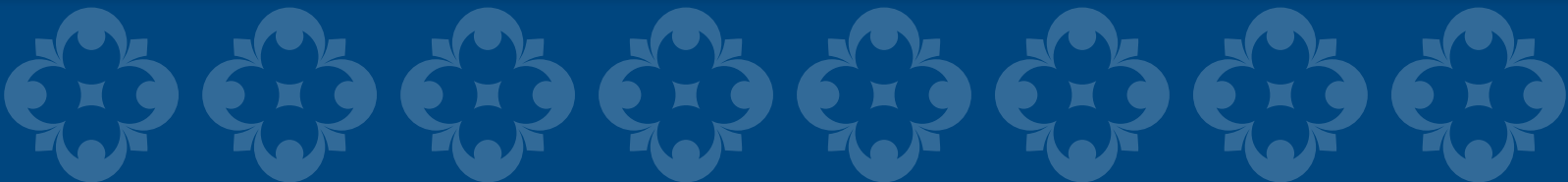




# CAIR

Council on American-Islamic Relations

*Best Practices for Mosque  
and Community Safety*



# Best Practices for Mosque and Community Safety

Dear imam, activist, community leader, brother or sister:

*As-salaamu alaykum.* Peace be to you.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) has developed the “Best Practices for Mosque and Community Safety” to better equip you and your community with the immediate steps necessary to safeguard your mosque or Islamic institution against bias-motivated violence or vandalism.

In pursuing better security, it is important to remember that these steps are only a starting point and that you should plan for the long-term by seeking the expertise of security professionals in the public or private sector.

The number of bias-motivated incidents targeting mosques and other Islamic institutions has grown in parallel with the rise in anti-Muslim sentiment promoted by a well-coordinated and well-financed “Islamophobia machine.”

Incidents targeting American Muslim institutions have included arson and bomb attacks, shootings, hate vandalism, and threats of violence.

This booklet is intended to give an overview of best practices in securing mosques and other Islamic institutions from crimes of various kinds, including hate crimes. It is by necessity a very general document. Specific security recommendations can only be made by a professional after a personal physical inspection and risk assessment of each facility.

Recommendations for best practices contained in this report recognize that the particular security challenges for mosques differ tremendously by the site of each facility, its particular location, the surrounding area and its geography, the political and social environment of the community in which it is located, the size of the building, the number of members of each mosque, and the history of past incidents and relations with the larger community -- as well as other possible considerations.

It must be understood that any security recommendations are done with a view to reducing the probability of hate crime. Even if all possible recommendations are implemented, there are no guarantees that such crimes will not occur.



Nihad Awad  
CAIR National Executive Director

Cover images from burned mosque in Joplin., Mo.



[www.cair.com](http://www.cair.com)

CAIR would like to thank Gerard Busnuk of Roland Park Security Consulting for lending his expertise and experience in the drafting of this guide.



## How to use this resource kit:

- \* Read this booklet carefully.
- \* Circulate it to other community leaders and your friends and family.
- \* Copy relevant portions to post in your local mosque, Islamic center or organization.

For additional information, contact CAIR National at 202-488-8787, or via email at [info@cair.com](mailto:info@cair.com). To contact the nearest CAIR chapter, click on the chapters link at [www.cair.com](http://www.cair.com).



CAIR National Executive Director Nihad Awad and CAIR Staff Attorney Gadeir Abbas at site of burned mosque in Joplin, Mo.

## Some Initial Steps to Take:

### **Develop a Legal Contact List**

Develop a list of attorneys who are willing to be consulted by the Muslim community in response to backlash incidents. Ask Muslim attorneys to volunteer their services to community members during this time of crisis.

### **Develop Positive Relationships with Law Enforcement Agencies**

Community leaders should, in cooperation with local civil rights advocates and attorneys, immediately coordinate meetings between representatives of the Muslim community and local and state law enforcement agencies. These meetings should focus on ways in which the community can help improve security and on how authorities can protect Muslims, Arab-Americans and other targeted minorities from harassment and discrimination.

### **Meet with Elected Officials to Discuss Community Concerns**

Delegations of Muslim representatives should schedule meetings with local, state and national elected representatives or their key staff to discuss community concerns. To find out who represents your area on the national level, go to: <http://www.capwiz.com/cair/home/>

### **Build Coalitions with Interfaith and Minority Groups**

Meetings should be coordinated with representatives of local interfaith and minority groups. These meetings should focus on building lines of communication and support, and hearing from these groups about how they deal with discrimination and bigotry.

### **Meet with Local School Officials to Discuss Student Safety**

Representatives of the Muslim community should meet with local school and school board officials to discuss safety plans for students and to sensitize the administrators to harassment of Muslim students.

### **Build an Emergency Contact List**

Community leaders should develop emergency email, text message and phone contact lists to be used in case of an incident that threatens the community's safety. Local imams, Islamic center board members and Muslim activists should be on the lists. A second list should be developed containing contact information for all local law enforcement agencies.

### **Hold a Community Meeting to Inform Others of Safety Guidelines**

Call for a meeting of the local Muslim community to discuss the information outlined in this kit. The meeting should take place at a local mosque or Islamic center and should be advertised using the emergency contact list.

### **Establish a Community Support Network**

Establish a network of community members who can offer emotional and material support to those who may be the victims of hate crimes or discrimination. Victims should not be left alone to deal with the negative impact of such incidents.

