



Insuring America's churches and related ministries®

Safety Library TIPS, TUTORIALS, AND CHECKLISTS TO HELP MANAGE MINISTRY RISKS

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Take Steps to Protect Your Church from Crime



Like most people, burglars don't want to do any more work than necessary to get a job done. Therefore, making a criminal's work more difficult will often be enough to prevent a crime.

Prevention Measures

You can reduce the threat of burglary, arson, and vandalism by following these steps:

- Install central station fire and burglar alarm systems. A central station alarm alerts a manned security station, resulting in deployment of law and fire enforcement officials. In contrast, a local alarm system sounds at the premises, making it effective only if someone hears it and notifies police.
- Install adequate dawn-to-dusk or motion sensitive exterior lighting around the building. Pay particular attention to entrances. Mount fixtures out of reach of people who might disable the lights to avoid detection.
- Landscape buildings to eliminate hiding areas close to the building whenever possible. This is most important near windows and doors that provide points of access to the building. Keep shrubbery and trees trimmed so the building can be observed by passing patrols.
- Secure windows, basement entries, and external stairways.
- Be alert to and monitor individuals who may be disgruntled and likely to retaliate by damaging church property.
- Ask local police to patrol your property as often as possible during the night hours. You might also ask local law and fire enforcement officials to inspect your premises and give advice on how to thoroughly secure your building.
- Compile a list of individuals who have access to church keys. Limit the number of people on the list and recalibrate locks if any keys are lost or stolen.
- Keep all flammable liquids in approved containers and secured under lock and key.

What To Do If a Crime Occurs

Knowing what to do in the event a crime is committed at your church can help keep you and your members safe.

- Call the police if you notice suspicious persons or activities around your church or if you discover a crime has been committed. (Do not deal with the criminal(s) yourself.)
- Observe carefully. If you witness a crime, try to remember the details such as the description of the suspect, including gender, height, build, color of skin, hair, and eyes; age; voice or speech; scars or tattoos; jewelry; and clothing.
- Make a list of all missing or damaged property if you discover vandalism or theft has occurred. (Ask your agent about obtaining a Personal Property Inventory booklet. This will help you document serial numbers, model descriptions, and purchase prices prior to an incident of fire or theft.)
- Don't disturb the crime scene.
- Notify your insurance agent as soon as possible. This will enable you to verify available insurance as well as to receive a fast, fair settlement.

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