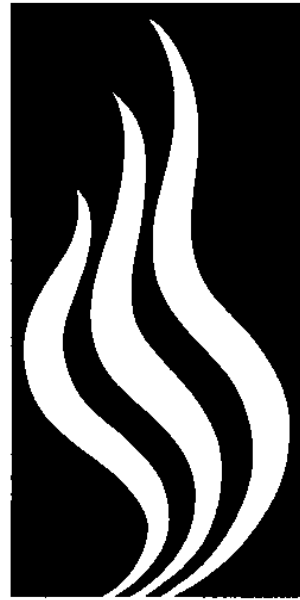


Synagogue Security



נר ה' נשמת אדם

THE
UNITED
SYNAGOGUE OF
CONSERVATIVE
JUDAISM

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Synagogue Security

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We are all painfully aware of the many acts of vandalism, theft, and terrorism which have been directed at synagogues and Jewish institutions not only in Europe and the Middle East, but in our own communities as well. Synagogues must continually remain conscious of their security needs in many areas. Basically, there are three main areas of security concerns: protection from theft and vandalism, protection from threats and terrorism, and protection from fire.

PROTECTION FROM THEFT AND VANDALISM

Statistics have shown that most break-ins are the work of amateurs. These individuals are primarily interested in cash, televisions, VCR's, computers, or any small item which could easily be sold for cash. For the most part, these amateurs choose their target based on their perception of the ease with which they can enter a facility, or the lack of risk they feel in their being caught. For this reason, even minimal security precautions can go a long way in deterring crime at your congregation.

The first step in developing a security plan is to assess the physical facilities of the congregation as well as the personal property (religious articles, office equipment, etc.) to be protected. Designate a liaison to establish a relationship with the local police and fire services. Initiate a fire reporting system. Post names and telephone numbers of contact person on or near the door for use by the fire or police departments in the event of a fire or break-in. Involve the police, fire department and your insurance agent in developing your overall security plan. In virtually every community, local and/or county law enforcement and fire officials will be happy to work with the congregation to survey the facilities and to recommend various means of protecting the property and belongings.

The following is a generalized list of major areas of consideration when developing a security plan:

1. **Exterior Lighting.** As a general rule, clean, well-lighted facilities are much more apt to be shunned by would-be vandals and thieves. All entry points should be well lit. Alleys, parking lots, walkways, etc should also be brightly lit. Motion activated lighting, which is very inexpensive, should be placed near entrances. Put signs around the property indicating you are protected by a security alarm and security service. If this is not the case, you may wish to purchase "dummy" signs that say the same thing. Statistics have shown that signs such as this are a deterrent to vandalism and crime.
2. **Exterior Paint.** Paint buildings a light color. Arsonists and burglars work mostly at night. Buildings with a dark exterior provide many hiding places for criminals.
3. **Fencing.** Whatever fencing you have should be well maintained and free of debris, boxes and weeds. Boxes and weeds provide good hiding places for intruders and attackers.
4. **Sky Lights.** Any openings in the roof or ceiling can provide access. Skylights, air conditioning vents and ventilators should be protected. Protection can be in the form of screening, motion detectors and/or alarm sensors.
5. **Fire Escapes and Emergency Exits.** These provide quick exit in an emergency, however, their neglect can lead to unwanted access as well. Make sure "panic hardware" and automatic door closers are working properly. Periodically check to insure that these exits close and lock automatically when opened. If hinge pins are on the outside of the building, remove one screw from each of the hinge faces and insert a threaded dummy bolt so that doors cannot be removed if the hinge pins are removed. Install cover plates on the outside of doors.

