

SECURITY

Security for the Crusade's nightly services and any other related events is of the utmost importance to GO TELL Crusades. Our staff will work closely with the Executive Team to help develop a **Security Response Plan** to cover all events. Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company provides the property and liability coverage for GO TELL Crusades and has resources to assist in creating a specific plan for each community. Following is a summary of their general statements to begin formulating this plan. While it is aimed mainly at a church setting, it helps raise the questions you should begin to ask in developing the **Security Response Plan** for the crusade.

Prepare for Potential Violence

Emergency preparedness for churches used to mean having a plan for responding to reports of fires and severe weather. Today churches also must be prepared to deal with crises created by violent people such as shootings.

Many people find it hard to believe that such things could happen at their ministry, says Brock Bell, senior manager of risk control at Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company. Bell travels the country each year, advising churches how to reduce their risks.

"It's kind of like lightning," Bell says. "You know it's out there, but you never expect it to hit you."

While outbreaks of violence at church seem unthinkable, they're happening with increasing frequency. Just type "church shooting" into your internet browser and see how many results appear. Browsing the list makes you realize that violence can happen anywhere – even in the smallest communities.

Fortunately, you can take steps to prepare for many situations in a way that will improve your ministry's ability to respond quickly and appropriately.

"A traumatic incident can only get worse if you're not prepared," Brock says. "While you can't make the risk go away, you can manage it by doing what a prudent person would do to prepare for it."

Assess Risks

For each ministry you operate, consider possible threats that could emerge. Imagine what would happen on weekends when the sanctuary is full or on weekdays when a handful of staff are present. Don't forget to consider what could happen at a school, preschool or day care center you operate.

For example, could an angry father enter a children's wing, demanding to have a child no longer in his custody? What barriers are in place to stop him? This is a time to imagine worst-case scenarios. Developing your response will come later.

Consider these possibilities:

- An estranged boyfriend stalks his ex-girlfriend at church.
- An agitated man enters the building, looking for someone
- A group of people stands outside, hurling insults at people entering the church.
- A person, seeking assistance, pulls out a knife when denied the help sought.

What would you do if one of these situations were to erupt? Does your church have a safety team or a response plan to guide staff and volunteers? For more great questions, download the Responding to Church Violence checklist from Brotherhood Mutual.

Once you have listed possible threats, determine the probability of each event happening. What impact would each emergency have on people, property and the ministry?

Now you have a better picture of the risks your ministry will need to address.

Develop a Plan

Creating a violence response plan involves assessing your ministry's individual situation, determining how to respond and practicing what to do if it happens. In many ways, it's identical to creating a disaster response plan for weather-related events. The only difference is the type of threats you face.

You'll need more than one person to help you. Enlist a broad cross-section of people, including staff, volunteers and church members, who can contribute their expertise to the plan. Including people with experience in law enforcement or public safety would be helpful. Then make a plan for dealing with crisis situations when they happen. Keep in mind that your response on a Sunday morning might differ drastically from what you would do on a weekday.

Establish Protocol

Your church may already have a plan for dealing with fire or weather emergencies. In many cases, you can modify that plan to deal with incidents of violence in your congregation. Here are some aspects to consider:

Communicating a Threat: If you have a large church, how will you communicate that people need to evacuate because of a threatening intruder? Could you use a public address system or assign certain people to deliver the message to various parts of the church?

Contacting Law Enforcement: Who will call police? Does this person carry a cell phone?

Communicating with the Public: How will you deal with a possibly overwhelming response from people concerned about the situation, including friends, family members, the community and the media? Do you have one or more spokespeople who could work with each audience?

Evacuation: How will people leave the building/venue, and where do they go afterward? Have you posted evacuation routes and procedures throughout the building? Do you have a system for evacuating small children and people with disabilities? How will you know that everyone has gotten out?

Responsibilities: Who will do what? Does your ministry have a current list of all people (on- and off-site) who would respond to a crisis of this nature? Does the list note their responsibilities and their 24-hour telephone numbers? Is anyone responsible for keeping this information up to date?

First aid: How will you treat the injured? Do you have an appropriate first-aid kit that someone checks regularly to make sure all items are available? Are key volunteers and staff trained in first aid and CPR procedures?

Training: How will you ensure that everyone knows what to do in a crisis? Does your ministry provide general training regularly to make sure that new people know what to do?