. For example, in one church the pastor has instructed security team members to not stop a young man who for years has habitually shouted scriptures or prayers during services.
- In some cases, the team can help educate the pastor about concerns, but in others the pastor may have a better understanding about the congregation and what is and is not a problem. This especially applies if non-members are used as security staff.
- Another kind of disruption is when the person involved is not doing anything overtly frightening but congregation members are unnerved or made uncomfortable. For example, in one urban church, street people come into the church, especially during cold weather. If the odor is unpleasant, members move to another pew. Sometimes the street people will move as well, apparently just to make a point of some kind.
- If there was an easy solution to that kind of challenge I'd provide it, but there isn't. There are options, according to the location of the church, if the street people are known, if they stay at shelters that could be consulted, and if they seem to be able to be reasoned with or not. This is a prime example of a situation that should be discussed well before the event happens.

Potential methods for dealing with disruptions:

- **Calming and controlling techniques.** These can be very useful for dealing with non-violent individuals who may be well-meaning but disruptive. Research these concepts online and/or by contacting behavioral experts or counselors—particularly if you have a specific person or a specific concern in mind.
- **Shield and Guard.** This involves having security members surrounding a potential target or, as mentioned above, standing solidly between the disruptive person or group and the target of their actions. Training can consist of scenarios at different locations in the church.
- **Divert and Direct.** This is a method for moving a disruptive person out of an area and into a safer or controlled area until police arrive. Sometimes simply having several people walking with the person, with one security member leading the way, hustles the person out of the area safely.

Special training for handling violent incidents:

This is the kind of event that is most dreaded and usually the most talked about when discussing church safety and security. It may involve any kind of weapon and may be directed at everyone in the room or only at one or a few people.

- If you will be training armed, non-law enforcement security team members, use knowledgeable instructors (law enforcement or through commercial resources) or do careful research about the best practices for situations.

- Save a record of training by date, training received and those present. Save all printed material. Practice on-site.
- Restrict training to team members and those involved in the security program. Especially do not have casual observers or children present.
- Develop plans and contingency plans for the team, based on several potential outcomes or responses by an assailant.
- Keep in mind that many individuals in the congregation may have their own plans of response and/or may be armed, and the security team will not know about it.
- Focus training first on *slow, walk-through scenarios* to gain increased awareness of potentials and to discuss responses and potential results. Real-time practice will be useful, with a well-trained team and careful attention to safety.
- Include distant and close-quarters encounters with an armed assailant who seems intent upon harm. (Slow motion or real time.) This will be effective for both armed and unarmed security teams. *What will you and the team do in a crowded sanctuary or meeting room, if armed violence occurs? Up close? With a firearm? With a knife? With an explosive?*
- Using dummy weapons or no weapons is one way to ensure that no one has a loaded weapon.
- Include training for how the team may split-up, with some team members helping the congregation find shelter or assisting in an evacuation, while others may be attempting to stop or block an assailant.
- Inform key people (platform team, ushers, deacons) of response plans. Discuss their roles in the event of a violent situation.
- The size and culture of the church will determine the degree of training or communication with the congregation or long-term members about their potential responses. The best way to do so is to incorporate some of that information into a quarterly announcement about responses to fires and other emergencies.

Contents of a Safety/Security Response Team Manual

- Overall role of the security team.
- Membership on the team
- Schedules and activities
- Attire, Communications and Equipment
- Activities during services
- Preventive assignments (random / selective patrol)
- Guidelines for responses in incidents involving a violent person.
- Guidelines for responses in incidents involving a disruptive person.
- Response in a fire or similar emergency.

Membership Criteria

Safety/Security Team requirements and characteristics include, but are not limited to the following:

- Must be a mature Christian. Must be a member of the local church for at least one year.
- Physically able to perform typical duties like walking for extended distances, and standing for long periods of time, possibly running a short distance.