## Broad Outline:

A general framework in which to think about institutional security falls within the following broad categories:

- **Be Aware**
- **Assess Your Vulnerability**
- **Prepare and Plan**
- **Prevent**
- **Respond/Mitigate**
- **Recover**

This framework can be applied to all sorts of security issues, from hate graffiti to burglary or to an active-shooter episode.

Decision-makers must decide which recommendations are best applied to their facility. They must also decide the order in which they will implement the process.

## Be Aware

The reality for the Muslim community today is that it shares some of the problems faced by other minorities. The hostility directed toward American Muslims is similar in some ways to that endured by the African-American community during the early stages of the civil rights movement and experienced by the Jewish community at other times. Another analogous situation is that faced by abortion clinics.

Bigotry is a fact of life. One cannot wish or hope it out of existence. But one can defend against it, and the first step in doing so is recognizing its existence and developing a security mindset prepared to deal with it. The idea that “It can’t happen here” is the death knell of a security program.

Community safety is most easily obtained through vigilance, while avoiding counterproductive paranoid scare tactics. One way to increase security awareness at your mosque is to develop, as part of your security plan, a **Security Awareness Program**.

This program enlists all members of the mosque to become eyes and ears for the facility management team. Everyone is asked to keep eyes and ears open to suspicious or unusual activities, persons, or items near the mosque. Two thousand alert members will arguably have a better chance of detecting a threat than 20 security cameras because of the members’ familiarity with the environment.

To be effective, the board needs to tell the congregation what they want them to do, what things to look for and how to report them. Larger mosques may wish to have a dedicated phone number or person to call to report concerns.

## Assess Your Vulnerability

Awareness begins to become concrete with a security plan for the facility - even if it’s a small facility and the plan is only a page or two long. (For example, who locks up at night and sets the alarm, etc.) **What’s your plan? Do you have one? Does anyone know about its existence or what it says?**

It is important that management must first perform a vulnerability risk assessment before beginning a security program or taking a fresh look at an existing one. Ideally, this should be done by a trained security professional so that it is performed in a thorough, structured, professional manner. It is recognized that some mosques will not have the financial resources to do this.

However, some police departments will offer to do their version of a security check and make suggestions for your mosque. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) also has specialists available to inspect facilities through their **Protective Security Advisor** program. The ability of these organizations to promptly respond and the quality of their inspections will likely vary, as will flexibility and appropriateness of recommendations.

If time and costs are considerations, management may elect to perform its own site vulnerability assessment. Should this be the case, it is important that a security committee be appointed or one person be put in charge of the security for a particular institution. That person would coordinate the inspection of the premises and gather the data to present to the ultimate authority and decision-makers at the mosque. Since the particular factors in each particular building can be so different, the vulnerability risk assessment must be flexible in order to address peculiar risks at that site.

Translated into practical, common sense terms for mosque leaders, a risk assessment means asking several questions:

- ✓ **What security measures are in place now?** Answering this question requires a detailed examination of physical security hardware, procedures and the people connecting them to each other. More on the inspection of current measures will be discussed below.



### ✔ **What risks do we face in the current environment?**

The overwhelming numbers of crimes facing mosques are vandalism of various kinds, particularly graffiti with hate-filled messages. This is a problem for businesses and institutions of all kinds. An additional concern, but less common, is burglary, mostly for theft, but also for the opportunity to commit arson. The far more serious risks are those posed by the so-called active shooter, as seen in the attack on the Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wisc., and the school in Newtown, Conn. Though these incidents of active shooter get a lot of press, they are, fortunately, relatively rare in a country of more than 300 million people. Despite its rarity, however, some thought must be given to the prevention, response to and mitigation of such an incident.

✔ **What are your gaps? Where are you vulnerable?** Are you reasonably protected against burglary? Are there any issues with your barriers to entry to your property, your lighting and your alarms? For example, are your doors always locked except when in use? Is the alarm set every day when the last person leaves? Are lights around the property burned out? List the answers in writing. More specifics to think about will be discussed below. (A very simple way to see your vulnerabilities to burglary, for example, would be to pretend that you've lost all keys to the mosque, but still want to get in. How would you do it? Look at your building through the eyes of a perpetrator.)

✔ **What is doable and reasonable given the resources available to the mosque?** The ability to harden defenses for very small congregation with a small facility and budget will be different from that of a large mosque with hundreds of members and a number of staff members. This is why the security assessment for each facility, and its recommendations for improvement, must be *individualized* to that particular facility and its ability to prioritize its limited resources. *There can be no cookie-cutter solutions.*

Often a review of what's currently in place will make security gaps apparent and will lead to a reordering of security priorities. This is the place where a security plan can be very useful.

## Prepare and Plan

Evaluate Your Current Security Plan:

- ✔ Does your religious center even have a plan? Most places don't have a written security plan. It's often verbal, based on incremental decision-making over years.
- ✔ What's the plan? Does anybody even know about it? Ideally, a security plan for a mosque or other institution should be written, defining broad procedures that are sensible and doable. There's no point in having procedures that are impractical or found to be not working, poorly implemented or outdated.
- ✔ Who's in charge? It is strongly recommended that there be one person overall in charge in any security chain-of-command. It would be someone who, generally, will be in charge of any security-related decisions or inspections. The person in charge of security could be a full-time or part-time employee, or could be a volunteer; he/she might be the chair of a security committee of several persons; or this person could have other duties. For example, the facility manager could be assigned this role, and in smaller facilities, the Imam might be the person. This person would be in charge of developing the security plan - or reviewing a current plan.
- ✔ Has an existing plan for security/safety been recently reviewed?
- ✔ Part of any review will be a listing of what security equipment is currently in place. Is it working? Is it adequate? What are the gaps?
- ✔ Has your security plan been tested by real events? For example, was there an emergency situation of some sort, and nobody seemed to know what to do? Did an alarm go off and nobody knew it was there? Did cameras not catch the car break-in on the lot? Did someone say "call the police" and other persons thought they were joking? Often, real events will give the organization an opportunity to improve and practice an existing plan.

