

the Deacon's Bench

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Spring 2016 | For America's Churches and Related Ministries from Brotherhood Mutual and Its Agents



SAFETY AND SECURITY

PROTECT YOUR MINISTRY'S PEOPLE AND PROPERTY

When a purse was stolen during a ministry event at Westgate Baptist Ministries in Spartanburg, S.C., a dedication to safety and security paid off. The theft was captured on the church's surveillance system; the footage helped police track down the perpetrator, and the purse was returned to its owner within 24 hours.

"We have about two acres of land, four buildings, and a congregation of about 300 people," says Jason Cansler, safety and medical director at Westgate. "We didn't have the manpower to keep an eye on everything—the campus is too large. So, we decided to install the cameras. They've been a huge help."

Installing the system wasn't a snap decision. It was a product of a safety and security mindset that takes time to implement.

“Our work is never complete,” Cansler says. “We’re always working on our policies and procedures, and there will always be things we can do better.”

A safety and security mindset can be infused into nearly everything a church does. This includes promoting everyday habits like storing valuables out of plain sight, and completing longer-term projects like installing security and fire alarms.

To help weave a security mindset into your ministry, consider following this three-step process: form a group to perform a security assessment, identify the ministry’s security gaps, and implement solutions to fill the gaps.

1. Form a Group

The first step toward establishing a safety and security mindset is to appoint a team that will assess the ministry’s current security situation. Good candidates to serve on this team include:

- **Safety and security team members.** If the ministry has a safety and security team, its members likely will be able to provide helpful input on the ministry’s security strengths and weaknesses.



Ask local first responders to help with your security assessment.

“Risks change, technology changes, and people change. Your security program has to keep up with that.”

—Jason Cansler
Safety and Medical Director
Westgate Baptist Ministries
Spartanburg, S.C.

- **Custodians.** These employees work on ministry buildings and property on a daily basis, giving them a firsthand look at the facility’s physical security.
- **Church administrators.** With so many programs and events occurring on ministry property, the administrator can provide a general idea of the ministry’s activities, programs, and policies.
- **Local first responders.** Police officers, fire personnel, and paramedics have daily experience dealing with emergencies. Their expertise can lead them to offer suggestions that others may not have considered.
- **The ministry’s insurance agent.** Many agents have training in risk management practices. Your agent may be able to personally assist in your assessment, or provide resources that can help in your efforts.
- **Representatives from other ministries.** Ask for help from ministry leaders in the area that have experience with safety and security in their own churches. Your colleagues can discuss what has—and hasn’t—worked for them in their efforts to make their ministries safer.

It’s a good idea to assemble a team that consists of a mix of people from within the ministry, as well as people you trust who come from the outside. A balanced group can offer insights about the details of the ministry, and may spot weaknesses that a team of insiders would not.

2. Identify Gaps

With help from leaders in all areas of ministry, the assessment team should identify the organization’s security gaps. Look for ways to better protect all aspects of the ministry—people, property, and activities. To assist in your efforts, Brotherhood Mutual offers *The Big Book of Checklists*

and *The Church Safety and Security Guidebook*, both filled with checklists and practical assistance.

Breaking the assessment into smaller pieces may help. Items to evaluate include:

- **Building security.** Is the parking lot well-lighted? Are doors to the building locked when no activities are scheduled? Are keys given only to those who need them, and are keys returned when appropriate? Are valuables stored in secure locations? What fire hazards exist?
- **Employee and volunteer screening procedures.** Are applicants required to complete a written application with references, a criminal background check, and a personal interview? Does the ministry contact the references? Does the ministry work with a trustworthy background screening firm?
- **Procedures for securing and counting tithes and offerings.** Are multiple people required to be present when counting money? Are counting teams regularly rotated? Is the counting room free of items that could be used to hide money, such as purses, briefcases, and coats?
- **Security measures in the ministry's childcare area.** Does the ministry follow a standard check-in/check-out policy? Are childcare areas secured so little ones can't wander off? Is the childcare area staffed at the proper adult-to-child ratio? Are there at least two workers with children at all times? Are children released only to people approved by their custodial parents?
- **Threats and hazards in the surrounding neighborhood.** Does the neighborhood have a history of car break-ins? Is the area prone to tornadoes? What can the church do to protect itself against these hazards?
- **Past security-related incidents at the church and other local churches.** Has a domestic dispute spilled over to the church? Are broken windows a common problem?



