

CHAPTER 1: WHOLE PARISH SAFETY AND SECURITY

This document is a summary and adaptation of the larger Tina Rowe's *Worship Without Worry* guidebook. It is not meant to be comprehensive; rather it provides abbreviated references from the main document. The larger document can be found on the Parish Safety and Security Resource page. This document also does not directly correlate to the Parish Security Checklist.

CHAPTER 2: THE PARISH SAFETY AND SECURITY COMMITTEE, SECURITY RESPONSE TEAM AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL RESPONSE TEAM

Safety and Security Committee

Parishes should have a Safety and Security Committee with the strategic vision and management oversight to institute and develop teams that will enhance the ability to respond to emergency situations. The teams should be staffed with individuals who are both capable and willing to handle difficult situations as they arise. These teams will be tailored according to the size, capabilities, and skills within each parish assembly.

Some of the functions of the Committee include:

- Develop a process that defines the roles and activities of the Committee and how it will function; specifically including the existing capabilities/talents within the membership
- Complete the security assessment checklist to define and determine the roles and responsibilities of the Committee. Also, the Committee should create a report that establishes periodic reviews and documents recommendations
- Develop activities to encourage qualified personnel to participate on the Committee and with the program
- Coordinate all materials and tasks for the program to make sure there is continuity and to minimize disruption in the parish
- Keep Pastor informed and ensure acceptance and success of the program; and keep a well-balanced and reasonable approach to safety and security activities.

The Committee should be comprised of interested and capable parties that will advance and improve the program over time. Members should also be concerned about the big picture rather than the details of the program. It is critically important that members are mature and able to practice good judgment, as well as able to communicate with parish leadership.

Security Response Team

The focus of this team is to be able to respond to emergencies for the whole parish. Ideally, these members will include Law Enforcement Officers. In fact, the lead position on the team should be the Law Enforcement Officer. Many parishes hire off-duty officers to patrol during parish events; and thus, they can respond to other emergencies quickly. Other members of the team should include firefighters, paramedics, former military, doctors, nurses, lawyers, etc., if possible. If these types of professions are not available, the team should have someone who can

observe, evaluate, and call for assistance as needed. It would be good if there was a common attire or something that distinguishes the team members.

Beware: if a designated group or person responds inappropriately, then the parish may be liable and its reputation adversely affected, if the response is overzealous, untrained, or ill-judged.

Common Functions of a Security Response Team

- Give specific assignments to each member: protect the Clergy, parking lot patrol, hall checks, etc.
- Respond to emergencies and call 911 when required
- Assist with building evacuations
- Work with greeters and others to observe entrances, sanctuary and other areas of the building and parking lot, etc.
- Evaluate situations to determine level of threat and response
- Handle violent and non-violent disruptions appropriately, or get 911 help
- Use safety equipment, first aid kit, Automated External Defibrillator (AED) devices, etc.

Training for Security Response Team

Training should be provided by professionals or those that are well-versed in these particular areas of security. Training areas that would be beneficial include requirements, policies, liability, situational roles, hand signals, barricading and barriers, evacuation procedures and lock-down or lock-out techniques.

Some of the areas where training a Security Response Team may be beneficial include:

- Training team members in the threat of a variety of situations, such as fires, illnesses, injuries, or violent situations, as dictated by circumstances
- Training for handling disruptions:
 - Purposeful Disruption: where people frighten others by yelling and holding up signs in a menacing manner. (Simply positioning the team between the individual and those being challenged may be sufficient.)
 - Unintentional Disruption: typically, nonviolent situations with an emotional or excited individual with no intention of harm. (Make sure the Pastor agrees with the best way to handle these types of situations)
 - Other potential methods of dealing with disruptions:
 - Calming and controlling techniques
 - Shield and Guard
- Special training for handling violent incidents which may involve a weapon - develop a plan for this contingency
- “Retreat Training” to members of the team
- Training on how to develop plans and contingency plans
- Practical training on simulated situations
 - Include distance and close-quarter walk through scenarios

- Train the team on how to divide tasks; some with evacuating the congregation and some with attempting to block or stop the assailant

The size and culture of the parish will determine the degree of training and communication needed. Maintaining and saving records of training dates for the team members will help maintain proficiency and provide a record of what is needed or completed. Also, practicing situations on-site helps keep the team members focused and coordinated in the event of an actual incident. If a team member is armed, this becomes particularly important.