Real events, of whatever import, give the opportunity to practice security and review any lessons learned from the handling of the event.

There are three basic elements that interweave in a security program: **people, procedures and security-related hardware/equipment.** These three need to interact with each other in order to have an effective program.





*Vandalized Muslim cemetery in Illinois.*



*Hate graffiti on New York mosque.*

## People

As mentioned above, a clear chain of command for decision-making related to security is important. Ideally, one person will be in overall charge. A primary purpose of the head of security, in addition to managing the security, is to encourage a security mindset in everyone. This person will draft and forward security procedures to the ultimate decision-maker(s). It must be recognized that those procedures will offer a framework, but cannot cover every possible contingency. The plan is based on the vulnerability risk assessment and has to be based on the local situation.

This person should head a security committee, if there is one, or help create one if there is not. A security committee of volunteers would be helpful, since in most cases mosques are not going to be able to afford paid staff for things that need to be done. Any security plan should be written, presented to key stakeholders and refined. A security committee must meet regularly, perhaps weekly, until a plan has been developed and underway, or during times of higher alert or crisis. The security director's job, in conjunction with the board and/or the security committee, is to coordinate any and all security-related activities.

A process needs to be developed to deliver updated security information or threats to the board, management, employees, volunteers, and the congregation, depending on the situation.

The security head should ideally have some law enforcement, emergency-medical, fire, or security background, and would be responsible for recruiting and training "ushers" and security committee members. He/she would be the primary person in charge of arranging for the purchase and maintenance of security equipment and services.

This person will maintain a log of any significant security incidents and is the primary contact with law enforcement. Ideally, this person will have two or three designated alternates if he or she is not available.

Mosques should consider a staff of ushers for the facility, whose primary role should be maintaining security. Typically, they would be deployed during services, holidays and special events. At least one usher in the main entrance or reception area would monitor people approaching and entering. In many urban churches, these security ushers wear yellow windbreakers with the word "security" on the back in letters large enough to be read at a distance. They often, in larger churches, are equipped with portable radios to communicate with each other and sometimes a base station. Many are off-duty police officers who are members of the congregation. Efforts, in larger congregations, are made to recruit police and security personnel, EMS and fire personnel and others with medical and emergency management skills. It is recommended that mosques adopt a

similar arrangement. If a threat of an active shooter is deemed very serious (perhaps because of a series of threats or incidents), ushers could be equipped with personal alarms, to either emit a sound there and/or send a trouble alarm to police.

Depending on the layout of the mosque, these security ushers can be used as a means of expanding the surveillance of the property in order to detect perpetrators of hate crimes - and in the worst case scenario, the active shooter. Typically, this means that the ushers are posted out away from the building, in the parking lot or on nearby streets and access points to the mosque. The ushers act as a way of forcing the shooter to show his hand earlier, possibly delaying entry into the mosque, giving time to secure the building and to sound the alarm and alert authorities.

The ushers also are a first defense against the placement of bombs near the building. On arrival for duty, a thorough perimeter check of the building should be done, along with a check of any areas recently accessible to the public or contractors. This should also be done on an at least daily basis by regular mosque office or maintenance staff. This practice establishes a baseline for items that should be there versus items that should not.

Ushers, especially those in larger buildings, need to understand their role in evacuation if it should be necessary. Each should understand the main evacuation routes in an emergency, along with alternative routes.

The signal to evacuate should be well understood by all. Special attention needs to be given to the needs of any wheel-chair-bound, visually-impaired, or other disabled people.

Ushers, and others as needed, need to be aware of a threat that has become internal because the perpetrator is getting into or has gotten into the building. Available countermeasures and responses are site and situation specific. Rooms that can be secured, where people can hide - at least temporarily - must be selected and prepared in advance.

It may be impractical to have full-scale, realistic drills such as those commonly done in elementary and high schools when the full congregation is present. Mosque boards may also consider “walk-throughs” in which the usher staff practices evacuation themselves, with alternate spots of simulated shooters, explosions or fires. It may be difficult to have regular rehearsals with volunteers, considering possible staff turnover, but the more one does to prepare, the safer the congregation will be.

Alternate plans can be developed for evacuation of the building due to a bomb threat, the discovery of a suspicious package and the threat of an active shooter.

Ushers with emergency medical skills should be pre-designated to respond to assist any injured persons, to the extent it would be appropriate and safe to do so in a crisis.

## Procedures

Procedures describe how an organization wants its policies carried out. These can vary in detail, depending on the situation of each facility. Typically, the head security person would develop procedures based on direction from his/her superiors.

