
Security Guidelines for Church Meetings and Events

Updated September 13, 2023

1. PURPOSE

The following guidelines are intended to help leaders and members remain safe and be prepared for and respond to security incidents on Church property or at Church events. Leaders are encouraged to discuss these guidelines in ward and stake councils and to use them to train members, as needed, to address local conditions or concerns.

Emphasize the objectives of staying calm, educating members on safety guidelines, and trusting in the Lord for guidance and safety.

These are general guidelines. Leaders should understand the laws within their own countries. If there are questions about local laws, the stake president should call the area office. In the United States and Canada, questions regarding these guidelines, security training for members, specialized security assignments, or security incidents should be made to local leaders and to the Church Security Department (1-801-240-2661 or toll free at 1-844-537-7000). Internationally, questions should be directed to the Area Security Manager (ASM), the Director for Temporal Affairs (DTA), or the local leader. Additional security training resources can be found in Leader and Clerk Resources under “Security Resources.” For questions that are not urgent, email the Church’s Global Security Operations Center at GSOC@ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

2. WHO SHOULD I CALL FOR HELP?

Leaders and Church members rely upon the appropriate emergency responders to deal with security incidents and emergencies at Church facilities and at Church-sponsored events. In areas with reliable public law enforcement and emergency response services, call the local designated emergency number, (911, 999, 0, etc.). In areas without reliable public emergency response, counsel with the stake president and area office regarding who will respond to emergencies and how to contact those emergency responders. In this document, “emergency responders” refers to the best resource for your area, which may be law enforcement, contract security, or another entity. Please ensure that leaders know whom to call for an emergency in your area.

If a Church member is victimized or targeted because of their Church affiliation, follow the guidelines for contacting the local emergency responders and immediately notify the DTA, ASM, and Church Security.

After a serious security incident has been controlled, report it to local leaders, the responsible ASM, and to the Church’s 24-hour Global Security Operations Center (1-801-240-2661; toll free in the United States and Canada at 1-844-537-7000), or GSOC@ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

Following a serious security incident, leaders should refer affected individuals to Family Services or another competent counselor for professional counseling. In addition, leaders may inform members of the security precautions taken according to these guidelines and counsel together about additional precautions that may be needed.

3. KEEPING EVERYONE SAFE AT CHURCH FACILITIES

Implementing the practices listed below will increase safety.

Guidance for Church Members

- Always follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost.
- Be aware of your surroundings. Know what belongs and what does not seem normal. If you find yourself in a situation (meeting, interview, activity, and so on) that does not feel right, remove yourself from the situation and call the appropriate leader or emergency responder.
- Be friendly to those visiting Church meetings; however, if you observe any behavior out of the ordinary, inform local leaders or your emergency responder.
- Report suspicious activity in or around Church buildings. Focus on the person's behavior (for example, if it is dangerous or alarming), not their appearance.
- Avoid being alone in Church buildings.
- Make sure the parking lot is safe before exiting your vehicle. Lock vehicles in the parking lot. Keep personal items—including bags, electronic devices, and garage door openers—out of sight. Avoid being alone in the parking lot.
- When leaving the building, check your surroundings for anything suspicious before returning to your vehicle.
- Do not enter a building that appears to have been broken into or vandalized. Call the appropriate emergency responder and notify local leaders.
- Do not leave packages, briefcases, backpacks, or bags unattended. Do not touch suspicious bags or packages. Report suspicious items to leaders.
- Keep Church information secure. Avoid taking photographs of sensitive locations (such as offices), posting anyone's personal information, or sharing interview schedules online (except through approved Church resources).
- Know the location of fire alarms and building exits and know the building's emergency evacuation procedures.

Additional Guidance for Leaders

- Contact Church Security or the responsible Area Security Manager to discuss solutions for specific security needs.
- Conduct interviews according to the instructions found in section 31 of the *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. If you feel that the

person to be interviewed poses a potential security problem, consider canceling the interview or invite another adult into the interview if appropriate.

