# Safety and Security Assessment Pack

LEADERS & STAFF

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

# Safety and Security Assessment Pack

*Assessments* PAGE


## Keeping the Entire Church Safe

ARE WE PRACTICING THE SAFETY BASICS?
*by Jeff Hanna* ..... 2

IS OUR CHURCH SECURE?
*by Jeff Hanna* ..... 3

IS YOUR FACILITY MEETING SAFETY REGULATIONS?
*by Stephen Chawaga* ..... 4

ARE WE AWARE OF OUR LEGAL RISKS?
*by Richard R.. Hammar* ..... 5–6

## Keeping Children Safe

ARE WE ENSURING THE SAFETY OF CHILDREN IN CHURCH?
*by Brad Lewis* ..... 7

ARE WE PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN FROM SEXUAL PREDATORS?
*by James Cobble, Jr.* ..... 8–9

HOW SAFE IS OUR RECREATIONAL EQUIPMENT?
*by Michael W. Michelsen, Jr.* ..... 10


This Assessment Pack from BuildingChurchLeaders.com is a collection of tools to use with your leadership team. Each tool has been designed to help you and your team measure how well you ensure safety and security in your church environment.

Here's how to use your Building Church Leaders assessments with your board, committees, or staff:

- Print and photocopy the assessment tool you'd like to use (you have permission to photocopy for church or educational use)
- Hand it to your team to complete
- Lead a discussion based on the team's answers.

For more assessment packs, complete training themes, or other training tools for church leadership, see our website at www.BuildingChurchLeaders.com

# Are We Practicing the Safety Basics?

*Being attentive to basic safety issues makes the church a secure environment for all.*
Proverbs 13:16

*Being good stewards of what God has given us charge over includes protecting the church's structure, financial assets, and, most importantly, its people. Assess whether your church currently gives the proper attention to the following areas of basic safety.*

Churches should examine these five areas as it relates to safety:

| | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| **Access to the Church** | | |
| Are all possible entryways (doors, windows and other access points) regularly checked to ensure they are acting as deterrents to break-ins? | ❑ | ❑ |
| Is there a written record of who has a key to one or more entryways? | ❑ | ❑ |
| Is there a secure location in the church for all technology equipment to be stored after each use? | ❑ | ❑ |
| Is technology equipment locked up appropriately on a consistent basis? | ❑ | ❑ |
| **Pending Repairs** | | |
| Does someone routinely evaluate potential hazards in the church building, such as poorly lit areas, handrails that need repair, and stairs that are slippery? | ❑ | ❑ |
| Are areas identified as needing repair attended to immediately? | ❑ | ❑ |
| If something needs fixing, is it done immediately—or clearly marked as a hazard until it's fixed? | ❑ | ❑ |
| **Employee Safety** | | |
| Does the church have written safety procedures covering items such as the location of emergency exits and protocols for emergencies? | ❑ | ❑ |
| **Access to Money** | | |
| Are safeguards in place that protect the handling of money during collections? | ❑ | ❑ |
| Is there more than one person who oversees the transfer, deposit, or disbursement of funds? | ❑ | ❑ |
| **Abuse Prevention** | | |
| Are there written policies in place for protecting children from any type of abuse? | ❑ | ❑ |
| Are potential staff and volunteers screened before being allowed access to children? | ❑ | ❑ |
| Are background and reference checks performed on each potential staff member or volunteer? | ❑ | ❑ |
| Is every childcare worker supervised and accountable to someone for his or her behavior and choices? | ❑ | ❑ |

—JEFF HANNA

### Discuss

1. How much time and discussion are spent on a monthly basis about safety concerns in the church?
2. What improvements to the church structure would enhance its safety and security?
3. How safe do you think members of the congregation generally feel?

# Is Our Church Secure?

*Help your congregation feel safer by taking precautions to protect them.*

Ezekiel 34:25

*Designing a comprehensive safety and security plan for your church is important to help the congregation feel safe and keep the environment inviting. Evaluate potential safety measures by placing a checkmark next to statements that need to be implemented in your church.*

### Training

Greeters, ushers, and other leaders are often the first contact with visitors. They can identify individuals who seem out of place. People with suspicious behavior can be closely watched, and these leaders can alert others to the situation if a crisis develops. These leaders can also facilitate a quick exit from the building for the congregation should evacuation be necessary.