## Security Equipment and Hardware

Equipment and supplies are determined by the needs shown by the mosque risk assessment, its security plan, and whether and how it is used and monitored by the personnel involved. Depending on financial resources, the equipment can be very modest or extremely elaborate. A tremendous assortment of security equipment is available, even within broad categories, so it is important to make sure your selection of equipment fits into the overall plan, is cost-effective and is actually used. It is also important that the equipment be professionally maintained. Basic security hardware that most mosques need to consider is listed below, with some relevant comments:

### Barriers: Doors, Windows, Fences

Doors should be solid wood or metal (with minimal glass) and are only as good as the locks and the door jambs that secure them. Locks should be deadbolts installed by a professional locksmith, and should go at least 2.5, preferably 3 inches, into a steel jamb. It should not be possible to open the deadbolt by breaking and reaching into a nearby window pane. If the lock is near such a window, it should open only with a key, but sliding bolts and hotel-style bar locks can be present for quick securing. **(IMPORTANT NOTE:** Emergency exits must be unobstructed. Check with fire officials to make sure all security measures comply with local regulations.)

Glass doors, or doors with a lot of glass near them, are not recommended. Sliding bolts and chains can also be used to secure little-used doors that are not part of the main entrance when the congregation is not present and the building is closed for the night. But care must be taken to maintain emergency egress should a fire or other emergency make escape important. It is also recommended that at least one, possibly two, strong sliding bolts that can be closed from the inside be installed at the main entrances for use during services if an usher spots a possible armed intruder approaching the building. This would likely delay an intruder long enough for police to arrive and deal with the situation.

The default condition of doors on a mosque should be “locked,” unless they’re being used, or open to the public for a function.

Emergency exit doors must be kept unobstructed for emergency egress. They must have locks that prevent outside entry but are easily opened from inside. Easy access in emergencies and security from intruders need to be checked regularly, at least weekly, during major services or during periods of high alert or crisis.

Windows are often a main point of entry for intruders if doors are secure. All windows should be equipped with working locks. Windows at the rear and at the basement level need to have screens or bars to delay any entry - keeping in mind the need for a quick evacuation. There are bars available that lock from the inside and swing open when unlocked.

If protection against thrown fire bombs is a consideration, thick wire screens do offer some protection. More protection is provided by glass-block windows, which provide light, but are generally as solid as brick and cannot be easily broken. They are a fine choice for lower level windows, and can have small openings with screens to allow fresh air in.

Your local fire department can advise on whether security you have in mind for windows is acceptable for fire escape. Fire prevention staff from the local fire department should be asked to do a walk-through of the premise with a view towards preventing arson from thrown firebomb-type devices.

Fences can be a useful barrier to delay entry to a possible intruder, or at least channel their entrance into a particular direction so they can be observed by the security ushers. Fences, in conjunction with security ushers, act to extend security of the mosques so that it begins some distance away from the building. Fences also delineate a property line, and if in good condition, send a message of ownership of the property to would-be trespassers. Most fences provide only a modest barrier to entry and can be scaled by reasonably athletic and determined persons. Nevertheless, they do provide some delay, and the climbing of this fence does enhance detection. The location and type of fence, and even if a fence is recommended, are very site-specific. Stone, brick or other solid walls that cannot be seen through are not recommended, as they reduce detection value.

Safe rooms are designated secure places within a building to retreat to should the building come under attack by an armed intruder(s). Their use may not be practical for large congregations, but mosques located in tornado-prone areas have probably already made provisions for this eventuality for weather events. The safe rooms should have solid doors and more than one means of exit - as well as sturdy locks that can be secured from the inside without keys.

## Alarms

A very basic piece of security equipment is the burglar alarm. All outside window, doors and roof vents, if accessible, should be alarmed. In addition to sensors on those items, there should be motion detection sensors strategically located throughout the building. Buildings with extensive glass should also have glass-break detectors. Alarms must be tested regularly.

In addition to burglar alarms, smoke and carbon monoxide alarms need to meet the fire department's minimum standards for occupancy. It is recommended that the system be integrated into the building's electrical system, with battery backup. An added feature, for large facilities, would be an automatic alarm to the fire department in addition to sounding on site.

One often-overlooked alarm is the panic or duress alarm, which acts in a similar manner to a holdup alarm. During times of crisis and chaos, it may be difficult to quickly call the police, or present a coherent picture of what's going on. This alarm at least gets the police en route to your location as soon as it is processed. Phone calls to 911 are also necessary to let responding officers know about details of the situation.

In addition to the fire alarm, mosques of various sizes need to consider a means of notifying congregations/occupants of a threat to safety. These means may vary, though a public address system is widely used in schools.

## Cameras

The main advantage of cameras is their usefulness in apprehension of the suspect following an incident. Most mosques would do well to have at least a modest camera system. Generally speaking, their security value is only significant if used in conjunction with other tools. Some, but by no means all, people are deterred by cameras. Those people are deterred only if they are aware that the cameras are there and believed to be operational. Thus, cameras' value is enhanced by signs warning that the area is under video surveillance 24 hours each day and is being recorded.

Recordings should be sent off-site and stored on the Internet. Having them recorded on site detracts from their value if the digital video recorder is damaged or stolen.

Camera installation is very site-specific. Mosques thinking of acquiring or upgrading these systems are encouraged to get several quotes and to deal with a local installation company.





Hate graffiti being cleaned from the Islamic Center of the Shenandoah Valley in Harrisonburg, Va.

## Grants

To help you prepare by purchasing security equipment, the federal government has a number of resources available to help secure religious and other non-profit organizations from terrorism.

