



# Health and Safety

for congregations

## Security

### How this guide can help you

People visit churches for worship, comfort, safety, and a sense of belonging. It is therefore important to our congregations to openly welcome those around us. Not all people however respect sacred places. We therefore need to adopt a balance between being as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves (Matt 10:16). This guide, provides information to ensure you have systems in place to prevent and contain security risks to ensure the church and other buildings are safe and secure.

### Identifying hazards and assessing risks

It is important that we identify potential hazards and take the necessary steps to ensure we create safe houses of worship for those who gather. It is also important to recognise that face to face interactions, working alone or at night, handling money and providing services to people with potentially unpredictable behaviour, such as those who are distressed, angry, intoxicated, confused, afraid or ill, can make us vulnerable to security threats. The physical environment can also affect the likelihood of security issues occurring and the ease with which people can respond to those incidents.

Our inspection tool includes helps you assess the risk of security threats. This can be found [here](#). When assessing the risk we need to consider the nature of the harm that could be caused by the hazard, how serious the harm could be and the likelihood of it occurring. Our risk management guide found [here](#) will help you through this process. When identifying hazards and performing risk assessments, it is important to involve staff, volunteers and relevant contractors.

### Controlling the risk

As with any other sort of hazard, the best control for security risks are to eliminate them if possible. If it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate the risk, you should implement the most effective control measures. Below are some examples of controls - this list is not exhaustive, and controls you implement should reflect your responses to the inspection tool and be balanced with the level of risk.

#### Access:

- Have welcomers greet people attending the service, lock doors when they aren't needed as access points, and keep internal areas locked i.e. offices
- Check the building and the facilities to ensure everyone has vacated following the service
- Ensure staff and volunteers can see who is coming into the premises and can restrict access when necessary
- Ensure there is restricted access to children's programs or ministry areas

#### Visibility:

- Install sufficient internal and external lighting or mirrors to provide increased visibility indoors and onto the street
- Trim plants around the building to increase visibility
- Arrange furniture to increase visibility

#### People management and systems:

- Where possible, minimise the need for staff and volunteers to work alone or at night. Implement controls when undertaking home visits. Refer to our guide [here](#)
- Ensure there are protocols for handling cash in line with our cash handling guide found [here](#)
- If the congregation provides food services or ministry to those experiencing homelessness another helpful tool can be found [here](#)

#### Security systems:

- Ensure there are systems in place to control keys. If a key is lost, it compromises security and necessitates the need to change the locks. An electronic access system can also be an effective way to monitor access
- In high risk situations, it might be helpful to consider installing CCTV and purchasing duress alarms

#### Emergency preparedness:

- Ensure there are procedures for managing emergency situations in line with our emergency manual found [here](#)
- Establish processes for people who may be intoxicated or under the influence of drugs. Safely refuse service for anyone that is aggressive or compromises your personal safety

### Training and instruction

Use training, instruction and information to support the overall approach to security is important but should not be used as the main way to control the risk. Training and instruction may be helpful to ensure staff and volunteers understand systems of work, emergency response, identifying signs of aggression and de-escalating unsafe behaviour. Workers should also be given permission and guidance on how to safely cease or refuse service if it compromises their personal safety.

### Monitoring and review

Reviewing control measures ensures they are working as intended and helps us identify possible improvements. A review of controls can include an examination of the physical environment, work functions and tasks. A review of controls should occur:

- When consultation indicates risk control measures are ineffective
- When there have been significant changes in the work environment or activities performed by the congregation
- After there has been a security incident or near miss
- Following an emergency drill

