

# SECURITY PROCEDURES FOR PLACES OF WORSHIP

## BACKGROUND TO THIS GUIDE

This security guide was originally designed by the Community Security Trust (CST) in 2014 at the request of the Department for Communities and Local Government and Police, to assist mosques in Bradford that were affected by far right extremist activity.

CST is a registered charity that gives security advice and provision, free of charge, for UK Jewish communities and for the benefit of wider British society.

This guide has been updated in the aftermath of several terrorist attacks throughout 2017 and was distributed to the Muslim community following the Finsbury Park attack. The guide is intended for clergy, staff, management committees and volunteers when considering security for places of worship and other faith community premises.

Report a hate crime to the Police via the True Vision website [www.report-it.org.uk/home](http://www.report-it.org.uk/home).

Report a hate crime to Stop Hate UK via their website [www.stophateuk.org](http://www.stophateuk.org).

For security and personal safety advice, or to report an anti-Christian hate crime, contact National Churchwatch [www.nationalchurchwatch.co.uk](http://www.nationalchurchwatch.co.uk).

For ongoing security advice or to report an anti-Muslim hate crime, contact Tell MAMA <https://tellmamauk.org>.

## EMERGENCIES

In case of a security emergency, you should always contact the Police immediately on 999. Ensure that you emphasise the severity of the problem and give as much detail as possible.

In the event of a potential or actual terrorist attack, the Government's advice focuses on "Run", "Hide" and "Tell". This may sound like obvious instructions, but very quick and vital decisions need to be taken. Sometimes it will be preferable to hide, or to barricade inside a safe room, but on other occasions a rapid dispersal will be the better option. Everything depends upon the circumstance of the attack, how and where it occurs.

## GENERAL SECURITY PROCEDURES

- ▶ At all times, be aware of your surroundings and be alert for suspicious behaviour. This includes individual(s) hanging around the location acting suspiciously (either on foot or in a vehicle), unattended bags/parcels or unknown suspicious vehicles parked close to your location.
- ▶ If you spot someone acting suspiciously, approach and question them if necessary, but only if it is safe to do so. When questioning someone, never do so alone (ideally to be done in pairs).
- ▶ Implement a locking up procedure of which all location personnel are aware and adhere to.
- ▶ At all times ensure the congregation leaves the premises calmly and disperse large crowds standing outside the premises unnecessarily as they are an obvious target for an attack.
- ▶ Familiarise yourself with evacuation and invacuation procedures. Depending on what an incident involves, it may be safer to keep your community inside the building (invacuation), locking the doors and 'barricading' yourselves inside until police arrive.
- ▶ If it is not safer to remain inside the building then the community should be evacuated to a safe place away from the building (going away from the problem), or immediately dispersed.
- ▶ All incoming post and deliveries should be carefully checked before opening. If you are concerned about deliveries or packages – do not touch, clear the area, call Police on 999.

CST advises all communities to report hate incidents and any suspicious activities to the Police and to any appropriate third party organisations - such information can help prevent further violence and intimidation against communities.

**For further security advice and guidance, or to report an antisemitic incident, please contact CST.**

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- ▶ Should an incident occur, do not allow community members to remain in the area taking photos or videos. Their safety is paramount and should be moved away from the danger.
- ▶ Contact a Counter Terrorism Security Adviser (CTSA) through your local police force who can advise on physical security and direct you to professional bodies that regulate and oversee reputable suppliers.

## LOCATION

- ▶ Remove all building materials and tools that may cause a security risk (items that could be used as a weapon).
- ▶ Secure scaffolding, ladders etc. and where possible, alarm the premises.
- ▶ Check all perimeter fencing/walls/doors/windows for signs of forced entry into the building.
- ▶ Clear undergrowth, foliage and overhanging branches around the immediate area of the location as they can be used to hide an explosive device.
- ▶ Remove litter bins and secure away from locations so that they cannot be used to hide an explosive device or start a fire that would spread to the building.
- ▶ Check emergency power and lighting systems.
- ▶ Secure doors, windows and other points of entry.

## MAINTENANCE

- ▶ Check and service all security equipment on a regular basis: intruder alarms, panic alarms and fire alarms, access control systems/locks etc.
- ▶ CCTV systems - clean camera lenses and ensure recording equipment is in full working order and records good quality images. It is also important that several people know how to access the footage if needed.
- ▶ Telephone systems - check landlines and ensure mobile phones are charged and with available credit.
- ▶ Have notepads and pens available to take down descriptions if needed.

## AT SERVICE TIMES

- ▶ Ensure that the area surrounding the building is safe by looking out for suspicious people, vehicles and objects.
- ▶ Check for unauthorised entry to the premises when locking/unlocking mosque.
- ▶ Ensure relevant equipment is working and external emergency doors can be easily closed and locked in an emergency.

## ENTRY PROTOCOL

- ▶ If safe to do so, question (in pairs) all unknown persons entering your building, or those who are acting suspiciously – such as hanging around or paying particular attention to your building.
- ▶ When questioning unknown people, be polite but firm, and not aggressive. Do not take the law in your own hands.
- ▶ Refuse access to anyone behaving suspiciously or causing trouble among the congregation.
- ▶ You have the right to refuse entry - if in doubt, keep them out.

## VEHICLE ATTACKS

- ▶ Be alert to any suspicious activity involving vehicles circling or waiting around locations or areas where worshippers gather. In previous attacks of this type, there has been a practice run or some hostile reconnaissance just prior to the attack.
- ▶ If you are suspicious of anything, keep everyone inside your building and do not let crowds build up outside locations. Call the police on 999.

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## QUESTIONING/CHALLENGING

### Who should you question?

Either during or outside of service times – any person (or a group of people) who is:

- ▶ Trying to gain access to the premises who is not known to you.
- ▶ Behaving in a suspicious or aggressive manner.
- ▶ Carrying or distributing offensive material.

Keep focused on your goal: to ascertain if someone is suspicious or not.

Where possible, ensure you have someone with you for security purposes and if the need arises as a witness.

Do not take the law into your own hands. If a situation escalates call the police immediately.

## CONTACTS

All contact numbers relevant to security should be reviewed on a regular basis:

- ▶ Personnel involved in security at the location.
- ▶ Caretaker and maintenance support contractors.
- ▶ Alarm companies/CCTV companies/monitoring companies.
- ▶ Location administrators/key holders.

## INCIDENT REPORTING

Note down as much detail as possible when an incident occurs:

- ▶ Date and time of incident;
- ▶ Location of incident;
- ▶ Description of incident;
- ▶ Description of the suspicious person or vehicle involved (including vehicle registration number);
- ▶ If you have had a threatening/abusive call note down all details about the message, background noise, gender of caller, time of call, number on which it was called etc;
- ▶ If you receive a suspect package you should report it to the police immediately without handling the package, giving as much detailed information as possible.
- ▶ Do not handle or remove suspicious or offensive items, or remove weapons following an attack, as the police will need to obtain forensics on site.