- Visit [www.fema.gov/preparedness-non-disaster-grants](http://www.fema.gov/preparedness-non-disaster-grants) for information about non-disaster grants for the Urban Areas Security Initiative, Nonprofit Security Grant Program.
- The Department of Homeland Security has a Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. They can be reached at 202-646-3487 or emailed at [partnerships@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:partnerships@fema.dhs.gov).
- Information is available from the Department of Homeland Security National Infrastructure Coordinating Center. They can be reached at [NICC@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:NICC@hq.dhs.gov) or 202-282-9201. Visit [dhs.gov/national-infrastructure-coordinating-center](http://dhs.gov/national-infrastructure-coordinating-center) to learn more.
- The Department of Homeland Security also has a Homeland Security Information Network, which one can visit at [dhs.gov/homeland-security-information-network-hsin](http://dhs.gov/homeland-security-information-network-hsin). One can email them for information at [hsin.outreach@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:hsin.outreach@hq.dhs.gov).
- Useful information about grants for nonprofits is found at [www.nonprofitexpert.com](http://www.nonprofitexpert.com).
- Information on federal grants in general can be found at [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).
- Under the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has launched a website with information specific to securing houses of worship. This information can be accessed by visiting [www.fema.gov/protecting-houses-worship](http://www.fema.gov/protecting-houses-worship).
- To locate and contact your state-level emergency management agency, visit: <http://www.fema.gov/emergency-management-agencies>.

## Prevent

In order to manage crimes against mosques, it is most important to try to not have them happen at all. Thus, prevention and deterrence in political, cultural and social methods is just as important as the security methods mentioned above. Ideally, all methods will be interwoven with each other into a coherent whole.

Some strategies helpful in preventing security-related incidents:

- The mosque leaders must engage in relentless community outreach using the concept of community in its broadest sense. This includes other faiths and their religious institutions, immediate neighbors to the mosque building, neighborhood associations, and business groups. Enlisting neighbors as additional eyes and ears as part of the mosque's security awareness program is an important bulwark of mosque security.
- Offer the use of the mosque building (or appropriate parts of it) to religious or other local institutions whose own building may have been damaged in a fire or flood or other mishap.
- Remember that the law enforcement community is your primary line of defense against criminal activity. They have arrest and enforcement authority and are armed and trained in order to carry out their functions.
- Personally get to know the commanding officer of the police facility that is responsible for your area. Perhaps even more important than knowing the commanding officer is to be personally acquainted and friendly with the officer who is regularly assigned to your area.
- Similar contacts should be established with appropriate political leaders (for example, mayor, city councilmen, state legislators, etc.). The more outreach and personal relationships the better.

- **It is important that relationships be established before any incidents occur.**
- Make sure the police, your neighbors and other relevant parties are aware of your days/times for regular services and your schedule for holidays.
- Acknowledge good work by individual police officers, medics, fire personnel, and political leaders in their dealings with your Islamic community with complimentary letters, phone calls, tweets, social media postings, annual award events, and the like.
- Support various community events or fundraisers to the extent possible.
- Invite police and EMS and fire personnel to visit your site for meetings, training, etc., to the extent appropriate and possible without interfering with the religious mission.
- Attempt to establish liaison with state and federal agencies in the same manner as you did with the local police. Local police may be able to facilitate this effort.
- Consider offering cultural training to police officers in your area. One Sikh community in Southington, Conn., arranged for the training to be given to local police officers through the U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations Service.
- Your security awareness program must train your security/ushers in placing any potential adversaries under surveillance before or at the time that they survey your facility. Most criminals survey or “scout” the location of their future deeds first in order to assess the “softness” of the target and their ease of committing the crime and escaping. Your lighting, cameras, signs, and other indications of security will work together with your ushers to present the best deterrent possible.
- Contractors, vendors, cleaning crews, and visitors, to the extent practical or possible, should not be allowed to roam the building with unfettered access to it, but should be accompanied to their area of work or visit.
- The organization’s website should be reviewed to ensure no sensitive material is provided.
- Security measures, in general, and to the extent possible, should not be discussed within the public arena. Be cautious about email inquiries that seem inappropriately to be seeking information about the mosque.



*Arson-damaged interior of the Islamic Center of Greater Toledo in Toledo, Ohio.*

## Lighting

An important aspect of the planning, prevention and deterrence process is the lighting around the mosque itself. Crime prevention theory posits that criminals don't want to be seen, and to the extent that they are seen, they don't want to be seen for long.

Again, the particular lighting requirements for any particular facility are situational and site-specific. If new or additional lighting purchases seem prudent for the mosque property, it is recommended that any new lighting meet or exceed the security standards set by the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America, and use manufacturers listed in its directory. The particular standards and tradeoffs for lighting can be highly technical, and vary by the particular site's layout.

If the mosque sits on its own property and land, the outer perimeter should have lighting surrounding the property, ideally around the fence or property line.

Care needs to be taken so lighting from the mosque property does not "bleed over" and interfere with neighbors inappropriately, causing "light pollution."

Some parts of the building should have lighting on constantly after dark, such as the main/front entrance and high-risk rear areas.

An additional security measure, particularly for less-used and less-traveled portions of the outer sides of the building, is motion-activated lighting that comes on with movement and shines a powerful floodlight onto the area. This can have a powerful psychological effect.