- Ability to remain calm in the event of an emergency. Must be able to communicate clearly to other team members, authorities and/or the congregation should the need arise.
- Safety/Security Team members can be made up of current or former emergency services members (police, fire, paramedics, former military, National Guard, private security) but this experience is not a requirement.
- Safety/Security Team members must remember to conduct themselves with a spirit of grace and love at all times; all actions should be accomplished with a Godly attitude.
- Safety/Security Team members should remember they are not the police but a volunteer Safety/Security Team.
- All Safety/Security Team members will use their level of authority in an approved manner and not abuse this trust placed in them. Any improper actions toward a member or visitor will be addressed and will not be tolerated.
- Safety/Security Team members will understand the procedures set forth in the policy or manual policy, with due consideration for common sense at the appropriate time.

Observation...Assessment...Action

Safety/Security Team members maintain the following “mindset” and will utilize these skills to remain alert and prepared to prevent and/or handle situations that may arise.

A. Observation Skills

Observe people and the environment continuously and purposefully. Visually scan and personally greet members and visitors. This not only fulfills your role as a team member but allows you to observe people up close and establish a friendly relationship with them.

A friendly greeting and good eye contact can make a difference in how someone reacts, even when angry or upset. Before you make eye contact, look at the hands, general appearance, items being carried or worn and the overall actions and demeanor of the person you are greeting.

B. Assessment and Indicators

You should be mentally assessing everything you see. Ask yourself, “Is everything normal?” Is there something that bothers you or does not seem right? Is there a potential for danger? Make a reasonable evaluation of the potential for harm using your judgment.

Your reasonable judgment will usually be enough to help you decide what action to take, be it keeping your eye on a specific person, notifying your team for back-up or immediately calling the Police. The same reasonable judgment you would use to decide if your safety or the safety of your family is at risk is appropriate for your role in church security.

C. Take Action

Observation and assessment may result in “no action” necessary on your part. At other times you may be required to perform some action. This may be as minimal as maintaining your observation of a specific individual, to notifying other team members to also observe and monitor.

Action may require that you make contact with a suspicious individual (should include at least two team members). Action may require that you warn and/or help others or that you immediately call 911. Effective action taken by you can decrease the chances of conflict, harm, injury and/or violence. Never try to handle a situation alone. Communicate your situation so others can assist.

Communication Tips for Dealing with an “Unruly” Individual

- Never say, “Hey you! Come here!” This puts a person on the defensive. Instead, try “Excuse me, can I talk with you for a moment?” This is professional and polite. More importantly, anything the person responds other than “yes” or “no” immediately provides you with tactical information about his emotional or mental state.
- Never say, “Calm down!” This rarely works and is a criticism of behavior. Instead, try “What’s the matter?” This will soften a person’s response and encourage them to talk.
- Never say, “I’m not going to tell you again!” This is actually a threat and may escalate a situation. Instead, try “Is there anything I could say/do that will help you to _____?” This is professional and polite. If the answer is “yes” we may have found a solution. If the answer is “no” we have additional tactical information to gauge our next move.
- Never say, “Be more reasonable!” This is the same as telling someone they are stupid and wrong, and it will probably escalate a situation. Instead try, “Let me see if I understand what you are saying?” And then paraphrase back to them. This helps to absorb the other person’s tension and helps them feel supported.
- Never say, “Because those are the rules!” This just irritates people and invites argument. Instead, try explaining the reason briefly. 70% of resistant people will actually do what you want if you just tell them why.
- Never say, “What’s your problem?” This signals to the other person, “It’s you vs. me!” This phrase will almost always escalate a situation. Instead, try “What’s the matter or How can I help?” This is professional and polite. It will soften up the response of even the most agitated person.
- Never say, “What do you want me to do about it?” This tells the other person you are upset or agitated. It is better to always appear in control even if you are upset when dealing with an “unruly” person. Instead try, “I’m sorry, I’m not sure how I can help you?” This is professional and polite. Approaching an agitated person in this manner almost always contributes to de-escalating a situation.