❑ Church leaders, staff people, ushers, and greeters receive awareness training in security procedures.

❑ Appoint a church security team and/or safety officers to stand ready in case of emergency.

### Technology

Many churches are installing electronic security systems and other technology to keep their congregations safe. They include:

❑ A central security center that is manned by people who are trained to respond to a crisis.

❑ Closed-circuit televisions and cameras positioned throughout the church.

❑ Two-way communication devices strategically used by personnel during church events for rapid response.

❑ Video cameras installed in daycare and nursery rooms.

❑ An available outside line close to the worship area for emergency use.

❑ An intercom or paging system that links childcare workers with parents or health professionals in the congregation.

### Education

❑ Church members are educated about what they can do to enhance their own personal safety and security.

❑ Church members are encouraged by public announcements and/or printed material to lock car doors before coming into church, store valuables out of sight, and keep personal belongings within sight.

❑ Church members are told to identify the exit closest to where they are sitting so they can find it quickly in an emergency.

❑ Church members are encouraged to enter and exit the church in groups, especially at night.

—JEFF HANNA

### Discuss

1. What types of security concerns are most prevalent in the minds of congregants?
2. What security issues deserve the highest priority for the near future? How should these be addressed?
3. What are the pros and cons of hiring an outside consultant to assess the potential security vulnerabilities that exist in the church?

# Is Your Facility Meeting Safety Regulations?

*Attention to basic safety concerns may prevent a disaster later on.*

1 Corinthians 14:40

*Some entities view the church as a business and therefore subject to the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA). These laws require that businesses be free of hazards that could cause death or physical harm, comply with specific workplace standards, and have certain types of safety equipment available. Are you following these guidelines? Find out with this assessment.*

Here are some OSHA regulations that may apply to churches:

| **Fire Prevention** | **We are in compliance** | **We are not in compliance** |
|---|---|---|
| Exits are located a certain distance apart from one another and are never blocked. | ❑ | ❑ |
| Fire extinguishers are in good working order, and employees are trained to use them. | ❑ | ❑ |
| A written plan maps out escape in case of fire, and all employees are trained to follow this procedure in an emergency. | ❑ | ❑ |
| **Walking-Working Surfaces** | | |
| Every stairway floor opening has a railing. | ❑ | ❑ |
| Every pit and trapdoor floor opening is covered with material that is of standard strength and construction. | ❑ | ❑ |
| Passageways and storerooms are kept clean and orderly; floors are neat and dry. | ❑ | ❑ |
| **Ladders** | ❑ | ❑ |
| Ladders are in good working condition and placed so that the rails have secure footing when in use. | ❑ | ❑ |
| **Means of Exit** | ❑ | ❑ |
| Exits, along with aisles and passageways leading to them, are situated so they are readily accessible. | ❑ | ❑ |
| Exit doors are side-hinged, easily recognizable, and void of any locks. | ❑ | ❑ |
| **First aid** | ❑ | ❑ |
| At least one employee is trained in first aid if the church is some distance from a medical facility. | ❑ | ❑ |
| There are adequate first-aid supplies available on site. | ❑ | ❑ |
| **Lawn \Mowers** | ❑ | ❑ |
| All mowers (walk-behind and riding) in use have an enclosed blade and carry a warning that the motor should not be used without a catcher assembly or guard. | ❑ | ❑ |
| A caution label is visible at each discharge opening. | ❑ | ❑ |

—STEPHEN CHAWAGA

### Discuss

1. What areas of facility safety need immediate attention?
2. What areas of the facility are potential hazards that have yet to be identified?
3. What is the timetable to bring these safety concerns in line with expectations?

# Are We Aware of Our Legal Risks?

*Avoiding legal risks in a church environment requires a proactive approach.*

Job 13:14

*Churches are increasingly becoming the target of lawsuits in our litigious-minded society. This troubling trend means church leaders must inform themselves about legal risk and implement appropriate risk-management strategies. Use these questions to assess your level of risk in these nine areas.*

**We carefully select and hire church workers.** Negligent selection suggests carelessness or a failure to exercise reasonable care in choosing workers, which especially applies to employees and volunteers who will be working with minors.

| We do this well and are not at risk | We do this adequately but may be at risk | We don't do this and are probably at risk |
|---|---|---|

**We will not retain staff that may present a risk to others.** A church may have used reasonable care in selecting workers but still be responsible for their misconduct if it retained them after receiving information indicating that they posed a risk of harm to others.