There has been some research showing, and it is widely believed in security circles, that additional lighting discourages and reduces graffiti and burglary.

Lights need to be inspected routinely, at least once a month. Any burned-out fixtures need to be corrected.

Trim trees and bushes that obstruct light patterns.

Wire cages or industrial-strength shatter-resistant lenses should be installed over the fixtures to prevent persons from throwing objects at the fixtures to break them.

## Respond/Mitigate

A general framework for response to incidents can and should include elements of the following, tailored to the particular incident, from a very minor incident to a very serious one:

- Get help on the way. This can be by a panic alarm or by calling 911. There should be someone on the staff (employee or volunteer, with alternates) whose main duty is to call 911. If there is a non-emergency situation, the contact person can call the appropriate number.
- Ideally, there should be a single point of contact for information and directions to first responders - in effect, a mosque "command post," with the security person or alternate in charge there.
- Someone should be able to meet first responders, if at all possible, with information, including
  - What's going on
  - Where
  - Who is involved
  - As much detail is possible
  - Request for medical attention if there are injured persons
  - Assist with access for emergency personnel, including crowd control as needed
- It should be clear, beforehand, who makes the call to shelter in place or evacuate the mosque.
- Once the incident is over and the mosque is secure, a review of the incident should be conducted with those involved. What worked? What didn't? What can we learn? Are there follow up activities that we need to do?



***The following three security situations of wide concern are examples of cases requiring prevention, response and mitigation:***

## **Armed Intruder/Active Shooter**

In recent years, the term “active shooter” has gained traction in the security community because of a number of high profile shooting incidents, such as Columbine, Virginia Tech, and most recently, the Sikh Temple in Wisconsin, the movie theater in Colorado and the school in Connecticut.

The “active shooter” typically begins shooting people, often people they do not know or have any particular reason to shoot, and keeps shooting. He keeps shooting, usually until police arrive, and then often takes his own life. Motivations vary, but the vast majority of these can be labeled “insider attacks,” in which the shooter had a connection to the institution where the shooting occurred and was acting out a ceremony of revenge because of some real or perceived slight. Many are obviously mentally ill, and most have made some intimation of their plans for revenge.

However, an attack by an outsider on an institution such as a mosque is virtually impossible to prevent once the attacker begins the attack. Active shooter situations are unpredictable and evolve quickly. Typically, active shooter situations are over within 15 minutes or less (the Columbine shooters killed themselves about 14 minutes into the attack). It is too late for prevention, and the organization is placed into a mode of response and mitigation: limiting and reducing the effects of the armed attack as much as feasible. The immediate deployment of law enforcement personnel is usually needed to stop the shooter. Before law enforcement arrives on the scene, the personnel at the mosque must be physically and mentally prepared to deal with an attack.

There are some steps mosques can take to prepare to minimize the effects of this kind of attack:

- Security precautions taken by the mosque should not be discussed with outsiders - except to the extent necessary.
- To the extent possible, the element of surprise needs to be taken from the attacker. It seems likely that there is usually at least a modest pre-attack reconnaissance as part of his plan, so placing potential adversaries under surveillance with an extended security presence outward from the building may possibly deter, or at least allow security/usher staff to respond quickly to an attack.

- A vigilant security/usher staff can often give a proactive early warning to the beginning of the attack by approaching suspicious persons who are dressed or acting inappropriately and may be hiding weapons. Unknown males with bulky, camouflage, or combat-type clothing, for example, need to be approached and asked if they can be helped.
- Should the attacker engage persons outside the mosque, every effort must be made to keep the intruder from getting inside the mosque in order to minimize casualties. As noted, the mosque should have solid, secure doors, without large expanses of glass, and with easily engaged locks to keep the intruder out as he approaches.
- The trouble alarm should be activated as soon as possible in order to get the police on the way.
- One or more designated persons should call 911 with as much information as possible.
- Occupants should be alerted to the external threat, following procedures established earlier. The appropriate notification system(s) may vary by mosque and size of the congregation, but the important thing is that the occupants be alerted to the threat.
- If the intruder gets inside the building, the FBI coaches a basic formula for survival:
  - **Get out.** Escape the building if that is at all feasible. Leave all belongings behind. Do not attempt to assist or move wounded people. Survive!
  - **Hide out.** This is where a “safe room” might be applicable. Safe room procedures should previously been formalized and established earlier during the planning process, and additional locks installed if necessary. If no formal safe room is available, any place in the building to hide from the gunman should be utilized as soon as practical. If you are in a hallway, get inside an office. If you are in an office, stay there and lock or block the door. Ideally the room can be locked from inside, but if not perhaps furniture can be moved against the door to block entrance. It is recommended that the lights in the room be turned out, cell phones turned off, and talking stopped in order to motivate the perpetrator to look for victims elsewhere.
  - **Take out.** If you find yourself confronting the gunman, and your life is in danger, it is recommended to do whatever you can to attack the suspect, shouting and throwing things at him and then perhaps running to escape. This action should be taken only as a last resort.

## Bomb Threats

Bomb threats can cause a great deal of anxiety and loss of time, even if the bomb turns out to be non-existent. While they are often distressing, one has to assess the threat by thinking about the following three questions as to why the person is making the threat (as opposed to simply placing a bomb and allowing it to go off):

1. To harass and disrupt the organization when there is no device.
2. To keep people from being hurt when there is a device.
3. To move people outside where there is a device.

The answer is that the motive for making the threat is almost always number 1.

