

TLP: CLEAR

Vehicle Threats



Recent incidents demonstrate that vehicles remain a flexible tool for threats. They can be used to ram buildings or crowds, deliver explosives, breach access points, and rapidly turn public movement areas into attack sites. While these incidents differ in motive, target, and complexity, they reinforce a common security concern: exterior areas, approach routes, parking zones, pedestrian spaces, and vehicle access points are often where risk develops before it reaches the main facility or event space.

As houses of worship, schools, and community facilities are designed for access, visibility, and convenience, building resilience against vehicle threats is particularly important. Parking lots are often close to entrances. Drop off areas may be crowded before and after services. Congregants, students, staff, and volunteers may gather outside before entering or after events. These are all features that support the mission of being open and welcoming, but they can also create exposure if vehicle movement is not separated from people and critical spaces. Not every facility needs to become hardened or unwelcoming. Instead, vehicle access, pedestrian flow, and exterior gathering areas should be assessed as part of the security environment.

The [March 2026 attack at Temple Israel in West Bloomfield Township, Michigan](#), shows how a vehicle can be used as part of a direct attack against a House of Worship. The Associated Press (AP) reported that an armed attacker rammed a vehicle into one of the nation's largest Reform synagogues, and that the vehicle caught fire after crashing into the building. AP also reported that a security officer was struck by the vehicle and knocked unconscious, though the injuries were not life threatening. This adds an important secondary hazard: vehicle attacks may create fire, smoke, evacuation, and responder safety issues in addition to the initial impact or armed threat.

MITIGATION. Organizations can treat vehicle threats as part of everyday exterior security planning. The goal is to reduce the likelihood that a vehicle can reach people, entrances, or critical spaces without being noticed, slowed, or stopped.

- Assess vehicle approach routes
- Create standoff where possible
- Separate vehicles and pedestrians
- Control parking and drop off areas
- Train staff and volunteers
- Watch for suspicious indicators
- Plan for rapid action
- Coordinate with local partners
- Use temporary measures for major events
- Review blast and fire exposure

[FB-ISAO Current Threat Level](#)

FB-ISAO Physical Threat Level: SEVERE

FB-ISAO Physical Threat Level for US Faith-Based Organizations: "SEVERE."

FB-ISAO's definition of the Physical Threat Level, "SEVERE" means FB-ISAO is unaware of any specific events. Still, there is a concern that an event is highly likely.

FB-ISAO Cyber Threat Level: ELEVATED

FB-ISAO has assessed the general Cyber Threat Level for US Faith-Based Organizations as "ELEVATED."

FB-ISAO's definition of the Cyber Threat Levels, "ELEVATED" means FB-ISAO is unaware of any specific events. Still, there is a concern that an event is more likely than normal.

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Open Space Security



Houses of worship (HOWs) face a unique and growing set of security challenges due to their inherently open, welcoming environments. Designed to foster community engagement and accessibility, these spaces often operate with minimal

physical barriers, multiple entry points, and dynamic gatherings. While these qualities are central to their mission, they also make HOWs particularly vulnerable to security threats that can develop unnoticed until it is too late to respond effectively.

A central challenge is the balance between openness and protection. Worship services, outreach programs, and special events draw diverse groups of people, often with little or no screening. Suspicious behavior, such as loitering, unusual movement, or unauthorized access, may be visible but easily dismissed in the absence of structured monitoring or clear escalation protocols. This creates a critical gap between observation and action, where early warning signs fail to trigger timely intervention.

Another significant issue is the reliance on volunteer-based security teams. Unlike fully staffed professional security operations, many faith-based organizations depend on volunteers with varying levels of training and experience. This can lead to inconsistencies in monitoring, decision-making, and response coordination. Combined with the challenge of maintaining constant vigilance in busy, open environments, this reliance increases the risk that subtle threat indicators may be missed.

Human fatigue further compounds these challenges. Monitoring multiple camera feeds or managing ongoing activity can quickly overwhelm individuals, especially volunteers. This fatigue reduces the likelihood of detecting fast-moving or subtle threats, highlighting the limitations of relying solely on manual observation.

Addressing these issues underscores the importance of a layered security approach. Likewise, emerging tools, such as AI-enabled video analytics may help enhance early detection.

MITIGATION. Given the difficulty of securing open and publicly accessible environments, organizations should prioritize measures that improve early detection, reduce response time, and integrate security tools into a layered prevention model.

- Assess open-area exposure
- Strengthen layered security integration
- Prioritize early warning capability
- Reduce human monitoring burden
- Connect detection to action
- Embed prevention into routine operations

Spotlight: Intelligence Teams for Houses of Worship

If you haven't participated in any FB-ISAO education sessions for members, please consider joining the final session on June 3 on **Building and Intelligence Function for Houses of Worship**. Our sessions are recorded and made available to members. However, there's no substitute for being part of the conversation where you can share your own experiences, ask questions, and most importantly engage with the community of your peers grappling with similar challenges!!

- This most recent [event](#) series kicked off in January. Please consider joining as we delve into a deeper understanding of how the intelligence process better informs resilience-building activities.
- Previous education series' discussed [FireArms in the House](#) and [Standing Up Teams](#).
- Our recording library is available to **members** on the FB-ISAO Slack workspace.

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