

SYNAGOGUE SECURITY TOOL KIT[®]

**A Hands-on Guide To
Preventive Safety For
Your Congregation**

PRODUCED BY HERUT NORTH AMERICA

Herut North America is an educational/activist organization that is affiliated with the American Zionist Movement.

Herut North America maintains branches in the United States and Canada, and is part of the World Herut Movement.

► **TO GET YOUR COPY, PLEASE EMAIL TO
office@herutna.org**



Create A Safer Synagogue. Today.

Starting a safety and security program at your synagogue doesn't have to be complicated or costly— and it's vitally important to do what you can. Many synagogues don't know where to start, or think that a huge budget is necessary to develop a security plan or security team. There are many things synagogues can do right now that are low cost or no cost.

Whether or not the decision to employ armed professional security guards work does not stop there.

Is your leadership motivated to make changes today? It's possible to make quick, meaningful changes. Jump-start your plan with these eight, do-it-today action steps:

1. Assign roles.

In an emergency, determine who will call 911, who will talk to authorities, and who will talk to the media. Assign backups for each role.

2. Identify trained professionals within the synagogue membership.

Look for trained medical professionals, current or former law enforcement officers, and members with military and/or security backgrounds.

3. Invest in two-way radios.

Two-way radios eliminate spotty cell service and scrambling to locate a list of internal phone numbers. Ushers, gabays, day care workers, and office staff equipped with two-way radios can relay information quickly throughout the building or campus.

4. Create a single entrance into the synagogue.

Assign a gabay, usher, or team member to lock doors once services begin. Any unlocked doors should be actively monitored by at least two people. The main entrance team should be comprised of at least three people and should be stationed outside. Consider having one of the three people at the main entrance hold a handheld metal detector as a deterrent. All other entrances should be inaccessible from the outside of your synagogue. Ensure that the exit doors remain unlocked from the inside.

5. Monitor doors and parking lots.

During services, assign two volunteers to monitor each unlocked door and two volunteers for the parking lot. Equip your volunteers with two-way radios.

6. Draw attention to the exits.

This may seem obvious, but in an emergency, it's easy to forget about side or back exits. Start your message this weekend by pointing out all exits to your congregants.

7. Ask, "what if it happened here, G-d forbid?"

Schedule a leadership or staff meeting to spur discussion. Make this an ongoing, formal conversation.

8. Knowing is half the battle.

Invite local law enforcement, a fire marshal, ambulance service, or your insurance agent to your campus to identify trouble spots. They'll help you better understand potential risks and offer solutions to help you create a safer synagogue environment.

You've come this far...are you willing to do more?

Capitalize on your momentum. By working these additional five steps, your synagogue can be ready to respond to just about any emergency:

- Overcome objections and fear. Engage leadership in deeper discussions.
- Take a closer look at the unique aspects of your ministry and buildings.
- Ask, "what does success look like?" Map a strategy to bring your vision to life.
- Recruit, screen, and train a safety and security team that's ministry-minded and calm; formalize the role of each team member.
- Create a plan that addresses all relevant emergencies.

If that sounds daunting, know that help is available. Contact Herut today.

Also, visit the Orthodox Union's website at <https://www.ou.org/security/> for information about the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's "Nonprofit Security Grant Program" which many synagogues have utilized to make their synagogues safer.

Developing a Security Plan for Your Synagogue

Here are some of the things you will need to consider when getting started with your security plan:

An Onsite Survey:

This is an important first step to see where your building is the most vulnerable to an attack and what can be done to prepare for the worst. Ask for the police to assign an officer to walk through your facility with the team leaders and point out any important considerations that you may need to address. A worksheet is included in this booklet to use when conducting onsite surveys.

A Standard Operating Procedure (SOP):

If you fail to plan, you plan to fail. You cannot wait until an emergency to make your plan, so it is important to get an established plan in writing and make your security team members familiar with this plan.

