

Church Protection

APRIL 2009 NEWSLETTER



Violent Crimes

Violence involving religious organizations has captured national attention with the following tragic events:

Marysville, IL March 2009—the fatal shooting of a southern Illinois pastor who was shot through the heart during Sunday services.

Knoxville, TN July 2008—Man open fire at church killing two and injuring six others.

Denver, CO December 2007—Gunman killed two at missionary training center. The next day he killed two more at a mega church.

Neosha, MO August 2007—Gunman opened fire at a church killing the pastor, two worshipers and wounding several others.

There is no amount of planning that can stop someone from desiring to harm others. Having a plan of prevention and response can make your congregation a more difficult target and can reduce the harm if violence occurs.

- Maintain vigilance and do not become complacent.
- Review screening policies for visitors, volunteers, workers and service personnel.
- Criminal background checks and abuse registry checks should be completed on all staff and volunteers working with vulnerable people.
- Entrances into the congregation should be limited during services and non service hours. All doors should be equipped with panic hardware for safe exiting.
- An emergency preparedness plan should be established and include: communications, emergency evacuation procedures, meeting place(s) for evacuees, and emergency response procedures.
- Communication process—should have a “lockdown” code word via internal communication which would activate if a threat was detected or weapons were spotted. Authorities should be contacted immediately.
- Key response team members should be designated. Invite doctors, nurses, EMT, firemen and security responders to become part of the team.

Counsel should be obtained by congregations attorneys, local law enforcement and Heffernan Insurance Brokers prior to making decisions on whether to do one or more of the following:

- Self perform and maintain own security staff
- Contract agreement with a security company
- Hiring off-duty police officers

For more safety tips, please visit our website at: www.unitedchristianinsgroup.org. Feel free to contact our office with any questions or concerns at 800-234-6787.

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