



HOW TO PREPARE YOUR CHURCH FOR AN ACTIVE SHOOTER SITUATION

It's a situation no one wants to think about, but recent events have pushed it to the forefront of your mind. What would we do if a mass shooting happened at our church?

How can your members, children, and visitors be best prepared for an active shooter?

As churches, our ministry to embrace anyone in need makes us vulnerable. How do we keep our doors open to all, while protecting those inside? Here is a three-step approach to protect your congregation from active shooters

1. Plan

First form your emergency response team. Ideally your team should include individuals with medical and law enforcement training.

Next, educate your team on responses to an active shooter situation that result in the least amount of loss. **Run. Hide. Fight.** is the recommended course of action for adults, and **Lockout. Get out. Take out.** is the recommended course of action for Sabbath School teachers and grades K-12 environments.

Learn more about the **Lockout. Get out. Take out.** method in our resource *"Be Emergency Ready."*

Meet with local first responders and learn how they will respond to a shooting in your building. Make it easy for first responders to assist you. Provide local law enforcement with building blueprints and emergency contact information for the pastor and emergency response team members. Report any threats to the safety of your church, including restraining orders your church may have in place.

Make your active shooter emergency action plan using the information you have learned and with additional church Emergency Planning resources from Adventist Risk Management Inc. (ARM).



2. Practice

You have a crisis response plan. Now, it's time to practice. First, rehearse with your emergency response team. Next, hold a safety drill and train your entire congregation.

SAFETY SABBATH: MARCH 24, 2018

As part of the Risk Management Initiatives for North America, it is ARM's goal that every church in the North American Division holds a safety drill on **Safety Sabbath** each year on the fourth Sabbath of March.

ARM is providing free, customized resources with everything you need to hold an active shooter drill. You will find every action step included, from how to form your emergency response team to completing the post-drill survey. Register your church for Safety Sabbath and receive free resources to protect your church.

3. Prevent

Creating a plan and practicing safety drills with your congregation are the fundamental steps you can do to protect your members if an active shooter targets your church. However, there are some things you can do to prevent an incident from happening altogether.

Train Your Staff — Train your church staff, especially greeters, to recognize signs of a person who is

agitated, angry, intoxicated, or shows aggressive or threatening body language. Create guidelines on how to approach and, if needed, deny access to such individuals.

Create Barriers — Create layers of protection that can stop or stall a violent person before they reach your congregation. These steps can include monitored surveillance of your church parking lot and closing sanctuary and church doors after the service has started. Those who come late are met at the door and guided to seats by church greeters.

Prepare Your Building — Optimize your building for efficient evacuation and secure lockdown. Make exits accessible and clearly marked.

Hire Armed Security — Work with your conference to determine if your church needs armed security. Contract with a professional security provider. Do not allow untrained, nonprofessional, armed church members to ensure the safety of your church. Review the five questions you should evaluate before hiring church security (page 11).

None of us want to be unprepared when an active shooter enters our church doors. The most important things you can do to protect your members are to make your emergency action plan, practice safety drills, and take measures to prevent violent individuals from harming your congregation.



Every resource you need to host your active shooter drill is at SafetySabbath.com.

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