

Evacuation Planning

To: All Church Staff

Reference: Security Team Preparedness

Many churches have many separate teams operating with little to no coordination. Speaking with our principal law enforcement officer in one church I was told he only knew three of the people on the children's church team for certain. He was as uncertain about the staff that is working under the pastor and a plan with a goal of unifying all church security assets into a unified team that works together seamlessly during emergencies is imperative.

In addition to the security teams working together, all volunteer teams and staff need to be aware of their mission in an emergency. Visiting a church one Wednesday night they had a fire alarm mid service. Had it been a real fire nobody seemed to know who directs people to safety based on usable exits, who helps gather all of the children in the nursery through toddler range who will each need an adult to escort them to safety along with our mentally challenged and elderly with mobility issues. In any serious event, evacuating the building, getting people to assigned safe zones then reuniting families will be a significant chore.

A full scale evacuation of the building due to fire, storm damage, attack or other will need to be managed by our staff as they are familiar with the people under your care and numbers. Some will need more help than others. Teens and most adults can follow directions from trained staff. Children in cribs, barely able to walk, too young to understand need to evacuate will likely need an approved person for each child to get them out safely and to a predetermined rally point. An evacuation of the building, especially as an emergency unfolds will be epic even with proper planning and training as when panicking people have a tendency to not think clearly so drills for staff and teams are recommended.

Churches should have written documents and training for parking lot attendants and their responsibilities. The Ushers and Greeters should also have a plan for integrating with security to resolve issues and help ensure the safety of our congregation. Every church should have a plan for emergency medical teams to aid people in distress till first responders arrive. A unified security team has a huge amount of training and paperwork to establish standards that will meet insurance regulations and state law. A unified plan for all possible threats from vandalism to cyber attacks on our financial data based on FEMA and Homeland Security documents is recommended for all churches to put into their emergency plans. End goal is to have all of our people trained and ready to react without having to guess in an emergency.

In the event of any major emergency getting all of our people to safety quickly is going to be difficult at best but with good planning and some training we can make it happen. Each staff member will have a job to do and heads of departments will be like ship captains. They will not leave their area of responsibility until sure all of the people they are charged with have been evacuated safely. We will have in-house training to work out as many issues as possible are dealt with before an event happens.

To properly develop this plan we need help from the staff. We need to know how many people under your charge. How many will need active help getting to safety, how many staff you have in your department we can leverage and your personal opinion on two best ways to get your people out of the building based if problem is in the front or the rear of the building. As we get each team leader's reports they will be consolidated into a document and training to ensure all needs are met getting our people to safety.