

RiskReporter

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Armed intruder

safety for your organization cannot be ignored

Acts of violence are tragic and rarely understood. While these incidents often appear without warning, there are steps you can take to help deescalate or prevent them.

This Risk Reporter will show you ways you can track, monitor and compile a list of suspicious behaviors so that you might avert a violent event from occurring at your facility. We've also included information on crisis communication plans.

It's impossible to know what tomorrow will bring. However, planning and education can help you prepare. Here at Church Mutual, we know your organization plays an important role in your community, and we're here to help you protect it.

Behavioral warning signs of a violent person

Across the U.S. and around the world, acts of violence continue to be on the rise. Unfortunately, many attacks are focused on “soft targets,” such as houses of worship, schools and other workplaces.

Identifying behaviors of concern and properly responding in a timely manner could be the key to preventing such attacks.

Red flags of suspicious behavior or activity

The best way to avert a crisis is to notice shifts in human behavior. While one individual event alone might not predict violent tendencies, a central data repository of suspicious behavior reports could help connect the dots. Here are some signs of behavior that should be reported.

- Excessive complaints about work/life environment
- Abrupt change in personality: loud/boisterous to quiet/silent or vice versa
- Files many complaints; always sees oneself as the victim
- Increased talk or social media posts about violence

*Consider this:
The best way to avert a crisis is to notice shifts in human behavior.*

- Access to or use of firearms/increased obsession with weapons
- Takes criticism poorly and can't let it go
- Insubordinate to manager or teacher
- Inflexible to change, demanding that others change
- Sends concerning emails or texts/phone calls
- Consistent poor work relationships

There could be other factors that might affect a person's behavior, such as substance abuse, mental illness and other life events (such as divorce or bullying) that may affect the quality of life of a person. These influences can contribute to poor choices that a typically stable person might not contemplate.

Tools such as the Firestorm Behavioral Risk Threat Assessment (BeRThA®) process are also available to teach you how to identify warning signs, identify opportunities to intervene and help the person who might have proceeded with a crime.

For further information about averting a crisis and how to prepare, visit Firestorm online.

Did You Know?

A reduction in physical health and/or hygiene could be an indication that a person is dealing with a difficult situation and should be reported.





The benefit of anonymous reporting tools

The best way for you to prevent violence and protect your sphere of influence is to gather intelligence. The people that occupy and utilize your building are always talking to those around them. So even if complaints, incidents or concerns are not taken directly to administrators, rest assured, they are being voiced.

When people with information are not comfortable sharing their concerns directly, you do have an avenue to allow those concerns and behaviors to be reported. Anonymous reporting gives others the option to bring plots to light before it happens without fear of retribution.

If you offer a clear process for coworkers, friends or family to report, you have a chance to address an issue much earlier in the process, before it snowballs into a violent attack or self-harm.

What should be communicated about anonymous reporting?

- Share that reporting isn't only about stopping an act of violence, but also intervening before behaviors of concern go too far.
- Provide training to employees, students or congregants about how to identify critical indicators of behaviors. Encourage people with information to contact law enforcement immediately if an imminent threat is present.
- Anonymous reporting is only effective if people with information know how to make a report, so create posters, simple web pages, videos or postcards to be used as reminders or takeaways.

What can anonymous reporting look like?

- A web-based form or app can gather important data. Ask for who or what was seen, when it occurred, where it occurred and why it might be suspicious.
- Text-based reporting might encourage younger users.
- An anonymous call-in hotline could provide an information outlet. Make sure it is available 24/7/365 to encourage reporting at any time, not just business hours.
- Even low-tech solutions such as a physical drop-box at your facility can be effective if checked frequently.

Make sure that you have a plan in place for what to do with information once it is reported. A central data repository can help link important tips and possibly connect the dots from multiple incidents.

Did You Know?

Statistics show that a large majority of the time, one or even two people are told about a violent event before it occurs.



Social media mining defined



What if you could use public social media posts to recognize concerning behaviors or escalating problems within your organization?

Law enforcement, public health officials, company brands and school systems over the past 10 to 15 years have been using a form of social media skimming, called "mining," to gather data.

Social media mining is a rapidly emerging field. Given the huge amount of information that is shared across social media platforms every minute of the day, being able to analyze and extract patterns from this content can be extremely helpful.

How can you scan social media posts for escalating behavior problems?

- Predictive intelligence is moving quickly, and evolving technology is becoming available every day. There are many social media monitoring tools available to scan and mine social media posts. Decide what your needs are, and choose a program that can scale to your level.
- Depending on how in-depth you want to go, you can find a range of monitoring tools that cost anywhere from \$0-\$500 a month.
- You can set specific words, phrases or locations to be tagged and monitored. Your entity name and city are a few ideas. Search online or ask local

*Consider this:
Being able to analyze
and extract patterns
from social media can be
extremely helpful.*

authorities for trigger words that might be red flags.

- Some triggering phrases and actions might include: angry/threatening statements on social media such as "you/they will be sorry," odd or erratic behavior, identification with gangs or extremist networks, abusive language or cyber stalking.