Content of a Security Response Manual

A Security Response Manual should be readily available and accessible to everyone involved with the Safety and Security Committee and its Security Teams. This manual should include:

- Role of each security team position
- Membership on the team
- Schedules and activities
- Attire, communications, and equipment
- Activities during Masses and events
- Preventative assignments
- Guidelines for responses with incidents involving a violent person (both armed/unarmed)
- Guidelines for responses with incidents involving a disruptive person

Emergency Medical Response Team (EMRT)

Some parishes may not have members who can serve on this team. This group, however, is not an Emergency Medical Team (EMT), that should be left up to first responders. Rather, the EMRT is more for assisting someone who is feeling unwell and helping with medical situations in the surrounding area, including, playgrounds, parking lots, etc.

Functions of the EMRT

Some of the functions of the EMRT include:

- Provide stand-by assistance prior to arrival of first responders
- Provide first aid for minor accidents and illnesses
- Administer proper AED intervention in appropriate situations
- Evaluate situations that might present medical or safety concerns and make recommendations
- Coordinate with other functions within the parish or at a parish event in need of their assistance
- Provide information and training to staff and volunteers
- Being the resource for outreach and safety
- Provide comfort to those who are afraid or nervous after a difficult event
- Conduct walk-throughs and inspect for potential areas of concern

Establishing and Maintaining an EMRT

In order to establish EMRT, the following items will need to be performed:

- Identify lead members to develop a team
- Develop a plan for roles and responsibilities of the team
- Establish roles and assign them to team members
- Establish training and retraining for general and parish specific needs - both for medical and non-medical team members
- Determine what equipment and supplies may be necessary at your location
- Establish procedures for various anticipated situations
- Logging and recording of incidents and events
- Set up a schedule to make sure necessary events are covered

Developing the EMRT as an effective group under the Pastor is particularly important. The Pastor should be informed - in writing - of all incidents where someone has suffered an injury. The attorney on the team should be notified immediately so further risk and liability can be assessed and minimized.

Safety Liaison

A Safety Liaison can assist a parish in developing instructions with contacts and phone numbers for maintenance and emergencies. Also, information about unlocking and locking the buildings, including any equipment, should be made available. These instructions could also include a log and a schedule of individuals responsible for implementing these responsibilities. Instructions relative to contacting the police, if a crime is reported, as well as evacuation instructions should also be included. These instructions and other related functions could be managed by a Safety Liaison who would help coordinated these actions. The Safety Liaison could also be helpful for off-site events, especially events involving parish children and youth, and large events, as well.

CHAPTER 3: HOW TO INSPECT AND ASSESS THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF YOUR PARISH

Security Assessment for your Parish Campus

An awareness of the strengths and deficiencies in a parish campus is only accomplished through a thorough security assessment and should include a visual review and the inspection of many items. These items include an array of physical and operational pieces. To conduct a successful assessment, it must be through the lens of realistic physical threats to persons and property. Suggested areas of assessment include but are not limited to:

- **Safety** (areas of potential for accidents, illness, injuries, harm to people or the organization.)
- **Security** (potential for crimes, violence, loss or damage or related harm, from any cause)
- **Emergency preparedness** (readiness for response and recovery related to any harmful event or situation of any kind. This may also include plans to be a resource for assistance if an emergency occurs in the community.)
- **Continuity planning** (preparedness to continue Masses, services and programs of the place of worship, without significant interruption.)
- **Overall status** of each component of a safe and secure place of worship (anything related to the place of worship or its assets and activities that can be inspected, reviewed, inventoried, or evaluated.)

It is also helpful to keep a sense of balance about threats and risks. When tragic or frightening events occur, there is a justifiable sense of urgency to prevent bad things from happening. However, there are often more immediate threats to safety and security that also need attention.

