



Corporate Headquarters: 5555 Harrisburg Industrial Park Drive, Harrisburg, NC (USA) 28075

Charlotte, NC Office: P.O. Box 620183 Charlotte, NC (USA) 28262

Phone: 800.231.9106 **Fax:** 801.905.3736 **Web:** www.ThreatSuppression.com **E-Mail:** info@ThreatSuppression.com

Threat Suppression's Church Safety and Security *Frequently Asked Questions*

Q. Are significant crimes in churches actually increasing?

A. From 1998 to 2013, there were 650 recorded deadly force incidents in United States churches. In 33% of the cases, someone other than the perpetrator was killed. In 2012, deaths from church attacks increased 36% compared to 2011, leading the Obama Administration to release the *"Guide for Developing High-Quality Emergency Operating Plans for Houses of Worship"*. A large survey of pastors in 2004 found that 45% of pastors feel that hate crimes against churches are on the rise. Nearly all of these pastors agreed that violence and anger issues in churches are increasing. The study also found that approximately 50% of pastors have been threatened at their job.

Q. Our church is in a relatively stable, low-crime community. Are we still at risk?

A. A review of crimes in churches found that 24% of all incidents are perpetrated by a church member—either an employee, volunteer, or current churchgoer. Regardless of the relatively low crime rate in the community, churches are still at risk for crimes. Some of the worst criminal acts against churches have occurred in communities known for low crime and relative stability.

Q. Our church has policies and procedures in place for safety and security. Is that not enough?

A. When church safety and security policies and procedures are reviewed, there are three common issues present in nearly every church. First, the policies look good on paper but they are rarely followed. Second, no one took ownership of the policies to ensure the policies were properly administered. Third, the majority of security policies and plans are created by people with little knowledge of safety in security. Many plans actually set the church up for failure during times of crisis.

Q. We strongly feel that God will take care of our church and provide the safety and security that we need. Because of this, we do not believe that additional safety and security measures are needed. Why do we need security when we have God?

A. Our presentation dedicates time to address this theological debate. First, the thought that God will protect believers from harm is a false assumption. Just read the book of Job in the Bible to see this point. Mike Holton, Church Business Administrator at Wedgwood Baptist church in Fort Worth, Texas, stated, *“Our church did not have any safety and security policies. Our senior pastor had always stated that we should have security in the Lord and try not to create our own security. However, we found that plan was not adequate when an active shooter entered our church and killed seven kids and injured seven others.”* In addition, churches are considered businesses and are required by the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) to have adequate safety and security plans in place for “Any reasonably foreseeable event that could cause harm to the employees”. Take note that OSHA considers most church volunteers to be an employee by OSHA standards.

Q. Is there a legal liability on our church for not having adequate safety and security plans and failing to train our staff?

A. There is absolutely a clearly documented legal liability on churches for failing to have adequate security plans and training in place. Lawsuits against churches have increased 2000% since 1992. Even when the church has done nothing wrong, the church must still address the lawsuit. The average church lawsuit costs \$50,000 to defend (legal costs only). When a church loses a lawsuit, the average judgment is \$100,000, not including punitive damages. There have been multiple judgments awarded against churches in the millions of dollars for negligence. There is currently a lawsuit in the amount of \$10 million filed against a mega-church for dismissing a church volunteer under accusations that he molested a child during children’s church. The volunteer was cleared of all criminal charges and the incident was found to have never occurred. In another case, a church paid out \$13 million for a drowning death that occurred at a church camp.

Q. What are the six most significant safety and security threats that can occur in Sunday church service? Does your training address these threats?

A. Threat Suppression has recognized six significant threats that can occur during a Sunday church service. These threats are determined based on frequency and impact of the event. The six events are (1) active shooter/active assailant, (2) armed robbery of church tithes, (3) domestic kidnapping, (4) medical emergencies, (5) fire emergencies; and (6) weather events.

Q. Our church practices good fire prevention techniques. What is the likelihood of a fire in our church?

A. The United States Fire Administration states that 1,300 church fire occurs each year in the United States, causing more than \$38 million in damages. More than a quarter of church fires are the result of arson. Sixty-five percent of churches that had a fire did not have a working smoke alarm and 96% of churches did not have a sprinkler system.

Q. In your POWER course, you talk about financial audits for churches. Is church fraud actually a serious problem?

A. According to the Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company (the largest insurer of Christian churches), \$37 billion is lost worldwide from Christian church-related fraud. This is \$4 billion more each year than the Christian churches give to missions. However, 80% of church fraud cases are never reported. If all cases were reported, it is estimated that Christian church fraud would exceed \$250 billion a year. Church fraud cases continue to increase a rate of 6% each year. By 2025, it is estimated that Christian church fraud will exceed \$300 billion. The average amount stolen in a church embezzlement scheme is \$100,000-\$400,000 and occurs over a period of several years.

Q. In your POWER course, you talk about conducting background investigations on church employees and volunteers. We've known many of these people for years. Is a background investigation really necessary?

A. Approximately 3% of churches conduct background investigations on church employees and volunteers. However, 94% of pastors in one large survey stated that churches should be conducting background investigations on all church employees and volunteers. Retrospective analysis by Pinkerton Security found that approximately 9% of church employees and volunteers are ineligible for employment because of previous criminal convictions. These convictions included murder, carjacking, kidnapping, child molestation, rape, weapons violations, and drug-trafficking. In addition, a church assumes a massive legal liability by not conducting background investigations on staff members who have access to children. We strongly recommend that all churches conduct annual background investigations on all church employees and volunteers.

Q. There are lots of “experts” out there teaching safety and security courses. Why is Threat Suppression any different?

A. Threat Suppression staff are all practitioners of safety and security. Our team represents more than 500 years of public safety experience, responding to more than a quarter million emergency calls. We bring a wide variety of experience, including veteran law enforcement officers (all assigned to specialized units, such as SWAT), career fire officers, physicians, paramedics, intelligence analysts, Special Forces operators, and much more. Our staff sits on numerous public safety committees at the local, state, and federal level. Multiple agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice, the Department of Defense, the Department of Education, and the United States’ District Attorneys Office have recognized and endorsed the training offered at Threat Suppression. In addition, multiple insurance carriers and underwriters endorse the safety and security training that we provide.

Q. How much does Threat Suppression training cost?

A. Our training is competitively priced. We understand that money is limited for training. We believe in the critical importance of this training and we work very hard to make sure that the training is affordable for our clients. We design each package uniquely for the needs of our clients, making sure that the needs are met in the most cost efficient manner. Please contact us at info@ThreatSuppression.com or 800-231-9106 for a price quote and availability.