Organizing A Security Team:

This starts with choosing the right people and ensuring that they are as prepared as possible. Host a meeting with individuals who have shown concern for security and review this booklet. This can be a great opportunity for people who are interested in protecting the synagogue to enjoy being comfortable with one another while raising their skill level and meeting the standards set forth by the SOP.

Self-Defense / Training:

We recommend that the security team members be required to obtain their NRA (National Rifle Association) basic pistol certification, and also take the NRA developed courses “Personal Protection in the Home” and “Personal Protection Outside the Home” as well as demonstrate proficiency to the level required by law enforcement officers in your state and/or municipality. A goal should be to have each member have a current concealed handgun permit to serve as a verification that they have passed a background check and demonstrated a basic understanding of the skills and laws required to carry a concealed handgun in your state and /or municipality. These requirements will help reduce your liability greatly and each member will gain a much better appreciation for the responsibility they have to the congregation’s members and the community.

Synagogue Security Team Planning:

1. Conduct a risk assessment on the synagogue's stance on topics, location, and structural characteristics. It is probably best if you have a professional security consultant specializing in building security conduct this assessment.
2. Create documentation such as written job descriptions, team policies and procedures. Please note that you might not be able to effectively do all of this without proper training because odds are you don't have a great overall picture of what this effort will entail. So, part of this step might actually develop after initial training.
3. Get approval from synagogue leadership at all levels.
4. Select security team members.
5. Acquire necessary equipment (you may not have a full understanding of all of the equipment that you need at this point and that is okay).
6. Train team members directly and/or have members obtain training.
7. Meet with local law enforcement and fire departments.
8. Provide necessary safety / security training to youth group leaders, school staff, etc.
9. Introduce security initiative and the security team to the synagogue community as a whole.
10. Begin operations.

Sample Security Team Daily Checklist for Shabbat, Yom Tov, and Special Events

1. Roll Call of security team members
2. Intel updates (anything that could be a potential threat such or change in service schedule, etc.)
3. Team assignments (positioning of personnel)
4. Changes in team schedule for the day
5. Weapons and flashlight check
6. Radio sync and check
7. Sweep sanctuary and social hall for hidden weapons, IED's, and anything at all out of the ordinary
8. Check doors
9. Children's area sweep
10. Start and maintain parking lot patrol rotation
11. Lock up facility and then check every room and closet to make sure everyone is out of the building
12. Meet to review events of the day

Synagogue Security & Safety Assessment / Onsite Survey Worksheet

Outside

_____ Trees and Shrubs: All shrubs and trees are trimmed to reduce hiding places for persons and easy access to roof or upper floors.

_____ Signage: Signs are present showing locations for entry; to include beit midrash, chapel, sanctuary, women's section (Ezras Nashim), and office location for visitors during week.

_____ Signage: Signs are present to direct visitors to proper location to ensure they are welcomed properly.

_____ Fire escapes: Exits are properly labeled AND access is open and easy to reach.

_____ Equipment: Equipment is secured if left in the open.

_____ Equipment: All equipment stored outside or in storage facilities is secured properly and inventoried with serial numbers and photos.

_____ Lighting: Sufficient lighting is present at all entrances, parking areas and walkways.

_____ Lighting: Exterior lighting is vandal proof.

_____ Lighting: Motion sensitive at appropriate locations.

_____ Doors/Windows: Doors and windows are up to date with latest available security updates in place and in good working order.

_____ Outside Check System: Documented weekly check off inspection system in place to ensure the safety of those attending services and events. This should include: no graffiti or controversial items are present, no suspicious items, trash removed, and playground equipment safe and free from items that are health hazards. Checks should be completed prior to day's planned activities.

_____ Line of sight: Views are free of obstruction from inside to parking lots, play grounds, walkways and are all visible from entry doors.

_____ Staff parking: If parking for staff is identified ensure it is easily observable from entry doors. (If not designated ensure safety team is aware of vehicles driven by staff members.)