People, Places, Property, Programs and Processes - That May Be Harmed Purposely or Inadvertently

Considering the potentials, historical data and the current situation in your community and elsewhere can help you establish priorities and make planning decisions. Threats and risks to consider are as follows:

- Crimes against people and property
- Crimes against children
- Violent actions (Shootings, explosives, assaults, etc.)
- Attacks by terrorists, gangs or groups
- Attacks by individuals
- Vandalism/Graffiti
- Natural disasters and weather
- Mechanical failures/emergencies
- Accidents, injuries, and illnesses
- Fires (water and smoke damage)
- Loss due to robbery, theft or fraud
- Threats (phone, mail or in person)
- Disruptions (intentional/unintentional)
- Vehicle damage or theft
- Stalking of Clergy, staff or members
- Attacking Clergy, staff or members
- Domestic quarrels or other conflicts erupting on the property
- Staff issues
- Anything else that affects the operation or safety of the parish or the safety and security of staff, members and visitors

Consideration of human sources of harm reminds us to not make assumptions about people or situations when we consider safety and security.

Developing a Skills Inventory and Related Teams

There are many friends of the parish who may, or may not, attend masses and/or ministries, however, who want to assist keeping places of worship safe and secure. It is feasible to consider their collective status as relevant resources utilizing their areas of expertise.

- Law enforcement, the military and similar resources: there may be persons in these careers in or outside your congregation who would like to assist with security efforts.
- Fire department: may be able to check fire extinguishers and exits and provide other information. Fire safety is vital in parishes, so their expertise and experience are crucial.
- Emergency medical assistance: providers of emergency medical care or the fire department's EMT program can be a source of information and assistance, as well as provide training about Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and first aid.

If you have a large number of members with specific medical conditions (on oxygen, with heart conditions, having diabetes, in wheelchairs, etc.) ask EMTs if there are special precautions or responses about which volunteers need to be trained. (Members with those conditions should also be encouraged to keep the security team informed about their special needs and responses.)

- Catholic Charities, Red Cross, Salvation Army and other emergency providers. If your parish is in an area that is hit by storms, floods, fires or other natural hazards, get to know the Catholic Charities Response Team, the Red Cross officials and the Salvation Army teams with whom you might be working.
- Trades and craft professionals. Parish members with this expertise may be asked to provide volunteer time.
- Utility providers: Often electricity and gas providers offer energy assessments as well as other assessments.
- Other places of worship within your community. Perhaps you can develop a network within other places of worship in your community. Other places of worship have similar concerns, no matter what the faith or group.
- Commercial and online resources. There are many websites and books that offer information and are included within the Archdiocese's resources.
- Parish members can be identified who have knowledge, skills, and abilities in areas that could be helpful.

It should be noted that concern is helpful, obsessive fear and worry is not. An effective assessment team or security team will look for risks and hazards everywhere, while creating a more confident environment for the parish family and visitors. One way to accomplish this is to consider risks and threats while also considering prevention, protection, detection, and response. Keep the overall picture in mind to help keep a realistic approach and reduce unnecessary fear and anxiety.

Vary Inspection Times

Most security consultants and most volunteers in a place of worship, inspect and assess the facility just one time--often on a weekday--and call it done. However, a thorough assessment requires inspecting during varied times and circumstances. This is another advantage of having several teams involved and breaking the process into manageable portions.

Plan to inspect at least part of the facility and some of the programs on weekends, at night, during the week, during services and during selected special events. Also plan to inspect in varied seasons and during holiday times. Each will present different hazards and concerns.

- Weekday
- Weekend & Special Worship times
- Night-Time
- Inspect with and without notification

CHAPTER 4: THE CLERGY & THE WORSHIP TEAM **OR CLERGY SECURITY & THE ROLE OF THE WORSHIP TEAM IN** **EMERGENCIES**

Considerations when determining if a Clergy Care person/team is needed

- All Clergy, from time to time, may be targeted by the mere fact they are extremely visible and the leaders of the congregation
- In the event an Archbishop or Bishop is at the parish, the Deacon will take on these responsibilities. Clergy Care person/team should consult with the Deacon or the Master of Ceremonies, if a Deacon is not present.
- Often visible due to vestments: easy to pick out
 - Some Clergy are more vulnerable or visible due to media attention or public position on hot topics
- Clergy Care person/team should be well known to the Clergy they are assigned
- If there is a visiting Cleric, it is best to have introductions before the event

