

# Invest in your church's security to prevent theft in the building

*These headlines, from newspapers across the country, tell a sad story:*



Once considered sacred even to criminals, churches are now prime targets for theft. In fact, it's precisely the trusting nature of church organizations that can make them so vulnerable to crime. If your church's lack of security measures is putting church property — and that of church members — at risk, it's time to make some changes.

The term "resources" cover more than just cash. Your church also will need to ensure the security of valuable property like computers, sound systems, televisions, DVD players and other electronics, musical instruments, vehicles and more — anything that could be sold for money.

The following are some examples of potential risks and basic precautions:

**Theft of valuable property:** Lock up anything of value, preferably in an unmarked closet. For insurance purposes, keep an up-

to-date list and appraisal of property, equipment and fine art.

**Loss or theft of collections:** The collection plates should be highly guarded, from the start of the collection to the finish, with two adults supervising the plate at all times. It is advised that the collections are immediately locked in a secure place or taken to the bank's night depository box until two or three adults are ready to count and document the money.

**Theft from church members:** Church members need to keep a watchful eye on their own personal belongings.

Remind members to lock their car doors while in the church parking lot. Also, personal belongings, such as purses, cell phones and other valuables, should not be left unattended.

**Internal Theft:** To prevent embezzlement of church funds by workers or volunteers, establish a system of internal controls, such as team counting, separation of financial duties, dual signature requirements for checks over a set amount, and regular audits or reviews by an accountant not involved in the church's bookkeeping.

## Form a church watch program

A simple and affordable way to boost your church's security is by setting up a church watch program. The biggest requirement is the help of church members. Follow these steps to implement your program:

- Educate members that the

protection of church resources and the facility is an act of good stewardship.

- Invite members to make an effort to drive around the church property whenever they are out and about in the neighborhood.
- Ask them to look for suspicious activity, cars or people.
- Encourage them to observe unusual activities and to call the police or a designated church leader if they believe something looks out of the ordinary.
- Ask them not to confront individuals or take any unnecessary risks.
- Invite church neighbors to also report anything suspicious to the appropriate authorities.
- Use the church newsletter or bulletins to remind members of the watch program and to thank them for their participation in making your church community a safer place to worship.

The added traffic through your parking lots and around your facility can serve as a deterrent to potential vandals and thieves. And the program may even encourage members to take a more active role in the overall safety and security of all areas of ministry.

## Security systems further safety

Statistics show that a security system can significantly reduce the chances of a burglary or break-in. In fact, just having a well-marked security system, including decals on windows, visible cameras, or obvious wall-mounted systems, are a deterrent in itself.

While some churches may not feel that security systems are a feasible option for their facility due to the cost, the good news is that security systems now are much more affordable, thanks to advancements in technology. Keep in mind that a security system can actually save your church money in the long run by helping to prevent costly thefts.

As a basic rule, a good security system will offer three lines of defense:

**1. PREVENTION** — Decals and window stickers are provided by the security company to let criminals know your church is protected, making them less likely to break-in.

**2. ALARM** — In the event of an attempted break-in or actual entry, the system's audible alarm alerts neighbors and usually scares off the criminal.

**3. CALL FOR HELP** — Most systems are monitored by an off-site vendor, so when an alarm sounds, appropriate

authorities are notified and dispatched to the scene. You also may choose to set up a monitoring service to contact specified church leaders.

Be sure to work with a reputable security system company. The professionals there will assess your facility and make recommendations based on your church's needs and budget. They'll help you explore all the options available and make sure you're well-informed and comfortable with the system your church chooses.

Investing in your church's security — whether it's an investment of time, money or both — could be one of the best decisions your church will make. It also can help maintain a sense of security for your staff and congregation — and in today's uncertain world, that's an important investment, too.

**Eric Spacek is senior risk manager at GuideOne Insurance, West Des Moines, IA. [ [www.guideone.com](http://www.guideone.com) ]**

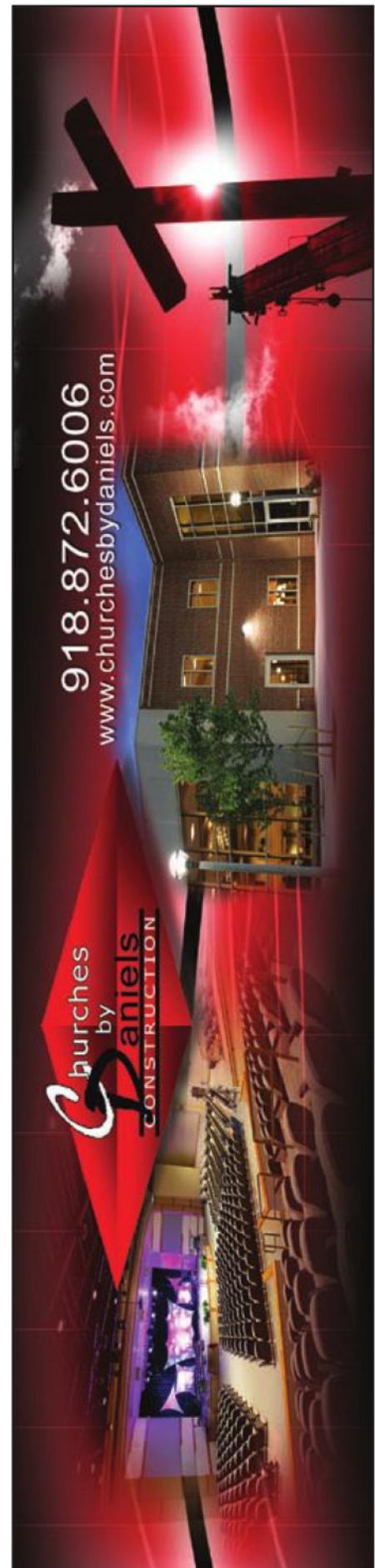


**Acoustics First**<sup>®</sup>  
Materials to Control Sound  
and Eliminate Noise<sup>™</sup>

*Materials that look as good as they sound*<sup>™</sup>

Toll Free **1-888-765-2900**

Web: <http://www.acousticsfirst.com>



Churches  
by  
**Daniels**  
CONSTRUCTION

918.872.6006  
[www.churchesbydaniels.com](http://www.churchesbydaniels.com)