| We do this well and are not at risk | We do this adequately but may be at risk | We don't do this and are probably at risk |
|---|---|---|

**We supervise our church workers and volunteers adequately.** Churches may be liable for injuries sustained during church activities on the basis of negligent supervision. Adopting a "two-adult" policy specifying that no minor is ever allowed to be alone with an adult during any church activity is a significant step toward reducing liability.

| We do this well and are not at risk | We do this adequately but may be at risk | We don't do this and are probably at risk |
|---|---|---|

**We provide counseling services in a way that reduces potential liability.** The most important legal concerns include negligent counseling, sexual misconduct, maintaining confidences, and the unauthorized practice of psychology or counseling by unlicensed persons who are not serving as pastoral counselors.

| We do this well and are not at risk | We do this adequately but may be at risk | We don't do this and are probably at risk |
|---|---|---|

**We report child abuse when we become aware of it.** It is essential for leaders to clearly understand their responsibilities under state law to report known or reasonably suspected incidents of abuse.

| We do this well and are not at risk | We do this adequately but may be at risk | We don't do this and are probably at risk |
|---|---|---|

**We understand and follow The Uniform Securities Act on the sale of securities.** Violating securities law represents the second highest source of damages in civil litigation involving churches. Church leaders should not consider securities as a means of raising funds without the counsel of a securities attorney.

| We do this well and are not at risk | We do this adequately but may be at risk | We don't do this and are probably at risk |
|---|---|---|

**We comply fully with current employment laws.** Churches may face liability for wrongful termination, violating state and federal discrimination laws, and the off-duty use of lawful products such as tobacco and alcohol.

**We do this well and are not at risk** | **We do this adequately but may be at risk** | **We don't do this and are probably at risk**

**We avoid exerting undue influence in estate matters.** You can reduce the risks by ensuring that anyone gifting to the church obtains the independent counsel of an attorney in drafting the will or trust. Ideally the attorney should not be a member of the same church.

**We do this well and are not at risk** | **We do this adequately but may be at risk** | **We don't do this and are probably at risk**

**We are aware of any issues that may put board members at legal risk**. In recent years church officers and directors have been sued personally. "Directors and officers" insurance provides coverage for board members in the course of their official duties.

**We do this well and are not at risk** | **We do this adequately but may be at risk** | **We don't do this and are probably at risk**

—RICHARD R. HAMMAR

## Discuss

1. What legal risks are we most vulnerable to currently?
2. What practical steps can we take in the near future to reduce our potential liability in these areas?
3. Should we engage personnel to investigate areas we need to understand further? What specific steps should they take?

# Are We Ensuring the Safety of Children in Church?

*Avoid potential problems with careful planning and conscientious follow-through.*

Proverbs 22:3

*Keeping children physically and emotionally safe in church has become more important than ever. Parents and church staff must work together to ensure the safety of their children. Is your church taking the necessary precautions to protect children? Use this assessment tool to find out.*

| | We do this well | We do this adequately | We don't do this |
|---|---|---|---|
| A background check is performed on every volunteer who potentially works with children. | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Personal references are checked for each candidate who shows interest in working with children. | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| The area of the church where early childhood classes take place has only one entrance and exit manned by a supervisor or greeter to ensure proper pick-up of children. | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Parents and children are matched by a coding system, such as nametags, to identify them as the rightful parent. | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Information, such as family names, addresses, phone numbers, and health information pertaining to emergencies, is obtained from parents the first time their child uses the childcare facility. | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| An emergency alert system using two-way radios or other means of instant communication is in place at any event where childcare is offered. | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Childcare policies and procedures are provided in written form for parents as part of their welcome packet with their first use of childcare services. | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| Information is available for parents who want to know basic safety data, such as how they can be found if their child needs them, who monitors the child's pick-up, and so on. | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |

—BRAD LEWIS

### Discuss

1. How might the security or lack of security a parent feels about the childcare system affect the way they feel about the church?
2. What potential consequences might a church face without this type of childcare structure in place?
3. Other than remaining safe, what other ways do children benefit by a well-thought-out-childcare safety program?

