



2020 Hostile Events Preparedness (HEPS) Workshop Exercise Series Findings Brief

About the Workshop Series

With notable attacks on people and places of faith, many organizations need to continue to better understand their threat environment and what responsible security measures might be taken. While each place of worship will need to create a preparedness system that best suits its individual resources, culture, and comfort level, there are concrete steps Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) can take to enhance security.

The 2020 Hostile Event Preparedness (HEPS) Workshop Series provided a forum for faith-based and charity organizations to enhance their threat awareness and preparedness relating to potential physical attacks at their facilities. The use of a hostile events scenario was used to provide participants an opportunity to interact with one another through a facilitated discussion, and to identify best practices, opportunities for improvement, and salient points of concern. [Learn more about the workshop objectives.](#)

About This Document

To benefit the Faith-Based Community, FB-ISAO produced the HEPS Workshop Series After Action Report, with the purpose of aggregating findings accrued during workshop series discussions and observations. This document, the Series’ Final Findings Report Brief, is a high-level overview that provides the top five best practices revealed during the workshop series.

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Stakeholder Participation Snapshot

2020 HEPS Workshop Locations						
Location	Type	Duration	Date(s)	Participants		
				FBO	Observers	Total
Orlando Florida	In-Person	One-Day (7 hour)	19 Feb.	19	10	29
Virginia	Virtual	Three-Day (3 hr. per)	13-15 Oct.	19	18	37
Virginia	Virtual	Three-Day (3 hr. per)	21-23 Oct.	25	6	31

Suggested Best Practices

1) Layered Defense

A layered approach to security during all events was received by all as a best practice and an easy to implement action. Layered security, or “Defense in Depth,” is important because it facilitates the possible detection of hostile attackers and the usage of preventative measures to protect FBOs. This concept was brought up repeatedly and with consistent agreement. Examples included expanded perimeters, choke points of entry and physical obstructions such as bollards.

2) Evacuation and Response

Clearly identifying ingress, egress, and assembly areas and ensuring they are known to responders and staff is important and can greatly improve response. Use of these designated routes and points helps first responders and congregational security staff in allocating and positioning resources as rapidly as possible

3) Strengthen Hometown Security Relationships

FBOs should leverage and strengthen hometown security relationships among local community leaders, law enforcement (LE), fusion centers and other local FBOs. Great value was placed in working with other FBOs in the geographical area to include leadership and security staff from different denominations and faiths. Sharing information through networks such as FB-ISAO helps to identify needs and improve overall preparedness.

4) Build Security into Safety Plans

Numerous participants found that building security into their Safety Operations Plan tends to gain leadership buy-in for security. An independent hostile attack plan proved less desirable as it might not garner the attention desired. Participants agreed on the need to establish a more holistic approach to the development and implementation of safety and security plans and procedures.

5) Realistic Training

Emphasis was made that threats and hazards training, in general, should be realistic and appropriate. Such training should include LE / and FBO safety teams. Participants agreed that this training would be particularly important for potential active shooter incidents and mob violence. Exercises and training should, if practicable, periodically encompass all functions of support. Exercising with response organizations such as LE and fire services will improve effectivity and safety of the congregants, staff, and emergency responders. The workshop series highlighted the availability of numerous training and exercise resources specific for use by FBOs.

6) Identify and Handle Suspicious Activity

It was highly suggested that training should also include “gate keepers” for situational awareness in identifying suspicious activity and how to engage such threat actors. Ushers, security staff, and other personnel are better positioned to intercept and contain potential threats when properly trained.

Want More Information?

For a full list of best practices, as well as areas of improvement and enduring challenges noted by workshop participants, consult the FB-ISAO 2020 Hostile Events Preparedness (HEPS) Workshops Exercise Series After Action Report. To obtain a copy of the report, contact FB-ISAO at info@faithbased-isao.org.

If interested in hosting or participating in one of our future workshops, contact FB-ISAO’s Executive Director, Mayya Saab at mayya@faithbased-isao.org.