



PROTECTING PATRONS AT PUBLIC GATHERING LOCATIONS



OVERVIEW

Protecting patrons at public gathering locations and venues requires a holistic approach to mitigate vulnerabilities while providing a safe and secure environment. These types of locations can be considered more vulnerable due to their ease of access, large number of attendees, and often limited security. With incidents of targeted violence happening more frequently, becoming more lethal, and occurring over a shorter period of time, public gathering locations and venues remain a potential target. This highlights the importance for venue owners and operators to assess existing safety and security practices to ensure effective procedures and mitigation options are in place.

VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT AND EMERGENCY PLANNING

To mitigate the impacts of a potential physical security incident, facility owners and venue operators are encouraged to begin with a risk assessment to identify and prioritize potential areas of concern, as well as gain insight into mitigation strategies. A comprehensive risk assessment evaluates the threat environment, identifies organizational vulnerabilities, and considers the consequences of a potential incident.

In addition, risk owners are advised to develop emergency action plans that specify the procedures for employees and staff during and in the immediate aftermath of an incident. Ideally, these plans are coordinated with local law enforcement to support collaboration and improve response effectiveness. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) Protective Security Advisors (PSAs), located throughout the country, are available to assist venue owners and operators with vulnerability assessments, emergency action planning, and security options for consideration.

Venue owners and operators are also encouraged to develop and implement emergency communication and mass notification procedures to enhance security and preparedness. Training and exercising these plans and protocols with staff will help enable a more effective response during a potential incident, while simultaneously building personal and organizational resilience.

SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOR INDICATORS

Public gathering locations will benefit from training staff and employees to recognize and report suspicious behavior in accordance with organizational policies and regulations. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) licensed national campaign “If You See Something, Say Something®” provides useful information on how to recognize and report indicators of terrorism-related suspicious activity. In addition, CISA’s “Employee Vigilance Through the Power of Hello” resource provides non-security staff with tangible information that individuals can use to help identify and effectively respond to suspicious behavior.

SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOR MAY INCLUDE BUT NOT BE LIMITED TO THE FOLLOWING:



Attempting to access sensitive or restricted areas



Loitering at a location without a reasonable explanation



Carrying objects that may seem unusual for the surroundings



Placing an object or package, then abandoning it



Expressing or implying threats of violence



Taking pictures/videos of personnel, facilities, and/or security features in an unusual or covert manner



Inquiring about the operations and security of areas where large crowds gather



Wearing unusually bulky clothing that is inconsistent with weather conditions that could conceal explosives/weapons

PROTECTIVE MEASURES



Upon completion of a vulnerability assessment, commercial facilities are encouraged to implement cost-effective protective measures that address identified areas of concern.

In addition, consider the following:

VEHICLE AREAS



- Patrolling parking areas regularly
- Ensuring parking areas and store fronts have adequate lighting
- Restricting vehicles and implementing a trusted access system for delivery drivers near locations with increased pedestrians

PEDESTRIAN AREAS



- Conducting a visual security sweep of the property, facility, or venue before opening
- Limiting the number of people who can congregate near or that can line up immediately outside of the facility or venue
- Securing non-public entry points and checking them regularly

EMPLOYEES



- Advising employees, staff, and volunteers of foundational steps to follow during an active assailant incident (i.e., Run, Hide, Fight), as well as basic life-saving procedures
- Establishing and clearly communicating with staff what the reporting system and expectations are. Consider adding additional signage to help visitors maintain vigilance
- Hiring additional temporary security staff, as necessary (i.e., during special events)
- Reviewing insider threat mitigation programming and protocols

COMMUNICATIONS



- Contacting local fusion centers to understand the threat environment specific to the area
- Coordinating with local law enforcement agencies to increase presence during peak operating hours
- Establishing, exercising, and communicating guidance on how staff accountability will be achieved after an incident
- Creating and exercising a crisis communication plan
- Establishing relationships with neighboring facilities and venues to facilitate information sharing

IF AN INCIDENT OCCURS



Immediately contact 9-1-1. Begin implementing the appropriate emergency action plan and/or incident response plan. Every employee who has an emergency task should know how and when to perform it. This may include life-saving procedures, such as those taught in the STOP THE BLEED® program, which offers critical life saving techniques that could be incorporated into planning, exercise, and training efforts.

AVAILABLE TRAINING AND RESOURCES



CISA provides access to a multitude of capabilities that support security capacity-building efforts, including resources, training, and exercises.

- Securing Public Gatherings: cisa.gov/securing-public-gatherings
- Bombing Prevention Resources: cisa.gov/obp
- Commercial Facilities Sector: cisa.gov/topics/critical-infrastructure-security-and-resilience/critical-infrastructure-sectors/commercial-facilities-sector
- De-escalation Products and Resources: cisa.gov/de-escalation
- Active Shooter Emergency Action Plan Product Suite: cisa.gov/active-shooter-emergency-action-planning
- Employee Vigilance through the Power of Hello: cisa.gov/power-hello
- Exercises: cisa.gov/resources-tools/services/cisa-tabletop-exercise-packages
- Insider Threat Mitigation: cisa.gov/insider-threat-mitigation
- DHS If You See Something, Say Something®: dhs.gov/seesay
- STOP THE BLEED®: stopthebleed.org
- For more information, visit: cisa.gov/protective-security-advisors or email central@mail.cisa.dhs.gov