6. **Windows.** Windows should offer light, ventilation and visibility, but not easy access. Make sure all locks are in good working order. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the best type of window hardware has spring-loaded bolts which insert through the window frame into the wall frame. Consider grates or bars on the interior of windows. In congregation areas, make certain that they can be released from the inside, in the event the window is needed as an emergency exit. Also, look into shatterproof glass. Periodically check all window frames. The best lock will do little good if the window frame is rotten. Locks should be placed such that they cannot be reached by breaking the glass.
7. **Doors.** Exterior doors should be solid core wood or metal. Doors should close completely and, if possible, remain locked. If possible, use a positive identification system (intercom or television) to allow entrance (except, obviously for services and large programs). Maintain a written list of everyone who has keys to the building and alarm codes, if applicable. If you do not know who has keys to the building, or if a key gets lost, change or re-key the locks. Reduce the number of exterior doors with keys. It is generally not necessary to have more than one or two doors with key locks. All other doors should be equipped with dead bolts, or in assembly areas, panic hardware that will permit exiting when doors are locked.
8. **Landscaping.** Make sure trees are trimmed away from the building to prevent their use to gain access to the roof. Insure the hedges and shrubbery are well lit to prevent their use as hiding places.
9. **Interior Lighting.** Use timers and/or nightlights to make the building appear to be occupied at all times.
10. **Closing.** Check to insure that all windows and doors are secured and locked when the building is closed for the night. Develop a Maintenance Checklist for closing your building. This checklist should include every door and window to insure that someone actually locks each one on closing the building. Restrooms and other places where intruders might hide (closets, offices, etc.) should be checked immediately prior to closing. If members and/or non-maintenance staff can open the building for programs, make sure that these individuals are thoroughly familiar with security and closing procedures. If possible, seek to minimize the number of individuals who may open and close the facility.
11. **Securing of Valuables and Personal Property.** Small electronic equipment such as calculators, portable dictation equipment, etc. should be locked either in desk drawers or closets each night. Rooms which contain printing and copying equipment should all have interior locks. Typewriters, computers, monitors, printers, fax machines and small copying machines should be bolted to desks or stands. Most office supply stores carry easy to install systems for securing this equipment. All such office equipment as well as televisions, video recorders and cameras should be numbered and catalogued. Several systems are available to allow for placing permanent identification numbers on owned equipment such as computers, monitors, etc. Lists of catalogued equipment should be kept in a fireproof safe.
12. **Torahs.** Some congregations store their Torahs in a locked vault when they are not in use. If this is not feasible, and they are kept in the ark, the ark should either be capable of being locked or alarmed as part of your burglar alarm system. If the ark is alarmed, it could be a "24 hour zone" such that even when the building is open, the ark is still alarmed. A separate key or keypad is used to disarm the ark for services. Torahs should be registered with the Universal Torah registry. Information on this nonprofit organization may be found at the end of this report.

PROTECTION FROM TERRORISM AND OTHER THREATS

While the threat of a terrorist attack on a North American synagogue may seem remote, nevertheless, it is worthwhile to be aware of the potential as well as any necessary actions which may lessen the chance for problems.

The most common form of potential terrorist attack on a synagogue is the letter or parcel bomb. All individuals who handle incoming mail at the congregation should be trained to evaluate the mail for potential bombs. Instruct office staff not to open any package or mail which appears suspicious or unusual.

The International Association of Bomb Technicians and Investigators has listed the following points to look for when evaluating incoming mail:

1. Foreign Mail, Air Mail and Special Delivery
2. Restrictive Markings such as Confidential, Personal, etc.
3. Excessive Postage
4. Hand written or poorly typed addresses
5. Incorrect Titles
6. Titles but no names
7. Misspellings of common words
8. Oily stains and/or discolorations
9. No return address
10. Excessive weight
11. Rigid envelope
12. Lopsided or uneven envelope
13. Protruding wires or foil
14. Excessive securing material such as masking tape, string, etc.
15. Visual distractions

Instruct all staff to be especially cautious of ANY package left in the office or on the grounds by a person or persons who is not known to you.

The High Holy days usually get a large amount of media coverage and this time period is frequently the setting for an upsurge of disturbing incidents of vandalism and/or terrorism. Another time when the congregation could be subject to a terrorist attack is when a high profile dignitary speaks at the synagogue.

During these times, especially, it would be wise to review overall synagogue security measures and to take extra precautions to prevent unwanted acts. Here again, you should contact the Anti-Defamation League for assistance and advice.

