

# Security Guidelines for Church Meetings and Events (United States and Canada)

October 10, 2019

THE CHURCH OF  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

---

## 1. Purpose

The following guidelines are intended to help leaders and members remain safe and be prepared for and respond to security incidents on Church property or at Church events. Leaders are encouraged to discuss these guidelines in ward and stake councils and to use them to train members, as needed, to address local conditions or concerns.

Emphasize the objectives of staying calm, educating members on safety guidelines, and trusting in the Lord for guidance and safety.

Direct any questions about these guidelines or about providing security training to members, specialized security assignments, or security incidents to leaders and to the Church Security Department (1-801-240-2661; toll free at 1-844-537-7000). For questions that are not urgent, email the Church's Global Security Operations Center at [gsoc@ChurchofJesusChrist.org](mailto:gsoc@ChurchofJesusChrist.org).

## 2. Use Local Law Enforcement to Deal with Security Incidents

In an emergency, call 911 immediately. Leaders and Church members are to rely on local law enforcement to deal with security incidents and emergencies at Church facilities and at Church-sponsored events.

After a serious incident has been controlled, report it to leaders and to the Church's 24-hour Global Security Operations Center (1-801-240-2661; toll free at 1-844-537-7000).

Following a serious security incident, leaders should refer affected individuals to Family Services or another competent counselor for professional counseling. Leaders may inform members of the security precautions taken according to these guidelines and counsel together about additional precautions that may be needed.

## 3. Keeping Everyone Safe at Church Facilities

Implementing the practices listed below will increase safety.

### *Guidance for Church Members*

- Always follow the promptings of the Holy Ghost.
- Be aware of your surroundings. Know what belongs and what doesn't seem normal. If you find yourself in a situation (meeting, interview, activity, and so on) that doesn't feel right, remove yourself from the situation and call the appropriate leader or law enforcement.
- Be friendly to those visiting Church meetings; however, if you observe any behavior out of the ordinary, inform local leaders or law enforcement.
- Report suspicious activity in or around Church buildings. Focus on the person's behavior (is it dangerous or alarming), not appearance.
- Avoid being alone in Church buildings. Leaders instruct members—*especially women and*

## Security Guidelines for Church Meetings and Events (United States and Canada)

October 10, 2019

Page 2 of 4

*youth*—not to be alone in Church buildings (see *Handbook 1: Stake Presidents and Bishops* [ChurchofJesusChrist.org], 8.3.5).

- Make sure the parking lot is safe before exiting your vehicle. Lock vehicles in the parking lot. Keep personal items—including bags, electronic devices, and garage door openers—out of sight. Avoid being alone in the parking lot.
- When leaving the building, check your surroundings for anything suspicious before returning to your vehicle.
- Do not enter a building that appears to have been broken into or vandalized. Call law enforcement and the appropriate priesthood leader to report the incident.
- Do not leave packages, briefcases, backpacks, or bags unattended. Do not touch suspicious bags or packages. Report suspicious items to priesthood leaders.
- Keep Church information secure. Avoid taking photographs of sensitive locations (such as offices), posting anyone's personal information, or sharing interview schedules online, except through approved Church resources for this information.
- Know the location of fire alarms and building exits, and know the building's emergency evacuation procedures.

### ***Additional Guidance for Leaders***

- Contact Church Security to discuss solutions for specific security needs.
- Conduct interviews according to instructions in *Handbook 1*, 7.4. If you feel the person to be interviewed poses a potential security problem, consider cancelling the interview or invite another adult into the interview if appropriate.
- Lock the bishop's and stake president's offices and clerks' offices when not occupied.
- Make sure all computers are logged off or locked when not in use. Do not store passwords in places where others can easily find them (for example, under the keyboard).
- Ensure proper key control measures are in place and followed (see *Handbook 1*, 8.3.5). Report lost or stolen keys immediately. Each night, check to be sure that the Church building is empty and locked.
- In locations where the risk is higher, it may be advisable to have a male (or two, depending on local conditions) walking the parking lot or Church property during Church activities in order to communicate a security presence. In such cases, if confronted, leaders should avoid conflict over issues involving property.
- If there is repeated criminal activity at the building or in the area, consider leaving lobby lights on and keeping all but the necessary entrances as a deterrent.
- Take seriously any threat to persons or property and report threats to local law enforcement. In some instances, Church Security and legal counsel can pursue legal means to keep individuals

## Security Guidelines for Church Meetings and Events (United States and Canada)

October 10, 2019

Page 3 of 4

off Church property.

- Ensure members understand the directions provided in these guidelines and know how to respond appropriately.

### 4. Weapons at Church Facilities

“Churches are dedicated for the worship of God and as havens from the cares and concerns of the world. With the exception of current law enforcement officers, carrying lethal weapons on Church property, concealed or otherwise, is prohibited” (*Handbook 1*, 8.4.5; *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* [ChurchofJesusChrist.org], 21.2.4).

### 5. Responding to a Disruptive Person in a Church Meeting

If a serious or dangerous disruption is occurring on Church property or at a Church-sponsored event, call law enforcement. When the situation is under control, notify your leader and the Church Security Department.

If a person becomes disruptive during a Church meeting:

- Be respectful, speak calmly and with self-control, and respect his or her personal space. Do not touch the person.
- If the individual is at the pulpit, turn off the microphone.
- Explain to the individual that his or her behavior is inappropriate in this setting. Ask them to stop and leave. You may also invite them to meet with a leader in the foyer.
- If the person refuses to leave and continues to cause a disturbance, dismiss the meeting.
- Do not attempt to physically restrain or remove the person.
- If the person has been asked to leave Church property, but refuses, inform him or her that law enforcement may be notified, and he or she may be arrested for trespassing.

These guidelines apply regardless of where the disruption occurs (at the pulpit, in the congregation, on the stand, and so on) and can be adapted as needed for all meetings, classes, and other Church events or activities.

### 6. Responding to an Armed Intruder or Active Shooter

#### *Armed Intruder*

If an intruder threatens to use a weapon, comply with the person’s demands. Do not provoke the intruder by arguing or acting defiant or confrontational. If the intruder demands cash, including donations, give the intruder what he or she demands without hesitation.

After the intruder leaves, call law enforcement immediately. When time permits, notify your leader and the Church Security Department.

## Security Guidelines for Church Meetings and Events (United States and Canada)

October 10, 2019

Page 4 of 4

### *Active Shooter or Other Active Assailant*

If an active shooter or other active assailant enters the building, do one of the following, based on the circumstances:

**Run.** Flee immediately if a safe path is available. Move quickly to the safest exit and away from the building to a safe location. Exit quietly, without drawing the attention of the assailant. Adults are to ensure all children are supervised and accounted for. Do not return to the building or to an office or classroom for personal items. Do not carry anything that could be mistaken for a weapon by responding law enforcement.

**Hide.** If you are unable to escape safely, hide out of sight of the assailant's view. If possible, close, lock, and barricade the doors to the classrooms, offices, or other rooms where you are hiding. Turn out the lights, silence mobile phones, and keep low to the floor and away from windows. If there is an exchange of gunfire between law enforcement and the assailant, everyone in the building is to stay in their barricaded rooms until instructed otherwise by law enforcement.

**Fight.** As a last resort, if there is no time to run or hide, fight back against the assailant. Use anything available as a weapon, and fight to stop the assailant. If others are present, organize to defend yourselves.