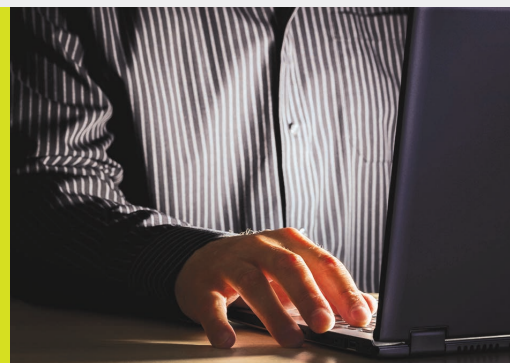
- After identifying a trigger, it's worthwhile to check the person of interest. What information can you gather about the suspicious words or phrase?
- Another sign of escalation is frequency of social media posts. If an aggravated person doesn't feel they are being heard in real life, sometimes he or she may turn to social media to post their thoughts, feelings or aggression. For example, if you see someone post 50 times in 1 day, that might be someone to check on.

Addressing the risks of engaging in social media is a daily minefield. But, with proper attention to the signs of behavior that might be escalating, there is a chance to help predict and possibly prevent criminal activity.

Policies and procedures should be developed by your organization for tracking escalating online threats to your organization. This should be included as a responsibility to be tracked by your safety committee.

Did You Know?

Many times, a person planning a violent event will post thoughts, rants or actual plans online.





Crisis communication plans can save lives

When a disaster occurs, how will you alert the people inside and around your building to the danger, and provide direction on how to respond?

Having an emergency communications plan in place allows you to provide timely information that can help keep everyone calm, and possibly save lives.

In-building considerations for crisis communication

- Use existing loudspeakers to issue an alert. Provide as much information as possible, such as the description and location of the emergency.
- Make sure all people of your organization use plain language (no code words) to communicate during an incident and are trained on your specific building procedures.

- Post signs and written information to assist visitors in finding evacuation routes and understanding your crisis plan during an emergency.
- Provide security staff and other critical personnel with two-way radios for direct communication.

Employee-wide communications for large facilities/campuses

- Use technology to issue alerts and quickly inform large groups of people of danger. Mass text messages and emails can help you reach large groups instantly.
- Consider a check-in response method to acknowledge headcounts and know how many people are accounted for — options include text message replies, an emergency smartphone app or a check-in on social media.
- Be prepared for a large load on your servers and the possibility that it could crash as people try to get information from your website.

Social media and tools to aid emergency communication

- During an event, the real-time nature of social media can be helpful to crisis teams. This is not the time to make unnecessary public communications, so keep messages short and direct and use social media only if it will help save lives.
- If you already have an app for your organization, push alerts or updates to all who have the app installed on their smartphones.
- Resources are available online from FEMA and other government agencies. You can also find consultant companies or teams, such as Firestorm, to help with crisis communications plans.

Crisis situations are uncomfortable to talk about — no one wants to believe the possibility that danger could happen nearby. Having a known communication plan in place will help control the chaos that can occur during a dangerous situation.

Did You Know?

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) highly recommends that organizations of all shapes and forms walk through different emergency scenarios to create courses of action. This process should include reviewing your emergency plan and checking your building for deficiencies.

Active assailant planning checklist

Name of facility:

Person conducting assessment:

Date:

- ▶ Has local law enforcement been asked to conduct a free "security vulnerability assessment" of your buildings and grounds as a way to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of current security practices at your facility?

☐ Satisfactory ☐ Needs Attention ☐ Not Applicable

Action to be taken _____

- ▶ Has a formal plan been developed that identifies threats to your organization, including suspicious behaviors, such as violent threats, acting out, unusual behavior, etc.

☐ Satisfactory ☐ Needs Attention ☐ Not Applicable

Action to be taken _____

- ▶ Has a reporting mechanism been developed for anonymous reporting and formal reporting of suspicious activities?

☐ Satisfactory ☐ Needs Attention ☐ Not Applicable

Action to be taken _____

- ▶ Does your security team conduct practice drills on different actions to take in response to various threats that could occur at your worship center?

☐ Satisfactory ☐ Needs Attention ☐ Not Applicable

Action to be taken _____

- ▶ Are security sweeps and observations conducted before, during and after worship center events by trained staff/volunteers to help detect potential threats involving suspicious people, packages or vehicles?

☐ Satisfactory ☐ Needs Attention ☐ Not Applicable

Action to be taken _____

- ▶ Have you established a means of communication with members, guests and employees in the event an active assailant enters your facility?

☐ Satisfactory ☐ Needs Attention ☐ Not Applicable

Action to be taken _____

- ▶ Does your program outline steps for members, guests and employees to take in the event of an active assailant event such as Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter and Evacuate?

☐ Satisfactory ☐ Needs Attention ☐ Not Applicable

Action to be taken _____

- ▶ Have rally points been established and has a communication method been developed to account for all members, guests and employees in attendance?

☐ Satisfactory ☐ Needs Attention ☐ Not Applicable

Action to be taken _____

- ▶ Have you developed a communication plan to inform the families of members affected, as well as the news media of the event?

☐ Satisfactory ☐ Needs Attention ☐ Not Applicable

Action to be taken _____

- ▶ Have you identified tasks you must complete after the event to further improve preparedness, planning, response or recovery?

☐ Satisfactory ☐ Needs Attention ☐ Not Applicable

Action to be taken _____

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