If a security incident occurs when the church is vacant, how long does it take for someone to find out? What security issues are other churches dealing with?

Use a map of the building's floor plan to guide your efforts. Take notes and photos to document your findings. Invite local first responders to help in your assessment, especially when inspecting the building's physical aspects. First responders should know where the most common security problems emerge, and their perspective as outsiders may help spot issues you tend to overlook.

"I tell people to think from the perspective of the bad guy," says Bob Johnson, safety and security director at Christ's Church of the Valley in Peoria, Arizona. "You're looking for anything that could make the church a soft target for somebody who wants to do harm."

You may discover that several master keys are unaccounted for, or that there is no procedure for evacuating the building during a fire, or that ushers are not trained to verbally de-escalate a conflict. These security gaps could put the church's people and property at risk.

3. Implement Solutions

To manage the risks found in your security assessment, work with ministry personnel to address each vulnerability. Solutions might include:

- Encouraging people who attend evening activities to park in well-lighted areas of the parking lot.
- Marking all checks from tithes and offerings "for deposit only" to help avoid fraud.
- Organizing fire and tornado drills with the full congregation.
- Installing a fire alarm/sprinkler system to help address fire risks.
- Creating a safety and security team that specializes in guarding the ministry.

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Consolidate the proposed solutions into a notebook or computer spreadsheet. Include the urgency level and estimated cost of each proposal, so they can be prioritized into an action plan. As you organize and move forward with your plan, remember to:

- Take action on safety issues that require immediate attention.
- If you can't take immediate action, post warnings or take other steps to minimize hazards.
- Look for affordable alternatives to costly projects. You may be able to achieve the same results by different means, or you may need to complete a project in stages.

- Have a locally licensed attorney review any new or revised policies to ensure the policies comply with applicable laws.
- Keep detailed records of when and how you implemented your solutions.
- Document new hazards as you find them and propose solutions. Ideally, you'll find that you're increasingly looking at your ministry with a safety and security mindset.

Even if you can't eliminate a hazard right away, an assessment brings attention to important safety and security gaps. Knowing the vulnerabilities can start the process of making the ministry safer. 🏰

KEEPING WATCH

Even if your church follows a comprehensive safety and security plan, there are bound to be times when the building sits empty. Who watches the property when no one is around? Fire alarms, security systems, and other tools can help. Here's what to look for:



1. FIRE PROTECTION SYSTEMS. Smoke alarms and sprinklers can work together to protect ministry property. Systems that have the ability to contact the local fire department are best.



2. SECURITY SYSTEMS. A unit with motion detectors and door and window sensors can help catch intruders. Surveillance cameras can be integrated into a security system to supply photographic evidence of theft, vandalism, and other misconduct. It's a good idea to opt for security systems that alert local law enforcement personnel to intrusions.



3. WATER ALARMS. Water damage can get expensive in a hurry. When a pipe bursts or a sump pump fails, these alarms can detect accumulating water and call for help.

Train staff members and safety and security team members on how to properly use equipment. Whatever tools your church uses to protect property, be sure to work with qualified, trusted contractors for installation and maintenance.

FORMING A SAFETY & SECURITY TEAM

Safety and security teams can handle a range of tasks to help protect the church and its people. To get the most from your team, carefully plan how it will operate and how the church will handle the risks that come with a safety and security ministry. Consider these five steps before deploying your team:

1. DECIDE ON DUTIES AND PROCEDURES. Church leaders, with help from a locally licensed attorney, should set guidelines for the team's scope, addressing the church's most pressing security issues. Typical duties of a safety and security team include overseeing the distribution of keys, handling security for worship services and other activities, heading up emergency response, suggesting building repairs and modifications that increase safety, responding to medical emergencies, and more. An attorney can help you tailor the team's activities to the church's needs and create a procedure manual to comply with applicable laws.