How Clergy Care person/team can be helpful to the Clergy

- Help to disengage the Clergy from difficult people or situations
- Help them move in/through/from crowds
- Be of direct assistance if medical emergency arises for Clergyman
- Should be made aware of any known threats to Clergy (type of threat, description)
- Advise the Clergy of situations outside of the parish before safety becomes an issue
- React to and shield Clergy as needed

Purpose of Clergy Care person/team

- Establish specific people with duty to protect Clergy when unsafe situations arise
- Have specific purpose of caring for, securing, attending to Clergy (but not bodyguard)
- Area of Responsibility is the sanctuary and knowing who is supposed to be up there
- Focus is on Clergy when at events not specific to liturgy (fiestas, speaking arrangements)

Effectiveness is reduced

- Super security is established
- Executive Protection style tactics are employed, especially without Clergy knowledge or approval
- If Clergy Care person/team becomes overzealous or prideful in their duties

Communication

- Unlikely to use radio systems, so activities will not be covert
- Possibly develop hand signal or gesture
 - Overt, loud commands --Must be known ahead of time - simple and short

CHAPTER 5: DEVELOPING A PARISH SECURITY MANUAL

Why Have a Safety and Security Manual

The *Safety and Security Manual* is most often a collection of written material maintained in a binder, as well as in a word processing file. It is the documentation, the ‘paper trail’ of the development of the safety and security program of a place of worship.

There may be edited versions of the large manual distributed to staff, volunteers and others. The security material for a parish member may only consist of a page or two of information, while the manual for the Music Director may be large; and the **Main Manual** will contain everything.

Suggested Manual Contents

It will be a *work in progress* that will change over time. The important thing is to give it structure and get it started. The following suggestions for contents can be customized to the specific needs of a parish and can be changed as needs change or new information becomes available.

For example, the section on childcare or nursery programs may start with a few pages of basic procedures, then expand as higher levels of safety and security are implemented or as the program grows. Eventually, the **Main Manual**, and the component Childcare Manual, will contain the full and extensive information in duplicate for all Childcare issues. The **Main Manual** will have all component manuals contained within it. The contents should be organized both by sequence of topics from front to back in the Manual in both a Table of Contents, and alphabetically by name in an Index.

Overview Information

- This provides the organizational structure of the parish with staff contact information, assignments of responsibility and who is a resource for what activities
- Community resources (law enforcement, fire department, public utilities, wastewater drainage, street maintenance, etc.)
- Contractors, vendors and others that are resources for various tasks or responses for parish maintenance or emergency assistance (Plumber, locksmith, glass repair, water clean-up, alarm companies, mechanical maintenance supplies, etc.)
- Phone chains and contact lists for members

***Note:** Putting important contact information in the manual will make people more likely to keep it handy and review it occasionally or even regularly.*

Sections for Major Components of Parish Operations

The sections will vary between parishes. Large parishes may have full binders just for the safety and security procedures and plans for educational areas and programs. Small parishes may only need a few pages of material with a few sections to cover needs for one or two rooms and one weekly Mass.

- **By space and areas.** (Parish buildings, floor area or other division of space. Parking lots, exterior of the building, the school, sheds, and other out-buildings.)
- **By groups and responsibilities.** (Pastoral team, counseling team, administrative team, maintenance staff, youth leaders, security team and/or security committee, etc.) These will vary according to activities of staff or volunteers and how often the building is open.
- Among the procedures or plans may be:
 - Protective measures for staff and volunteers when alone in the parish
 - Requirements for times when two or more staff must be present for liability purposes
 - Requirements and rules about counseling services
 - Safety guidelines for various tasks
 - Sign-in requirements for participants
 - Doors that should be locked, how equipment should be stored, in what condition should a room be left after using, etc.
 - Key control procedures
 - Lists of dos and don'ts for using the parish after hours
 - Other rules, requirements and responsibilities
- **Programs, processes, and activities.** (Masses, Sunday School, nursery, childcare, Choir (services, practice, etc.), social and other events, baptisms, Vacation Bible School, youth conferences, vehicle use, travel to and from sponsored events, etc.)
- **Procedures and Plans.** Information about how to develop them is in the next section.
- **Include examples of forms or other material.** The manual should contain blank copies and/or examples of any forms, sign-in sheets, approval forms, placards, etc. This is a good way easily to review all forms and to see how they fit with other procedures, and to establish such forms as the Master Control, standard for the topic.