Here are some general tips for security during these times:

1. If financially possible, hire off-duty police or private security guards.
2. If possible, do not allow any parking next to the building. Explain to everyone that this is being done for security purposes.
3. All non-necessary outside doors should remain locked. In addition, all non-necessary interior doors, such as maintenance closets, meter rooms, and offices should be kept locked. This will make it more difficult, though not impossible, for unauthorized persons to gain access to non-public areas.
4. Determine, in advance, who is the one person in charge (Executive Director, President, Rabbi, etc.) in the event of an incident (bomb threat or similar crisis). This is especially critical if the building needs to be evacuated.

5. Do not assume that any of the public speakers knows how to calmly evacuate a room. Review all possible contingencies with the speaker(s) and inform them who has been designated to announce any evacuations. This will help to avoid panic and aid in a rapid, peaceful evacuation if necessary.
6. Check with your local phone company as to any services they may have to assist you in dealing with threatening and/or harassing phone calls. Some companies offer "Caller ID" which will allow you to determine the number which is calling you. Some offer a service called "Call Trace" which allows you to trace a call after you receive it.

Incident Response and Follow Up

In the event that your congregation is involved in an incident, whether vandalism, phone harassment or threat, bomb threat or terrorist, the following is a list of suggested procedures to follow:

1. Report the incident to the police immediately. Obviously, if the situation is an emergency, Dial 911. In other situations, call the local police on a non-emergency line.
2. Retain all evidence, graffiti on building, telephone message tape, note, letter, etc. If applicable, have the specific individual who was harassed, or who took the harassing or threatening call, immediately make written notes of everything he or she can recall. Often, seemingly insignificant details can provide important clues.
3. When police come to investigate, obtain and write down the case number and the number of the investigating officer. Make sure that the police know that you are a Jewish religious institution.
4. Report any additional incidents immediately: suspicious person, phone calls, etc. Refer to the original case number when filing follow-up report(s).
5. Inform staff of any incident in a calm manner on a need-to-know-basis.
6. Assign one or two people to be in charge of any responses to the incident. Direct all questions, especially media, to those assigned.
7. If there is physical damage and/or graffiti, take several photographs from all possible angles.
8. As soon as police have had a chance to view the damage and the photographs, clean up and/or repair the damage. Vandals often take perverse pride in viewing their handiwork.
9. Notify your local Federation and the Anti-Defamation League of the incident. They will be able to assist you in dealing with this.

After the incident, you will need to make a conscious decision as to whether or not to discuss the matter with the media. It is usually unnecessary and inappropriate to notify the media on such incidents. If an incident is significant, the media will know from police reports.

If an individual is apprehended, cooperate fully with the authorities. Experience has shown that it is helpful to get word out as widely as possible that vandals will be treated as criminals and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

PROTECTION FROM FIRE

According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), arson is the leading cause of property loss due to fire. Over a half million arson fires, including 100,000 building fires cost our nation more than \$2 billion annually and kill over 700 people. One-fourth of all fires are arson and over one-half are set by juveniles. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), arson is the leading cause of fires in religious institutions. While a fire may be set for a number of reasons, the NFPA reports that in religious institutions, vandalism or covering up for another crime such as burglary are the most common reasons.

Fire can be a devastating problem for any facility, especially synagogues. There are many things you can do to prevent fires from occurring or to lessen the damage should they occur. All of the precautions listed above in the section on vandalism are vital in the protection against arson as well.

Many of the policies governing fire prevention and/or alarm systems are contained in your local Fire Prevention Codes. If not already required by law, you should schedule an inspection of your facility by your local fire department. They will be able to guide you in setting up procedures to reduce the risk of fire and to minimize the damage should a fire occur. Many fire departments schedule yearly familiarization tours of larger commercial properties so that all fire fighters are familiar with the layout of the building(s) as well as access, location of electrical panels, fire safety equipment, etc. If this is not already being done in your location, see if you can arrange for such a visit.

Faulty wiring is the second most common cause of fires in religious institutions. Many synagogue building are old. Consequently, the wiring in these buildings may not be adequate to handle electrical demands of air conditioning, P.A. systems, organs, and other appliances and equipment found in synagogues today. If your building is more than 30 years old, you should probably have the wiring inspected by a qualified electrical contractor.