2. ASSEMBLE YOUR TEAM. Ideally, safety and security team members will have a military, police, or medical background and a heart for ministry. Experience working in emergency situations is especially valuable. Have all team members go through a comprehensive screening program that includes a written application, a reference check, a criminal background check, and a personal interview. Generally, it's best to actively recruit members on an individual basis rather than posting an open call.

3. TRAIN YOUR TEAM. Conduct regular training sessions with all team members to help ensure everyone knows how to appropriately respond in a variety of scenarios. These scenarios include everything from routine checks that ensure doors are locked to active shooter situations. Review procedures and put plans into action with situational exercises and emergency drills. Consider asking local first responders to monitor the training and provide input.

4. EQUIP YOUR TEAM. Equipment comes with a price tag, so get budget approval from church leadership first. Walkie-talkies, first-aid kits, AED machines, and name tags are common tools for safety and security personnel. Team members also should be familiar with equipment like fire alarms and security systems.



5. TALK TO YOUR INSURANCE AGENT. Safety and security activities come with risks. Before deploying your team, discuss your plans with your agent. Insurance coverage may be available to help protect your ministry and its team members. Brotherhood Mutual offers *Security Operations Liability Coverage* and *Traumatic Incident Response Coverage* to help manage safety and security risks.

It's a good idea to ask colleagues from other churches to share their safety and security policies and procedures. Their input and experiences can be valuable in avoiding common pitfalls. However, be sure to tailor your plan to fit your church's unique needs. Creating and consistently following a good plan can help ensure that your team operates efficiently and safely. 🏰

Looking for more information?

Brotherhood Mutual offers The Church Safety & Security Guidebook, featuring more than 200 pages of information to help you create and manage a safety and security program.

WHAT VALUABLES DOES THE CHURCH OWN?

A PROPERTY INVENTORY CAN TELL YOU

When leaders of a ministry tally the value of their church's contents after a fire, tornado, or other disaster, they may find out that their property was worth more than they thought. As a result, they don't have enough insurance to replace everything that was lost. One way to help avoid this scenario at your church is to complete an inventory of ministry property.

Having an up-to-date property inventory helps to:

- Identify the ministry's property assets.
- Buy enough insurance to replace these assets in case of a total loss.
- Settle insurance claims more quickly.

Conducting an inventory also can open your eyes to theft risks, causing you to secure certain areas of the building differently than you did before.

Begin with the basics

A personal property inventory can be assembled in a variety of ways. Consider following this plan.

Step 1: Grab paper and a pencil, or your mobile device, to record data.

Step 2: Choose a room in your building to catalog.

Step 3: Pick a spot to start, perhaps near the door you entered. Working systematically, record everything you see that isn't bolted down. Don't forget property borrowed or rented from others (such as musical equipment) that stays at the church. Personal property of others should be tracked separately from ministry-owned property.

Step 4: Add as much information about each item as you can (e.g.; price, year purchased, model number). Some details may need to be added later. Consider taking close-up pictures (or video) of unique or expensive items to supplement your notes.



Step 5: Repeat this process for each room, closet, and storage area on the property.

Protect and update your information

Once you have logged the contents of each room, go back and fill in any blanks. Use office records to provide additional details about big-ticket items.

Photocopy or back up your completed inventory and keep a copy in a secure location at the church office. Store another copy off-site, where it can be retrieved if the church is inaccessible.

Contact your insurance agent to review your results and determine if your ministry has adequate insurance coverage. Consider giving a copy of the inventory to your agent for safekeeping.

To remain useful, your inventory will need regular updating. You can revise it with each new purchase or schedule a time each year to review it.

Be confident about coverage

Having a personal property inventory will allow your ministry to quickly replace damaged, lost, or stolen items, and it will help ensure that you have enough insurance coverage to meet your ministry's needs. 🏰

Download a **FREE** property inventory guide at BrotherhoodMutual.com



Every Church Needs a Safety and Security Ministry

The Safety & Security Guidebook Second Edition

The essential tool for anyone who wants to make church a safer place. Real-life examples.
Ministry focus. Practical instructions.

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