Distribution of the Manual or Excerpts

- A computer file will be updated and saved as material is developed
- Maintain updated hard copies in offices and classrooms by emailing all changes to the designated responsible persons to make the substitutions or additions to their individual binders
- The ultimate goal is that everyone is so aware of the information that they do not have to refer to the Manual in a dire emergency. However, if they need to find a contact number or learn what to do in the event of a non-emergency situation, the readily available Manual will be convenient
- It generally is best for individuals and groups to receive only the material they specifically need. Parish leaders and other designees would have the complete Manual to maintain at home as well as on-site and *be familiar with all of it*, while volunteers may only be given instruction sheets for their particular activities

Steps for Developing the Safety and Security Manual

- **Identify the person or group who will have the primary responsibility for developing the manual**
- **Begin assessing the current status of the parish.** The parish security checklist provides a method for a very thorough assessment
- **Develop the most immediately needed plans and procedures.** After initial assessments, start to develop preventive measures and response plans for each major component of the parish.
 - Medical emergencies
 - Toxic/Chemical/Poison Spills or related Emergencies
 - Violent actions (shootings, attacks against individuals or congregation.) Accidents and injuries or damage involving people and property.
 - Criminal activities involving property (Building, property and equipment crimes.)
 - Criminal actions involving people (threats, assaults, kidnapping, sexual assault, harassing phone calls, other crimes.)
 - Disruption of services or activities (protests, emotionally disturbed persons, angry responses, etc.)
 - Mechanical emergencies (Electrical outages, water line breaks, overflowing sinks, etc.)
 - Weather emergencies
 - Explosives or bomb threats
 - Other threats or threatening situations

Note: Your parish may not need extensive information about all these potential issues, but anything can happen and those likely to be involved and responsible should be prepared.

How to Write Procedures and Plans That are Read and Remembered

- A **plan** answers the question: “What do I do when this happens?” It may not be workable in every detail, in an emergency, but it provides preferred actions.
- A **procedure** answers the question, “How do I do that task?” It must be followed as written, and there is often such a parish requirement.
- Those two terms get used, misused, and confused many times and are often used synonymously. Sometimes the term SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) is used, even though that may not be correct either.
- For most Parish Life programs, the most important thing is the effectiveness of the directions, guidelines, instructions, and checklists you develop, whatever you call them.
- **Procedures** will help people perform tasks that:
 - *are not done often enough to be remembered.* (How to set the alarm or turn it off or how to open the kitchen and close it up after use.
 - *have too many steps to be easily remembered.* (How to prepare the van for an off-site activity or how-to set-up for a typical or safe baptismal service during a pandemic.)
 - *are so important or so crucial, that the procedure should be followed precisely.* (How to check-in and check-out babies and children in childcare or how to schedule and conduct counseling sessions.)

- *are likely to be used in an emergency or when reminders are needed.* (How to turn off the water going into the water heater, what to do if there is a crime.)
- **Plans:**
 - These are usually developed to give people guidelines for what to do in an emergency. For example, if there is a fire, or a toxic exposure; if someone is injured, if someone becomes ill, if a threatening phone call is received; or similar situations.