Other common causes of synagogue fires are lightning, faulty furnaces and stoves, carelessness with smoking materials and careless use of candles. Another cause of fires is from exposure. Exposure fires, those originating outside and spreading to your building can be caused by a number of things. Certainly the fire that spreads to your building from another building is a circumstance beyond your control, however, you can eliminate the most common causes of exposure fires with a bit of common sense. The Security Inspection Check List at the end of this pamphlet provides a number of items to look for.

Preventing a fire from starting is the best protection you can provide your synagogue. To make your fire prevention program most effective, you should consider it an ongoing effort. For instance, you should make a quick tour of your building interior once a month. Look for places where a fire might start—in piles of old rags, overloaded electrical sockets, etc. It just takes a moment to remedy the situations—and cut down your chances for a serious fire.

At the end of this booklet is a handy checklist you can use when inspecting your facility.

Your congregation should have a plan to follow in case of fire. Diagram your fire exit routes and post these throughout the facility. Make sure there is an alternate or secondary exit and that these are clearly marked.

If a Fire Should Occur

Warn everyone to leave the building.

Have someone call a fire department.

If it is a small fire contained to the area where it started, use the nearest fire extinguisher, making sure it's the proper type. With your back toward a safe escape route, aim the extinguisher at the base of the fire and sweep from side to side. Discharge the entire contents of the extinguisher.

If you have the slightest doubt whether or not you should attempt to fight the fire—get out! Let the fire department handle it—they are professionals.

If you've chosen not to fight the fire, conduct a head count once safely outside. See how many people are accounted for. **DO NOT REENTER THE BUILDING.** Inform the fire department of any missing people and let them conduct rescue operations.

Have the fire department call an ambulance for anyone injured.

As soon as practical, contact your insurance agent. This will help you get the fastest fair risk settlement of medical claims and property damage.

ALARM SYSTEMS

While a complete and thorough discussion of every aspect involved in purchasing an alarm system for your congregation is beyond the scope of this pamphlet, there are a few things to be considered when doing your research. With regard to fire alarms, local and national building codes will determine the type of system as well as the various components which will be necessary for your particular application. With burglar alarm systems, you'll probably have a lot more flexibility.

Regardless of which type of alarm you are considering, be sure to get several competing bids, and make sure that all bids are for the same equipment. Your local fire department will probably have someone who will be able to assist you in developing the specific needs for your congregation with regard to fire alarms. Local alarm companies should be able to provide you with various alternative ways to protect your facility.

Make sure you deal with a reputable, licensed alarm company. There are many individuals around who can install alarm equipment, however, they may or may not be around to provide service when you need it. In addition, they may not be the ones who "monitor" your system. When you are shopping for an alarm system, find out who will actually be monitoring your system. It may be advantageous to have the company that installs your alarm also provide the actual monitoring service. In this case, if there are problems, you are only dealing with one company. In addition, determine what the monitoring company's procedure is in the event of an alarm. Some companies automatically call the police whenever they receive an alarm. Other companies will call a contact individual before notifying the police. Since many communities charge for excessive false alarms, be sure that your company will notify you before calling the police.

SECURITY INSPECTION CHECK LIST

STRUCTURAL

- All exit doors open outward, with no locks or fasteners to prevent free escape from the inside of the building.
- Keep exits free of obstruction at all times.
- Make sure all exits are clearly marked with lighted signs.
- Have any remodeling, additions, or repairs inspected by the Fire Marshal for compliance with local fire codes.
- If your facility is undergoing repairs, remodeling, or painting, make sure workmen are following fire safety procedures. Blow torches, painter's rags, and roofer's pot can be fire hazards.
- Have your furnace cleaned and professionally inspected once a year. Late summer or early fall is the best time—before the heating season.
- The walls and ceiling of the furnace should be lined with a fire-resistant material such as concrete block or fire code sheet rock.
- The furnace room should be lined with a fire-resistant material or be replaced with a UL-approved fire door.
- Keep furnace door closed at all times. If you have a counter weight closure, it should be enclosed in a shaft.