_____ Law Enforcement: Familiar with property, included in safety/security planning.

_____ Law Enforcement: Provide police with up to date emergency contact information.

____ Neighbor watch: Ensure neighbors have emergency contact information for key personnel in case of an emergency or observance of suspicious activity.

____ Security Cameras: If cameras are present, ensure that they are working properly and signage is present if warranted to discourage crime or other unwanted activities.

Inside

____ Lighting: Entryways are well lit along with all hallways.

____ Lighting: Lighting has been updated with motion sensors in key areas to prevent unwanted activities.

____ Lighting: Key locations lighted during overnight.

____ Access: Hallways are clear and not used for storage.

____ Classrooms: Easy entry and viewing from outside of room.

____ Classrooms: Lockable from inside in case of trouble.

____ Child care areas: Locked down and be sure to include outside playground areas.

____ Sanctuary and/or chapel: Ensure walkthrough is completed prior to each service; during the walkthrough you are looking for suspicious items.

____ Alarm system: If alarmed, ensure equipment is fully updated and functioning.

____ Entry doors: Locks changed or rekeyed to ensure limited access.

____ Key control: Master keys are numbered and limited to key personnel.

____ Inventory: Record serial numbers and/or photos of equipment and store information both on and off site. Consider some type of engraving on some items.

____ Fraud prevention: System of checks and balances in place to detect any suspicious fraudulent activities.

____ Facility Map: Diagram of building and locations of classrooms posted for easy viewing for those assisting visitors and for emergency responders.

____ Medical / First Aid: Equipment up to date with items needed and easily accessible with adequate signage on location.

_____ Medical: Up to date list of available medical personnel who are members should be easily accessible for the security teams use.

_____ Law Enforcement: Local law enforcement and fire department have a blueprint/floor plan/classroom locations of facility.

Additional questions to ask:

_____ Do our members feel safe?

_____ Do our visitors feel welcome?

_____ Does synagogue staff feel confident that any issues will be handled properly by team members?

_____ Do we have a crisis management plan in place and does everyone understand their role?

_____ What needs were found in the assessment and where do we start?

Self-Defense Tips While Walking To / From Synagogue

When it comes to your safety while walking to and from synagogue, it's important to stay alert.

Here are some tips to remember and to share with your synagogue's members.

Remember the basic rules:

1. Strength in numbers.
2. Sound is your friend.
3. Awareness is the key.

When walking alone or with others, during day or night, try to think of these tips:

Avoid dark areas that are not populated with other people if possible.

Do not be alone if possible. Those who are looking to rob or kill are looking for the least resistant target.

If you think someone is following you, continue to look back at them to let them know you are suspicious. If they become aware that you are on to them they may abandon their plans.

If a driver stops to ask you directions, avoid getting too close to the car – you could be pulled inside.

Whether in a parking lot or coming and going from your residence, always have your head up, your phone away, and your keys ready to enter your car or home. This is a time that you are most vulnerable.

MOST IMPORTANT: Enroll in a short term basic self-defense course such as Krav Maga. While you do not have to be a black belt to defend yourself, you do need to learn and master a few basic striking and self-defense techniques to use to fight in case you need to.

Further Tips:

Look confident, not scared – it's important to give off the vibe that you are confident. Stand tall and walk calmly. Don't let them sense your vulnerability.

Make wide turns around corners – by taking wide corners on sidewalks and around cars you can reduce the opportunities that criminals can have to ambush you. Give yourself more time to react to potential threats.

Turn off the music and put your phone away but keep it easily accessible. Avoid using your mobile phone or listening to music. Distractions can make you extremely vulnerable. Be careful to direct your full attention to your surroundings and stay attentive.

Avoid untraveled paths and stay on main roads or well-lit paths. Avoid dark alleys or isolated areas. Staying in sight of traveled roads and paths to increase the chances of witnesses if something does happen and to deter potential attackers.