Tips for Writing Plans and Procedures

- Make them clear, concise and in an easy-to-read format. Once you've written a procedure or plan, give it to someone and ask them to read it then tell you what they understand from it
- Ask for their critique about how easy it was for them to read and follow the key points.
- List brief steps to be followed unless the text is necessary to explain a complex activity.
- Write in a directive format ("do this") rather than suggesting ("should do this").
- Developing preventive measures and response plans requires reasonable, logical thinking, but it does not require large amounts of expertise in most cases
- Get inputs from others especially professionals when necessary
- Get approval for the manual while it is being worked on, including second opinions

Distribute and Train

- Keep a list of those who have the entire manual and those who only have portions. As changes are made, everyone should sign acceptance of the changes and get rid of old material. Otherwise, there will be a dozen versions in use at once!
- Training does not have to be time consuming or very formal, although as much time as possible should be given to it. For example, all Sunday School teachers should gather at least annually to discuss safety measures, security activities, things to be cautious about, how to evacuate the class in case of an emergency, what to do about a medical emergency and similar issues. New teachers or volunteers should receive a briefing before they begin.
- At some point, each teacher should be able to stand in his or her own classroom and talk about how safety and security procedures and response plans will be applied in that room with the usual children or adults present.
- People and groups should formally train about the procedures for their specific interest or location. For example, the music director may want to give frequent reminders about not leaving valuables in the choir room. In addition, he or she might conduct an emergency drill every few months, to refresh information about the evacuation route and what to do after leaving the building.

Update and Edit

Keep the manual a vital, immediately applicable document. As events occur or incidents happen elsewhere, add to it. When a new program or process is started, put procedures about it in the manual.

Summary

There are no rules about how a safety and security plan, or manual is developed—and it often changes mid-way and looks differently than originally planned. The goal is to develop a manual of helpful material that works for the people *using* it.

Unfortunately, the real test of the effectiveness of the material and the training received often takes place in an emergency when it is too late to make corrections. But, when such incidents occur, make the necessary amendments based on what you observed and learned from the last experience and incorporate them into the Manual. The contents and format of the Manual should be closely considered, and it should err on the side of too much useful information rather than not enough.

The final version of a Manual, with all its procedures, plans and information, may not be completed for months. Even then it will be in a constant state of adjustment and change. The important issue is that all the elements of a parish—people, places, property, processes, and programs--are being considered. That alone will increase the safety and security of a place of worship.

CHAPTER 6: THE SECURITY ROLE OF GREETERS AND USHERS **(G/U)**

Greeters and Ushers (G/U)

Your primary security tasks are to observe and assess, then get assistance from the security team or take appropriate emergency action. The best way for you to fulfill your role is to be aware, alert, and ready to get assistance from the security team. Going beyond that role can make a situation worse or get you or others hurt or killed in an incident involving a violent person.

Your security activities should focus on:

- Observation: Observe people and the environment continuously and purposefully
 - Unusual emotion
 - Unusual behavior
 - Clothing or characteristics which may be linked to problem behavior
- Assessment: Make a reasonable evaluation of the potential for harm
- Action: Get help, then warn and help others. You may be able to do something to prevent violence or keep it from getting worse, but first try to get help and warn and help others

G/U Security Checklist

Note that this list is separate and distinct from the parish security assessment. This list can be used to train G/Us in their duties, as well as, provide them with the necessary familiarity of the particulars of any given parish which would be taken for granted when responding to a security/emergency incident. Specific actions during a security/emergency event should be coordinated with the security team, if one exists, and scenario training should occur on a regular basis to ensure effective cooperation.

G/U Role and Position

- G/U should know the policies of the parish Pastor or other leaders with regards to the G/U security role
- G/U should have an assigned post or position (e.g. section of the parish sanctuary or narthex) for which they are responsible before Mass, as well as, during and after Mass, if applicable to the parish
- G/U's should be familiar with where other G/U's are supposed to be, in addition to the location of security team members
- G/U's should routinely communicate with other G/U's and the security team members about emergency responses, to ensure all are "on the same page"

G/U Action or Reaction

- G/U should be comfortable being assertive with a suspicious person or situation
- G/U should know how to covertly signal another G/U or a security team member to call 911 or to assist with a possible incident
- G/U should know and practice a plan for how to separate a suspicious person from other people in the narthex or parish sanctuary

- G/U should practice getting to another area of the parish building while staying low, including reaching and leaving from all possible exits

