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# Security Action Planning for Houses of Worship

Houses of worship are often located in isolated or rural areas and left unattended for extended periods of time, making it difficult to secure the facility. To help reduce potential for arson, bombing, vandalism and burglary, consider the following general strategies in implementing a security loss control program.

## Reduce Vulnerability

- Keep plants and shrubs trimmed to provide good visibility of building and surrounding property.
- Request assistance from law enforcement, fire personnel and area residents to help increase observation of the property.
- Have adult members of the congregation randomly check the building daily, or consider the use of a guard service.
- Install a protective lighting system that automatically turns on at sundown. Illuminate interior areas that are visible from the outside.
- Check credentials of outside maintenance personnel.
- Control access to air intakes of HVAC systems to prevent attempts to introduce contaminants into the system.
- Remove potential fire hazards from the grounds, such as trash, lawn clippings and other debris.
- Do not leave cash in the facility.

## Install Security Equipment

- Install dead-bolt locks and ensure doors and frames are solidly constructed and installed.

- Carefully control the distribution of keys to the building.
- Protect valuable stained-glass windows with burglary/vandalresistant glazing.
- Install a central station fire and burglar alarm system that provides for remote monitoring.

## Handling Threatening Situations

- Develop a crisis plan for actions to be taken when a threat is received, such as a bomb threat.
- If suspicious persons or vehicles are observed, obtain a detailed physical description and report it to law enforcement authorities.
- If a suspicious package or letter is received, immediately call law enforcement officials. Do not handle the parcel. Be alert for letters or packages that display an excessive amount of postage, are stained or have unfamiliar or missing return addresses.
- If threatening correspondence is received, avoid handling it. Place it in a clear plastic bag and contact law enforcement authorities.
- Post emergency contact information at all telephones.

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**The Hanover Insurance Company**  
440 Lincoln Street, Worcester, MA 01653

**hanover.com**  
The Agency Place (TAP) — <https://tap.hanover.com>

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