

MEMO

To: Sacramento Diocese – All Members

From: Irina Ganchenko, Claims Risk Manager

Date: May 1, 2025

RE: Securing Sacred Spaces – Preventing Theft, Vandalism, and Break-Ins

Recent incidents of theft, vandalism, and break-ins have reminded us of the importance of security at our churches and schools. Beyond locking doors and turning on alarms, security requires a layered approach built on awareness, planning, training, and prevention. Catholic Mutual offers comprehensive resources and risk assessment tools to support your efforts.

This memo outlines critical actions to help secure sacred spaces while fostering a welcoming environment.

Establish a Safety/Security Committee & Team

- Form a committee including clergy, administration, and a designated Safety Coordinator.
- Develop a Safety Team with trained individuals such as ushers, greeters, first responders, and staff.
- Provide regular and documented training exercises.
- Make the Safety Team visible; awareness alone can deter threats.

Harden the Target – Physical Security & Property Access

- Secure all buildings after hours, limit access points during Mass and events.
- Lock windows and reinforce doors (install tamper-resistant film where needed).
- Install exterior lighting and use motion sensors in vulnerable areas.
- Consider visible deterrents like patrol vehicles or marked parking security.

Interior Security & Emergency Planning

- Lock rooms not in use; safeguard tech, donations, and sacramental items.
- Post evacuation and shelter-in-place plans throughout the property.
- Identify rooms for potential lockdown use and consider accessibility for elderly or disabled.
- Maintain updated emergency kits with radios, first aid, and flashlights.

Prevention Through Awareness & Training

- Train staff and volunteers to recognize suspicious behavior (nervous demeanor, strange attire, loitering).
- Emphasize situational awareness and 'if you see something, say something'.
- Conduct regular drills—evacuation, lockdown, and medical emergencies.
- Encourage briefings before Mass/events and partner with law enforcement on trainings.

Risk Assessment & Documentation

- Conduct walk-throughs before Mass and events; inspect parking lots, doors, and windows.
- Take photos and document findings for follow-up and insurance purposes.
- Reassess your needs based on community crime trends, location, and event size.
- Track your emergency planning efforts to meet the standard burden of care.

Resources & Tools

- Use Catholic Mutual's CMGConnect platform for training and policy tools: [CMG Connect - Catholic Mutual Group](#)
- Reference DHS/FEMA resources for houses of worship.
- Coordinate security plans with law enforcement, EMS, and fire services.
- Contact Risk Management for help with policy development or security walkthroughs.

Security is not just a policy, it's a mindset. A well-prepared parish is both a safe and welcoming one.

Please don't hesitate to reach out directly with any questions or concerns.

Blessings,

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