HOUSEKEEPING

- Be careful with combustible decorations, especially around the holidays. Keep flimsy paper and cloth decorations away from light bulbs, wiring, and other sources of heat or flame.
- Make sure all upholstery, draperies, and furnishings are fire-retardant fabrics.
- Use candles in your synagogue only when absolutely necessary. Otherwise, try to use safe candle-type light bulbs. While a bit of the symbolic nature is lost, a large measure of safety is gained.
- If your congregation uses an organ, check frequently to make sure it is turned off. If left on, the motor can overheat or short out, causing a serious fire hazard.
- Consider making your facility a "smoke-free" facility. If you must permit smoking, designate a special area for it and provide an adequate number of safety-type ashtrays. Check ashtrays often for smoldering ashes or matches.
- Cleanup debris from social gatherings on the same day and place in proper receptacles outside of the building.
- Don't use the heating room for storage of combustibles.
- Don't keep any gasoline or gasoline operated equipment on premises unless they are in a well-vented, fire-resistive enclosure.
- Keep kitchen ventilating hood filters clean and free of accumulated grease.
- Kitchen stove burners should be maintained in good condition. They should ignite as soon as the gas is turned on.

ELECTRICAL

- If your facility uses fuses, check your fuse box to be sure you are using the proper fuse for each circuit and that all circuits are identified on the fuse box cover.
- If your facility uses circuit breakers, check the breaker box to insure that the breakers are in proper working order and that all circuits are identified on the breaker box cover.
- Inspect all electrical cords and extension cords now in use. Get rid of any frayed, cracked, or dried-out cords.
- See that all junction boxes and switch boxes are properly covered.

- ___ Check all major appliances—refrigerators, water coolers, stoves, air conditioners, etc., for proper connections and grounding.
- ___ Make sure all wall sockets and light switches are equipped with faceplates.

EXPOSURE FIRES

- ___ If your facility has a lightning rod system, inspect it to insure rods are properly in place. Wires should run unbroken into the ground, attached to ground rods sunk 8 to 10 feet into the ground.
- ___ Be careful when burning leaves, grass, or trash. Don't do it near your building or in the presence of hazardous conditions such as severe dry spell or high winds.
- ___ Make sure your roof is fire-retardant.
- ___ Keep your yards clean, free from piles of leaves and rubbish. This way, vandals have less fuel to start a fire, too.
- ___ Remove birds' nests from chimneys. You can prevent birds from re-building with wire mesh across the openings.
- ___ Keep chimneys cleaned, free of such and other obstructions.

FIRE EXTINGUISHING EQUIPMENT

- ___ Your facility should have at least one fire extinguisher for every 2,500 square feet with a minimum of one extinguisher on each level of your building. Consult your local fire department to see if local laws require more.
- ___ Place extinguishers in conspicuous, easy-to-reach locations. There should be no more than 75 feet of travel to reach an extinguisher.
- ___ The top of any heavy extinguisher should not be more than five feet above the floor.
- ___ Operating instructions must be clearly legible. If an extinguisher is in a cabinet, place it so that instruction face outward.
- ___ Employees and others who are regularly at your congregation should be familiar with operating instructions so no time is wasted reading them during a fire.
- ___ Extinguishers should be inspected monthly by an employee or other trained person. Keep a record on each inspection. Many local codes require periodic inspections by a licensed fire safety company. Records of these inspections are kept on a tag permanently attached to the extinguisher.
- ___ Take corrective action if there are any signs of tampering or damage.

Helpful Resources

1. Church Mutual Insurance Co. - 3000 Schuster Lane, Merrill, Wisconsin 54452 – (800) 542-3465
2. Arson Prevention Clearing House – (888) 603-3100
3. Federal Emergency Management Agency –16825 South Seton Avenue – Emmitsburg, MD 21727
4. International Association of Arson Investigators – 300 South Broadway, Suite 100, St. Louis, MO 63102 (314) 621-1966
5. Department of the Treasury, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, Washington, DC 20226
6. “Security First: Guidelines” prepared by the Public Affairs Department of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism
7. Universal Torah Registry, Inc. – 1320 Stony Brook Road, Stony Brook, NY 11790