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The Armed Safety/Security Team

Church Policy & Guidelines

The church leadership must develop policies, requirements, and restrictions about concealed or open-carry of weapons. Considerations for policy matters include:

- Biggest difference between members of the Safety/Security Team, and the Armed Safety/Security Team is ***additional and recurring qualifying and training in firearms and Use-of-Force law.***
- Carrying weapons must be done in keeping with State and Local laws, following all the legal requirements established by that state, including whatever permits and initial training are required. This is a non-issue with sworn law-enforcement officers, but may be an issue with security officers and private citizens.
- Weapons cannot be carried or stored in such a way that they can be accessed by children or youth. Weapons will not necessarily be taken out of holsters in any location in or around the place of worship.
- The kind of weapons used by the team – an approved product list, determined by someone knowledgeable in police and private security firearms. Some handgun designs and some calibers are much more suitable, while some are much less suitable.
- Talk to insurance company about requirements. Contact the county attorney's office and ask if they have any written material related to state law.
- The church policy will state that one or more people are going to be authorized to carry a weapon, and spell out 1) who will be armed and who will not be armed, 2) the level of additional training required for those who are armed.
- The church leadership will make a criminal report if there is a law violation involving a weapon, or to impose internal sanctions if the policy is violated in some other way.
- Ask the local police department for information on what will be done if the security team member shoots someone as part of an emergency response. Make it a part of the emergency response procedures to immediately call a pre-identified attorney.
- Many churches require monthly attendance at a Bible study or similar group to clarify that this is a faith-based stewardship activity, rather than a hired gun concept. Others may simply ask for compliance with training and attendance requirements.
- Emphasize the non-weapons nature of the team. Unless the team is comprised of active law-enforcement, it should not function as an arrest team. Instead it is a response team for emergencies.

Team Member Selection

Same criteria as Safety/Security Team selection, except add:

- Do a background check, even on those you think you know well, to have documentation that it has been done.
- Use pastoral/eldership insights.
- Be clear at the beginning that there will be selection and participation requirements, and that while all volunteers are appreciated and will be used when possible, not all will be authorized to carry concealed weapons.

Roles of the Team

- Consider the big picture of the overall purpose of the Armed Safety/Security Team, what you want them to do, what you want them to be. Pastoral / eldership preferences will have an effect on this.
- Consider visible, lower profile but identified as security with a combination greeter-helper-security role. Or consider a higher profile, security-focused role with other people for the greeter-helper roles.
- Decide when you need a widespread security presence from the entire team, and when you would like to have some security presence, but the entire team is not required. According to how many special events or situations you have, this schedule should be reviewed monthly.
- Consider assigned, stationary posts, versus random patrolling, versus focused patrolling. All Safety/Security Team members (armed and unarmed) should know the location of other armed and unarmed team members. Consider assigned positions in the sanctuary as well as elsewhere.
- Consider decisions about the attire, arm bands, and equipment.

Training for Team and Others

The difference between a Safety/Security Team and an Armed Safety/Security Team is additional and recurring qualifying and training in firearms and use-of-force law.

- Check the firearms training schedule of the local police. Consider semi-annual (or more frequent) live-fire qualifications and quarterly (or more frequent) training sessions. A certified firearms instructor should conduct the live-fire qualifications. The other training should likewise be from a Subject Matter Expert.
- General training, even for current law enforcement, includes: drawing from a concealed holster, cover and concealment, accuracy when there is movement, shoot-don't shoot scenarios, working as a team.
- Have someone who does police or military training discuss the physical and psychological effects involved in an emergency situation, especially affair for tactical situation and or a shooting situation. For example, loss of manual dexterity, tunnel vision, hearing loss, leg weakness, confusion.
- Focus training on when an event happens, rather than if it happens. To be optimally prepared, teach as if the scenario will happen and each person must fulfill their role effectively. Know the location of barriers and places of concealment in the place of worship. Practice some scenarios involving using them.
- Focus on observation and response techniques: indicators of an armed person, when to call 911, notification to the pastor or other platform members, notifying other church members.
- If there is a threatening situation in your place of worship, and everyone who has the weapon, no matter what their capabilities, simultaneously shoot several times in the direction of the threat, how many shots might be fired? Where might the bullets go if they don't hit the threat to target? Including penetrating through walls to cause a threat on the other side of the wall?
- If it is common knowledge that several people in the congregation are carrying weapons, the Safety/Security Team should consider providing training about the

legal aspects of weapon use, close quarters firing and qualifying, and related topics. Wink and nod concealed carry is tacit approval / acceptance / endorsement and may raise liability issues.

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