# Are We Protecting Our Children From Sexual Predators?

*Thoroughly screen all potential childcare workers to avoid the risk of sexual misconduct.*
Proverbs 18:5

*No church should be without a clear and thorough process of screening all potential childcare workers in an effort to prevent predators from having contact with children in the first place. Use this assessment to review your church's screening process and childcare-supervision policies.*

| | Always | Sometimes | Never |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Taking the Issue Seriously** | | | |
| Volunteers are screened at the same strict level as paid staff. | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| We screen all candidates for a history of abusing children. | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| All applicants are told that we have a screening program in place. | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| **Requirements for Working with Children** | | | |
| We establish that applicants have been a part of the congregation for at least six months. | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| We determine the level of involvement the applicant has in the church. | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| We ask the applicant to list two church members as informed references about that involvement. | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| **Supervision of Childcare Workers** | | | |
| We enforce a policy of multiple workers in each classroom. | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| **The Volunteer-Screening Process** | | | |
| Applicants fill out a written application that has been reviewed by an attorney. | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| We use a release form that authorizes the collection of information from references. | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| We thoroughly check all references. | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| We personally interview each candidate. | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| We perform a criminal-records check for those who have frequent and unsupervised access to children or youth. | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| **Documenting the Information** | | | |
| We document all steps taken to collect information from references and others. | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| We keep an interview form that includes names of the interviewer and applicant, date, and summary of responses. | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| We keep all forms and notes with the application. | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |
| We keep all information gathered confidential and in a locked location. | ❑ | ❑ | ❑ |

## Candidate disqualification

A criminal conviction for a sexual offense involving a minor would certainly disqualify an applicant. In the case of pedophilic behavior, such a conviction should disqualify an individual no matter how long ago it occurred. Other automatic disqualifiers would include incest, rape, assaults involving minors, murder, kidnapping, child pornography, sodomy, and the physical abuse of a minor. Other crimes strongly indicate that a person should not be considered for work with minors in a church.

—JAMES COBBLE JR.

## Discuss

1. Where are the current weak points in our policy and procedure for effectively screening potential childcare workers?
2. What legal liabilities might we currently be exposing ourselves to as result of these weak spots?
3. What aspects of our policy and procedure deserve top priority? What timeframe can we realistically use to correct these? Who will be responsible for implementing the changes?

# How Safe Is Our Recreational Equipment?

*Investing in safe and practical recreational equipment pays off in the long run.*

Deuteronomy 22:8

*Purchasing recreational equipment requires more research and planning than many realize. Evaluate your needs with the following points in mind when planning your next recreational equipment purchase.*

1) **Safety first:** The first consideration for all playground and recreation equipment is that it be safe for children to use. This implies buying good equipment that has built-in safety features. For example, a soccer goal might be of good quality, but if it does not have padding on the bars, it could lead to tragic consequences.

    - What steps have we taken to adequately consider safety features in the recreational purchases we are making for our youth?

2) **Space limitations:** Buy equipment designed for the space you have available. Products are available that will accommodate nearly any type of space. For example, basketball hoops can be purchased that fold forward, backward, or sideways, depending on need. Equipment can be purchased for just about any area. Carefully select the type and amount of equipment that fits the space allotted.

    - What smaller areas of the facility could be utilized for recreation if products were available to fit those spaces?

3) **Portability:** Because many churches don't have an area dedicated solely to recreational use, equipment must be moved and stored when not in use. In these cases, the church also needs space to store equipment. Be sure to look closely at the portability features of the equipment. The equipment needs to be easily moved and efficiently stored.

    - Where could future recreational equipment be stored for easy access in multi-purpose areas?

4) **After the sale:** Be sure to ask about maintenance requirements for the playground and recreational equipment under consideration. Portable or retractable equipment will have some moving parts, of which some will eventually wear out and need replacing. Outdoor gear will suffer from the effects of weather and need additional maintenance. Buy low maintenance equipment that is of good quality. Also, look for a dealer or installer who has a lot of experience with the equipment you're buying. Make sure you're dealing with a company that will honor their warranties. Get and check references.

    - How thoroughly do we assess various types and styles or recreational equipment to ensure both a quality product and a reliable installer/manufacturer?

—MICHAEL W. MICHELSEN, JR.

### Discuss

1. In our equipment purchases, how much should we consider safety and quality versus price alone?
2. How could we better utilize the areas of the facility designated for recreational activities? How conveniently and safely can we store and position equipment used in these areas?
3. What steps can we take to maintain the safety of the equipment after purchase?