



DEFEND TODAY,
SECURE TOMORROW

PROTECTING PATRONS DURING THE HOLIDAY SHOPPING SEASON

OVERVIEW

On November 10, 2021, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security issued an updated National Terrorism Advisory System (NTAS) Bulletin to highlight the dynamic threat environment. The Bulletin indicated that the upcoming religious holidays could potentially serve as a catalyst for acts of targeted violence.¹ Given the increase of patrons in shopping venues during the holidays, individuals or groups intending to inflict harm or disrupt festivities may also leverage the corresponding shopping season as an opportunity to engage in grievance-based violence. Although there are currently no credible or imminent threats, shopping venues should assess existing security practices to ensure effective procedures are in place.

VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT & EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

To mitigate the impacts of a potential attack, shopping venues should first conduct a vulnerability assessment to identify and prioritize potential areas of concern. In addition, shopping venues should develop emergency action plans that specify the steps employees will take following an incident; these plans should be coordinated with local law enforcement agencies to facilitate response.² The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) Protective Security Advisors, located throughout the country, are available to assist shopping venue owners and operators with vulnerability assessments, emergency action planning, and security-based coordination.³ Shopping venues should encourage stores and kiosks to increase communication and coordinate actions, where appropriate. Training and exercising these plans and actions will ensure effective response during an incident.

SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOR INDICATORS

Shopping venue employees should be trained to recognize and report suspicious behavior to their managers, security, or local law enforcement agencies. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s “If You See Something, Say Something®” campaign provides additional information on how to recognize and report indicators of terrorism-related suspicious activity.⁴ In addition, the CISA “Employee Vigilance Through the Power of Hello” resource provides non-security employees with tangible information that assists in identifying and effectively responding to suspicious behavior.⁵



Placing an object or package, then abandoning it or leaving the area;



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



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



Carrying objects that may seem unusual for the surroundings;



Loitering at a location without a reasonable explanation;



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



Attempting to access sensitive or restricted areas;



Expressing or implying threats of violence.

¹ dhs.gov/national-terrorism-advisory-system

² cisa.gov/publication/active-shooter-emergency-action-plan-guide

³ For more information visit cisa.gov/protective-security-advisors or email central@cisa.dhs.gov

⁴ dhs.gov/see-something-say-something

⁵ cisa.gov/publication/power-hello-resources

PROTECTIVE MEASURES

Upon conducting a vulnerability assessment, shopping venues should consider implementing cost-effective protective measures that address identified areas of concern. In addition, shopping venues should consider:

- ✓ Contacting local fusion centers to understand the threat environment specific to the area;
- ✓ Coordinating with local law enforcement agencies to increase presence during peak shopping hours;
- ✓ Hiring additional temporary security staff, as necessary;
- ✓ Advising employees and volunteers of simple steps (i.e., run, hide, fight) to follow during an active shooter incident, basic life-saving procedures, and providing guidance on how accountability will be achieved when safe;
- ✓ Creating a crisis communication plan;
- ✓ Patrolling parking areas regularly;
- ✓ Ensuring parking areas and store fronts have adequate lighting;
- ✓ Placing signage describing COVID-19 procedures and security;
- ✓ Conducting a visual security sweep of the shopping venue before opening;
- ✓ Restricting vehicles near locations with increased pedestrians;
- ✓ Securing non-public entry points and checking them regularly;
- ✓ Limiting the number of people who can congregate near or that can line up immediately outside of stores;
- ✓ Frequently monitoring lines for suspicious behavior.

IF AN INCIDENT OCCURS

Immediately call 9-1-1. Set the appropriate emergency action plan and/or crisis communication plan in motion. Every employee who has an emergency task should know how and when to perform it; this may include life-saving procedures. The Federal Emergency Management Agency's *You Are the Help until Help Arrives* curriculum and the DHS *Stop the Bleed* program teach life-saving first aid techniques that should be incorporated into planning efforts.^{6,7}

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 Website (cisa.gov/securing-public-gatherings):

Provides access to information regarding the types of threats posed to public gatherings and resources with options for consideration to support risk mitigation activities.

Employee Vigilance – Power of Hello (cisa.gov/employee-vigilance-power-hello):

Provides information on actions – including by non-security professionals – that may be taken when suspicious behavior is observed.

De-Escalation Series (cisa.gov/de-escalation-series):

Provides information on recognizing warning signs if a person is on a pathway to violence, assessing if a person or situation is escalating, de-escalating a potentially violent situation, and reporting by calling 9-1-1 or organizational reporting mechanisms.

Commercial Facilities Sector Website (cisa.gov/cisa/commercial-facilities-resources):

Provides access to resources specifically geared towards commercial facilities.

CISA Bombing Prevention (cisa.gov/bombing-prevention-training-courses):

Offers training and resources to build counter-improvised explosive device capabilities and enhance awareness of related threats.

CISA Exercises (cisa.gov/critical-infrastructure-exercises):

Offers a wide range of exercise services, including customizable CISA tabletop exercise packages to address a variety of threat scenarios.

⁶ community.fema.gov/until-help-arrives

⁷ dhs.gov/stopthebleed