FB-ISAO Newsletter

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FB-ISAO Physical Threat Level:
Severe

FB-ISAO has assessed the general Physical Threat Level for US Faith-Based Organizations as **“SEVERE.”** As per FB-ISAO’s definitions of the Physical Threat Levels, **“SEVERE”** means that an event is highly likely.

FB-ISAO Cyber Threat Level:
Guarded

FB-ISAO has assessed the general Cyber Threat Level for US Faith-Based Organizations as **“GUARDED.”** As per FB-ISAO’s definitions of the Cyber Threat Levels, **“GUARDED”** means FB-ISAO is unaware of any specific events, but a general risk of incidents exists.

Stories

Guide Available to Assist Houses of Worship with Mitigating Attacks

It is estimated that there are 300,000 Houses of Worship (HoWs) in the U.S. and the reality is that in each of those facilities the threat of targeted violence is real.

Between 2009 and 2019, there were 37 incidents of targeted violence in HoWs where 64 people lost their lives and another 59 people suffered injuries. The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) has released a security Guide for *Mitigating Attacks on Houses of Worship*. From the Guide, “Acts of targeted violence against houses of worship are a real—and potentially growing—problem in the United States and a top priority for the. As the Nation’s risk advisor, CISA has prepared this Guide based on original analysis to help houses of worship develop a comprehensive security strategy to mitigate future incidents.”

This comprehensive Guide covers a lot of ground including understanding the problem, building resilience and protecting facilities. From the Guide, “The bottom line is that houses of worship can best protect themselves by adopting a comprehensive and multi-layered security strategy.” The Guide also includes some recommendations:

-Establish a multi-layered plan for security, identifying clear roles and responsibilities for developing and implementing security measures.
-Create emergency action plans, business continuity plans, and incident response plans that are well communicated and exercised with the Safety Team for complete understanding.
-Conduct a vulnerability assessment to understand the risks to the house of worship from which you may prioritize implementing any subsequent safety measures.
-Build community readiness and resilience by establishing an organizational culture of caring where all members and visitors are properly supported, and credible threats are reported through previously identified channels.
-Apply physical security measures to monitor and protect the outer, middle, and inner perimeters, while respecting the purpose of each area of the house of worship.
-Focus on the safety of children by implementing safety measures around childcare, daycare, and schools.
-Implement cybersecurity best practices to safeguard important information and prevent a potential cyberattack.

L. Scott Parker, Advanced Threats Security Branch Chief at CISA said, “by sharing best practices with each other, faith-based organizations can improve their overall security.” FB-ISAO provides a collaborative platform that allows members to share best practices. Further, joining security-focused peers on FB-ISAO’s local Information Sharing Communities allows organizations to develop a community-based approach to resiliency. CISA has recently released numerous resources to assist faith-based organizations (FBOs) with improving their security posture. In addition to products, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) established the Faith-Based Security Advisory Council which “provides advice and recommendations to the Secretary and other senior leadership on matters related to protecting houses of worship, preparedness and enhanced coordination with the faith community.”

The Mitigating Attacks on Houses of Worship Guide outlines some statistics related to behavioral indicators. Scott Parker noted that over 50% of perpetrators engaged in some type of pre-attack planning behavior. FBOs must build a “culture of reporting” coupled with a process that takes reported information and evaluates it for the purpose of taking action based on suspicious behaviors. Scott Parker said, “a welcoming environment does not mean a defenseless one.” The Guide and the accompanying fact sheet are available here.

FB-ISAO Advisory Board

Get to Know the Board of Advisors

Contact Us

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www.faithbased-isao.org

Not Yet a Member of FB-ISAO?

How to join…

Not Yet on FB-ISAO Slack - You Need to Be!

Write to membership

Upcoming FB-ISAO Events

Monthly Threat Brief	26 January
Member On-Boarding	19 February

Houses of Worship Security Self-Assessment

From the tool description, "This tool is designed to guide personnel at houses of worship through a security-focused self-assessment to understand potential vulnerabilities and identify options for consideration in mitigating those vulnerabilities. This self-assessment is a first step in building an effective security program; it is not intended to be an in-depth security assessment. After completing this process and addressing preliminary findings, houses of worship personnel may consider pursuing more detailed security assessments to explore specific issues in greater detail."

The tool walks the user through sections:

- Security Emergency Management
- Security Force
- Perimeter Security / Delineation
- Parking and Barriers
- Access Control / Easy Control
- Close Circuit Video / Video Surveillance Programs

The tool will create a list of action items as well as provide the user with the ability to create a formatted report.

The useful tool is available here: https://www.cisa.gov/houses-of-worship. Questions can be directed to: CIOCC.Physical@cisa.dhs.gov.

Spotlight: Grant Town Hall Re-Cap

The Grants Town Hall was a great success!

> *"Once again, an awesome job and great event! Thanks for sharing all these resources with the faith-based community."*
>
> *"That was a great webinar and great gov't speakers, thank you!"*

Members of FB-ISAO have access to a recording of the event. To access the recording, join the #grants channel on the FB-ISAO Slack workspace. The recording is pinned to that channel.

During the event, members shared some best practices. Below are some highlights from those shares:

- Start early – don't wait for the grant application window to open to start the process.
- Review previous years' grant documents.
- Get your vulnerability assessment done now.
- Lean on your community, find a mentor, review a winning application from a neighboring FBO.
- Make sure that the recommendations from the vulnerability assessments are understandable to you and your community.
- Create a team that will manage the whole process.
- Leave room for unaccounted costs like expanded internet capability or the need to boost your electrical panel. Take into account on-going maintenance costs.

Thank you to our partners at FEMA and CISA for their participation!