

**DRAFT MATERIAL**  
**Thoughts On Developing A Security Team**  
by  
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**The following material was in response to an email requesting information. It isn't all-inclusive but it is a good starting point. One day I'll write a final version, but until then, I hope it is helpful to other readers, even in this form!**

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**An effective approach is to have two groups:**

- A Safety and Security Committee that is involved in assessing concerns and developing preventive procedures and response plans over time. They may meet often at first, then maybe only quarterly or as needed.
- A Security Team that is on-site and ready to respond to an emergency if it occurs. They may be scheduled for regular services as well as for special events or specific situations or locations.

Probably some people will be in one group but not the other. For example, adults of any age or physical condition could be part of the Safety and Security Committee but only those with the physical capabilities to help others in an emergency would be part of the Security Team. The person with the leadership role in the Security Team should also be on the Safety and Security Committee.

**Liability concerns:**

As a matter of reality, anyone may choose respond to suspicious situations or in an emergency, whether they are authorized too or not. However, if a person or group is designated by church leadership as a security responder, or if it is known a person or group intends to be responsible for that role, the church then becomes liable ethically, morally and legally, for the actions taken. In addition, the reputation of the church can be harmed by over-zealous responses or ill-judged or untrained actions.

Among the ways to ensure appropriateness and effectiveness is to comply with all related laws and to seek input from insurance providers, an attorney who understands the issues involved and from security leaders or directors in churches who have already done research about the matter.

Another way to ensure reasonable responses to various situations is to discuss likely situations and develop suggested responses using the law and best practices as guidelines. Such scenario-based training is also one way to get to know the thought processes of team members and to easily correct misunderstandings about what would be considered appropriate.

## **Proposed topics:**

If I were going to prepare a brief manual about a security team, it would have these headings and subheadings, at a minimum.

### **I. Overall role of the security team.**

Among the topics that might be discussed in this section are:

Who does the team report to and what is the reporting chain within the team. .

The mission of the team within the church function.

Liability concerns.

How the team represents the pastor, other church leaders and the overall message of the church.

(No matter what the expertise of those involved in security work in the church, church leadership should have some oversight role in the structure and procedures of the group.)

### **II. Membership on the team**

Application and approval process.

Requirements and limitations of participating in the security team

Armed status (or information about carrying non-lethal weapons, if that is an issue)

Expectations regarding being present at most services when possible (or as scheduled).

Notifying about absences.

Everyone involved should be briefed on how to respond to incidents within the church environment, based on reasonableness, the law and civil liability.

It is also important for Security Team leaders or church leaders to be willing to remove someone from a security position if it appears guidelines are not being followed or that there is a concern about the manner in which the role would be fulfilled. This isn't easy to do, especially with sincere volunteers, but it is sometimes necessary.

### **III. Schedules**

Schedules and how they are assigned (if there are enough people for that.)

Services and activities at which there will always be a security presence.

Security at services and activities other than the primary ones.

Security teams can do more than protect against violence or disruption (help in an emergency, check for safety concerns, provide preventive patrol, etc.) so it is appropriate for them to be at many special events or services, if enough volunteers are available—or if team members will be at the event anyway.

#### **IV. Attire, Communications and Equipment**

- Attire:

Uniform and non-uniform issues (for law enforcement)  
Anything that is issued or expected.

- Communications: Phone trees for notification when away from the church.  
Walkie-talkies or phones. Code words and phrases to get assistance.

- Equipment issued: (If any)

For example: Flashlights, portable, hand-held radios, chemical non-lethal weapons

- Weapons, if applicable.

Who will be armed and who will not be.

Protocol for notifying lead, if a person who is usually armed is not carrying a weapon.

Requirements and restrictions for being armed as part of the security team

Requirements and restrictions for using the weapon as part of the security team

#### **V. Activities during services**

**1. Pre-service briefing (Location, purpose)** This is a valuable time and needs to be part of every service, as a way to focus the efforts of the team.

**2. Service activities and posts (with descriptions of duties.)**

The people involved should help develop some of the ideas about their security activities.

(Examples)

Clergy (pastoral) security during services and afterwards. (This can't be like a Secret Service role, but there should be focused attention on the pastor and other visible church leaders.)

Left side, right side, front and rear of the worship area.

Foyer or lobby

Roaming patrol inside and outside.

Other assignments throughout the facility or in the service.

**3. After service assignments.**

This may include pastoral security, security in parking lots, checking the facility thoroughly before closing and other assignments.

#### **VI. Preventive assignments**

**1. Patrolling (areas of high priority, method, public relations, etc.)**

Observation (what to look for). (The document on "The Role of Greeters and Ushers in Church Security" can be adapted for this information.)

Contacting suspicious persons.

## **2. Assessments (if applicable)**

The function of security assessments and how the security team will help with them.  
Information on assessing vulnerabilities and threats.

This might be the responsibility of the committee instead of this team, but Security Team members are ideal for helping with assessments since they usually know the building well.

## **VII. Response to in a situation involving a violent person.**

Suggestions related to the two primary goals: Getting people to safety and stopping the criminal. This will be based on the skill and knowledge of the team members, as well as on their status—law enforcement or lay person in the church.

How to help people after the event.

## **VIII. Response in a situation involving a disruptive person or situation.**

What is considered disruptive, what the pastor will do to indicate a desire for action, etc.  
Consider a variety of situations, both inside and outside the building.

## **IX. Response in a fire or similar emergency.**

Evacuation responsibilities.

Where to guide people to gather and how to get them back if that is needed.

**Note:** These sections on responses could be combined. They should include

What not to take action about

What to take action about and guidelines for responses

Notifications and reporting about incidents

Other rules and requirements.

Generally, it is wise to have very specific assignments for everything except dire emergency responses. Otherwise, everyone thinks someone else will do the task.

## **X. Other (A good catch-all concept!)**

Other information related to the specific facility or needs of the church.

Those topic headings are merely suggestions for how to provide training and guidance for those on a security team. If the team is being newly organized, one part of training might be to have the group work together to develop guidelines.

Do not, however, make the assumption that because team members are emergency response professionals, that they do not need training or structure for their role as a church security team members. That is not fair to them and can create problems for the team and the church.

Best wishes in your work!

Tina Rowe