G/U Familiarity with Parish, Building and Immediate Area Physical Features

- G/U should know the most expedient route to every exit in the parish building
- G/U should be familiar with what items or areas in each part of the building could provide protection, concealment (e.g. crawl spaces, overhead storage and closets), or serve as a barricade (e.g. pew, desk, table)
- For effective execution during a security/emergency incident, G/U should know where mechanical and utility areas and items are located and how to access them (Electrical boxes, water supply, alarms, gas, fire extinguishers, ladders, tools, potential weapons, office keys, etc.)
- In the event of a loss of power, G/U's should also know the location of flashlights within the buildings, as well as, where and how to activate emergency lighting, if not automatic
- To aid in physical security and limiting space access to those with the intent to do harm, G/U's should practice locking all parish building doors quickly and be familiar with which interior doors have locks
- If there are not G/U's assigned to monitor the parking areas, then, those assigned to inside spaces must know the best location to view each outside parking area
- Training scenarios involving alternate locations will be essential. This encourages G/U's to practice responding to a security incident/emergency in a variety of parish areas, such as the narthex, sanctuary during Mass, classroom, fellowship hall, or parking lot

CHAPTER 7: SPECIAL EVENT PLANNING

An event safety plan is simply a collection of scheduled activities, assigned responsibilities and preventive/response guidelines. When there are written plans that are followed consistently, even a negative event can be reduced in severity, or, at the very least, the parish is less likely to be liable.

This document does not cover every aspect of event safety planning but may be useful as a starting point.

Safety Coordinator

Assign a Safety Coordinator who works directly with the Event Coordinator. They are there to ensure that no aspect of the event is planned with-out considering the impact on safety and security for people, property, and the parish.

- Establish the roles and tasks of the Safety Coordinator. This will help gain commitment to safety from all volunteers and staff. Utilize the “Five C’s”: Procedures must be communicated clearly and there must be a commitment that they will be implemented consistently and continuously.
- Ensure all volunteers, parish leaders and staff consult with the Event or Safety Coordinator before making changes to plans or directing something contrary to the plan (except in emergencies).
- All volunteers, parish leaders and staff should promise to follow safety procedures and rules. If there is a problem created by a safety procedure (lack of ventilation, no easy access to an area, long wait lines, etc.) solutions should be developed prior to the event if possible. If there is no way to improve things, the safety procedure—if it is reasonable—should take priority.
- Assess each component of the event to identify what is needed to ensure that each individual component objective is achieved, and what might prevent each desired outcome from happening.

Safety Plan

A Safety Plan should be developed prior to the event to address the following components:

- Type of event
- Number and demographic of participants
- Time of day
- Weather/season
- Required resources

Evaluate the physical site of the event and include all phases in the Safety Plan – including set-up, participant arrival and departure, and clean-up/tear-down.

Content of Safety Plan

The Safety Plan should address the following key areas appropriate for the event:

- Medical Emergencies (including clear access for EMS)
- Accidents/Injuries to volunteers or participants
- Theft or property damage
- Lost or misused property
- Crimes against people
- Crimes against property
- Parking – including ingress and egress safety
- Liability concerns
- Disruptions/disturbances
- Active threats/on-going act of violence (pre-planned or spontaneous)
- Inappropriate activities
- Others?

The Safety Plan should also designate:

- Secure areas that are “off-limits” to unauthorized people
- “High-risk” areas (for crime, accidents, illnesses, inappropriate activity, disruption, panic, etc.)
- Emergency evacuation procedures – even for outdoor events – including a holding/reunification area
- Known threats/concerns surrounding similar or past events
- Security procedures for volunteers (vehicles, property, etc.)
- Specific assignments/locations for event safety personnel

Emergency Response Procedures

Emergency response procedures should provide guidance to volunteers and staff. They should focus primarily on:

- Observation - people and the environment - continuously and purposefully
- Assessment - a reasonable evaluation of the potential for harm to people or property
- Action - get help and/or help others

Safety Plan Dissemination

Distribute the Safety Plan to all personnel and give them the opportunity to conduct a walk-through of the event site and practice any emergency procedures prior to the event.

Notify the local public safety authority of the event and its potential impact on normal facility operations/emergency response; and request additional security checks and patrol drive-bys during the time of the event.