So, what are the recommendations if a mosque receives a threat of a bomb having been placed on the premises?

- Whoever receives the call by phone (or email) should attempt to find out as much about the bomb as possible, namely where it is, and when it is supposed to go off, etc. Be aware, however, that in most cases, the caller will not stay on the phone long or respond to emails.
- The police should be notified via 911 and a report made. After police are called, management should be made aware of the situation. The decision to evacuate must be made by a person pre-designated to make that decision. In most cases, after their arrival, police will advise that any decision to evacuate should/must be made by management, and that any search made on the premises for the bomb should be done with the mosque's own staff. In rare cases during times of crisis, management should request, or police may suggest, a check of the building by a dog trained in explosive ordinance detection.
- A search should be conducted both inside and outside the building. On the outside, the entire perimeter, to the extent possible, should be checked with emphasis on areas near windows or doors, such as shrubbery, and unusual or out-of-place objects or vehicles. Inside, a search should be conducted of all areas accessible to the public, particularly unlocked closets and bathrooms.
- Advise any occupants of the threat, but that you believe it is without credence. However, people may leave if they wish.
- Management may always make the decision to evacuate if they are more comfortable doing so. However, repeated evacuations to a number of false threats usually lead to more threats. Repeated bomb threats are usually a tactic to harass and annoy an organization.



*Vandals target Tennessee mosque.*

## Suspicious Package

Should someone at the mosque encounter a suspicious package, whether in response to a bomb threat, or happening on it during day-to-day activities, the most important rules are:

- DON'T PICK IT UP OR TOUCH IT!
- Keep people away from it. Isolate the area. Use available personnel to assist in this.
- Call 911. Advise first responders of the object's location and why you think it is suspicious.

The U.S. Postal Service has an extensive and detailed publication on the security of a mail receiving center. While the chances of receiving a bomb or a chemical/biological attack through the mail are extremely remote, it is wise to train all personnel who handle mail in spotting signs of a suspicious package. The publication is available on PDF and may be accessed via:

<http://about.usps.com/publications/pub166.pdf>

Briefly, suspicious packages may be those with poor, vague, handwritten, or smeared addressing. Packages may appear poorly or loosely wrapped and may have an oily appearance or smell. They may have wires protruding or appear unusually heavy. They may be addressed to someone who is no longer at that location or is unknown.

When receiving an unexpected package, if doubt arises, it is best to contact the sender if possible. If the sender cannot be contacted, a call to authorities may be warranted. If so, the package must be treated as suspicious, and police and postal inspectors should be contacted.

A smaller mosque should consider the utility of a post office box, which would have the effect of keeping any suspicious objects away from the mosque. Postal employee assistance can then easily be requested if any package appears doubtful.

## Recover

It is fervently hoped that “recovery” never has to be deployed for a critical crisis. However, the factors involved in recovery can be useful for many sorts of events, from small-scale incidents to grave crises.

Despite the fact that this section is placed last in the handout, its role really fits into the planning and response processes. The preparation for recovery must be done before recovery is ever necessary.

### *Some factors to consider:*

- What is needed to sustain operation of the mosque? A checklist should be developed via brainstorming among board members and a checklist established of projects or items to be accomplished in order to plan for recovery from a worst-case scenario.
- First and foremost, medical and psychological help needs to be provided to those affected by any traumatic crisis. Ongoing medical issues resulting from serious injuries are extremely difficult and may last for years. Post-traumatic stress disorder can also affect people many years after surviving a critical incident. Thus a network of professionals, nearby mosques, Imams, or simply other Muslims and other caring individuals in the area, should be developed. Mosques or members of mosques should not have to face hate crimes and harassment alone.
- Off-site or “cloud” backup for critical records needs to be considered. Simple things such as serial numbers/pictures of office equipment will facilitate insurance claims. Payroll records, mosque membership information, insurance contacts, vetted contractors, and similar critical information should all be considered.
- Legal follow up needs should always be considered, including prosecution of arrested criminal suspects, as well as civil action against offending parties for restitution. A contact list of local, friendly attorneys, particularly Muslims, should be developed. If intimidation is feared, witnesses and victims should be encouraged to use the mosque as their address for legal contact, and police should be made aware of the need for possible protection.
- Review lessons learned. Even the smallest of crises present the opportunity to learn about your deterrence ability, the viability of your plans, and most importantly, your responses to the incidents.
  - What did the staff/volunteers of the mosque do right?
  - What did they do wrong? (This is often the toughest for any group to handle.)
  - Should your security plan be amended?
  - Were there any lessons to be learned for the crisis next time?

*Additional Useful Links for More Contacts and In-Depth Information:*

### **Council on American-Islamic Relations**

[www.cair.com](http://www.cair.com)

### **FBI**

[www.fbi.gov](http://www.fbi.gov)

### **The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF)**

has evolved to be the primary investigative agency on bombs, bombings, arson, and gun-trafficking crimes.

[www.ATF.treas.gov](http://www.ATF.treas.gov)

### **The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)**

provides information, assistance, resources, and information on preventing, preparing for and responding to disasters of all kinds.

[www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)

### **The Illumination Engineering Society of North America**

has a directory of member manufacturers, and other resources related to the complexities and standards of lighting.