- Ensure that doors to ecclesiastical offices and other areas that should be locked are locked.
- Make sure all computers are logged off or locked when not in use. Do not store passwords in places where others can easily find them (for example, under the keyboard).
- Ensure proper key control measures are in place and followed. Report lost or stolen keys immediately. Each night, check to be sure that the Church building is empty and locked. (See *General Handbook*, 35.4.5, "Safety and Security," and the "Security and Lockup Procedures" section in *Meetinghouse Facilities Guide*.)
- In locations where the risk is higher, it may be advisable to have two individuals monitoring the parking lot or Church property during Church activities. If criminal activity is observed, avoid putting yourself at undue risk and contact the appropriate emergency response agency.
- If there is repeated criminal activity at the building or in the area, consider leaving lobby lights on and keeping all but the necessary entrances locked as a deterrent.
- Take seriously any threat to persons or property and report threats to the appropriate emergency response agency, your Area Security Manager, or Church Security. In some instances, Church Security and legal counsel can pursue legal means to keep individuals off Church property.
- Ensure members understand the directions provided in these guidelines and know how to respond appropriately.

4. WEAPONS AT CHURCH FACILITIES

Firearms and other lethal weapons are not allowed on Church property. This includes concealed weapons. This does not apply to current law enforcement officers. (See *General Handbook*, 35.5.7.2, "Firearms and Weapons.")

5. RESPONDING TO A DISRUPTIVE PERSON IN A CHURCH MEETING

If a serious or dangerous disruption is occurring on Church property or at a Church-sponsored event, call local emergency responders. When the situation is under control, notify your leader and the Church Security Department.

If a person becomes disruptive during a Church meeting:

- Be respectful, speak calmly and with self-control, and respect his or her personal space. Do not touch the person.
- If the individual is at the pulpit, turn off the microphone.
- Explain to the individual that his or her behavior is inappropriate in this setting. Ask them to stop and leave. You may also invite them to meet with a leader in the foyer.
- If the person refuses to leave and continues to cause a disturbance, dismiss the meeting.
- Do not attempt to physically restrain or remove the person.

- If the person has been asked to leave Church property but refuses, inform him or her that the local emergency response agency may be notified if they don't leave willingly, and in countries where appropriate, he or she may be cited or arrested for trespassing.

These guidelines apply regardless of where the disruption occurs (at the pulpit, in the congregation, on the stand, and so on) and can be adapted as needed for all meetings, classes, and other Church events or activities.

6. RESPONDING TO AN ARMED INTRUDER OR ACTIVE SHOOTER

Armed Intruder

If an intruder threatens to use a weapon, comply with the person's demands. Do not provoke the intruder by arguing or acting defiantly or confrontationally. If the intruder demands cash, including donations, give the intruder what he or she demands without hesitation.

After the intruder leaves, call emergency responders immediately. When time permits, notify your leader and the Area Security Manager or Church Security Department.

Active Shooter or Other Active Assailant

If an active shooter or other active assailant enters the building, do one of the following, based on the circumstances:

RUN. Flee immediately if a safe path is available. Move quickly to the safest exit and away from the building to a safe location. Exit quietly, without drawing the attention of the assailant. Adults must ensure all children and youth are supervised and accounted for. Do not return to the building or to an office or classroom for personal items. Do not carry anything that could be mistaken for a weapon by emergency responders.

HIDE. If you are unable to escape safely, hide out of sight of the assailant's view. If possible, close, lock, and barricade the doors to the classrooms, offices, or other rooms where you are hiding. Turn out the lights, silence mobile phones, and keep low to the floor and away from windows. If there is an exchange of gunfire between emergency responders and the assailant, everyone in the building should stay in their barricaded rooms until instructed otherwise by emergency responders.

FIGHT. As a last resort, if there is no time to run or hide, fight back against the assailant. Use anything available as a weapon and fight to stop the assailant. If others are present, organize to defend yourselves.