<http://ies.org>

**The Department of Homeland Security** has information about its Protective Security Advisors.

<http://www.dhs.gov/protective-security-advisors>

### **International Association of Professional Security Consultants**

[www.iapsc.org](http://www.iapsc.org)

**The American Society for Industrial Security (ASIS)** is the largest security organization in the world, and encompasses all sorts of businesses and organizational environments.

[www.asisonline.org](http://www.asisonline.org)

**ASIS** has a resource guide for houses of worship.

[http://www.asisonline.org/councils/documents/HOWS\\_resourceguide.pdf](http://www.asisonline.org/councils/documents/HOWS_resourceguide.pdf)

**The Southern Poverty Law Center** is an organization dedicated to monitoring hate groups.

<http://www.splcenter.org/>

**The U.S. Postal Service** has a guide to safely monitoring mail in a mail receiving center.

[http://about.usps.com/publications/pub166/pub166fm\\_toc.htm](http://about.usps.com/publications/pub166/pub166fm_toc.htm)

A website focusing on various issues dealing with security for houses of worship:

<http://churchsecurityconsultant.com>





# CAIR

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)  
America's Largest Muslim Civil Rights and Advocacy Organization

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) is active coast to coast, with offices and chapters in more than 20 states, and provides assistance to the entire American Muslim community.

Since its founding in 1994, CAIR has worked tirelessly to provide a Muslim voice on local and national issues and to empower American Muslims.

**CAIR's Vision:** *To be a leading advocate for justice and mutual understanding.*

**CAIR's Mission:** *To enhance understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding.*

CAIR has grown to become the largest, **most trusted and most effective** civil rights and advocacy organization working for American Muslims.

## Promoting Justice

CAIR **attorneys and civil rights staff** across the country work to protect the civil liberties of all Americans.

Every year, CAIR attorneys and staff help thousands of American Muslims with **cases of religious discrimination** in the workplace, in schools, at airports, and with government agencies.

CAIR is the only American organization that produces **annual reports** documenting the status of American Muslim civil liberties and the rise of **Islamophobia**.

CAIR also initiates **legal and political campaigns** on issues of national importance, such as its successful challenges to anti-Islam bills introduced in dozens of state legislatures.

To prevent civil rights violations, CAIR **delivers trainings and publish guides** on American Muslims for professionals in the private sector with Fortune 500 companies, and in education, health care, law enforcement, and other fields.

CAIR publishes a free **Know Your Rights and Responsibilities** pocket guide and delivers seminars and trainings across the country to inform American Muslims of their legal rights and duties as citizens.

CAIR also advocates for justice in American policies, both domestic and foreign, by **engaging local, state and national officials** on a variety of important policy questions.

## Enhancing Understanding of Islam

CAIR has carried out **educational campaigns** to enhance the public's understanding of Islam and American Muslims, including the **"Explore the Quran"** campaign that distributed free Qurans to people of other faiths, its public library project that provided Islamic materials to more than **half of America's libraries** and its media education initiative that distributed the **Journalist's Guide to Understanding Islam and Muslims** to tens of thousands of media professionals.

To address public misconceptions about Islam and Muslims, CAIR representatives regularly **appear on or are quoted in local, national and international media** outlets. CAIR produces public service announcements to help Americans of all faiths understand Islam and the American Muslim experience.

CAIR distributes **step-by-step guides to activists** and community leaders to help them reach out with educational initiatives during Ramadan and on Muslim holidays.

CAIR also conducts vital studies on the American Muslim community and relevant policy issues. This unique data is collected in many publications, available at **cair.com**.

## Empowering American Muslims

American Muslims have the ability to contribute to positive change in the nation if they have the right tools and skills. **CAIR trains activists and community members** on engaging the media, running for elected offices and participating in civic activities.

Through its popular **Muslim Youth Leadership Programs** (MYLP), CAIR prepares future leaders of the American Muslim community in the fields of media, law, government, public relations, philanthropy, and other spheres in which American Muslims are underrepresented.

Participants in **CAIR internship programs** receive practical training in the fields of law, civil rights, government and media relations, and community organizing.

Each year, **CAIR trains dozens of interns** in its national headquarters - just a few steps from Congress on Capitol Hill - and at chapters nationwide. These interns go on to spread a message of justice and mutual understanding in their future endeavors.

CAIR **voter registration, get-out-the-vote campaigns** and voter guides help empower the Muslim community through active civic involvement.



# CAIR

Council on American-Islamic Relations

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**[www.cair.com](http://www.cair.com)**

202.488.8787

[facebook.com/CAIRNational](https://www.facebook.com/CAIRNational)

Twitter: @CAIRNational

[youtube.com/CAIRtv](https://www.youtube.com/CAIRtv)

CAIR National Headquarters  
453 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20003

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***CAIR Chapters:***

CAIR-Arizona

CAIR-California

CAIR-Connecticut

CAIR-Florida

CAIR-Georgia

CAIR-Chicago

CAIR-Kansas

CAIR-Kentucky

CAIR-Maryland

CAIR-Michigan

CAIR-Minnesota

CAIR-Missouri

CAIR-New Jersey

CAIR-New York

CAIR-Ohio

CAIR-Oklahoma

CAIR-Pennsylvania

CAIR-South Carolina

CAIR-Texas

CAIR-Washington

*To find the nearest CAIR chapter, invite a CAIR speaker, or to schedule a CAIR civil rights workshop, click on "Contact" at [www.cair.com](http://www.cair.com), call 202-488-8787, or email [info@cair.com](mailto:info@cair.com).*