Updated July 2026

Low-Cost/No-Cost Security Measures for Jewish Facilities

The Jewish community faces unique security challenges, and its facilities have been targets of crimes directed at the community. To ensure that these facilities continue to remain places of peace and comfort to members of our community, each facility must own and take charge of its security. Increasing awareness and training of the people who work, visit, or are present in your facility on a regular basis — whether staff members, faculty, clergy, parents, students, or congregants — is one of the single most effective ways to enhance the safety and security of your institution. This guidance is intended to outline security measures that are little to no cost and can assist facilities in increasing their overall security.

Top 10 Low-Cost/No-Cost Security Measures

- **Secure the Property**
- **Control the Flow**
- **Post Signage**
- **Secure the Facility**
- **Control Access**
- **Use Alarm Systems**
- **Staff the Phones**
- **Stock Medical Supplies**
- **Light up the Night**
- **Coordinate with Law Enforcement & First Responders**

Access control is the single most important thing we can do to keep our facilities safe.

REPORT SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

Follow established protocols to report suspicious activity — to include contacting local law enforcement and/or the relevant suspicious activity reporting authority — and contact the SCN Duty Desk at DutyDesk@securecommunitynetwork.org or by calling 844-SCN-DESK.

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Secure the Property

Keeping those with ill intentions from gaining entry to the building and/or property is the first line of defense.

Clearly define the property lines.
Signs, fencing, sidewalks (urban environments), and vegetation/landscaping (suburban/rural environments) can all be effective in defining property lines.

Eliminate hiding and climbing spots and ensure entrances and exits are accessible.
- Trim shrubbery and trees around the property and near windows, entrances, and exits.
  - Shrubbery should be no taller than 2 feet.
  - Shrubbery should be 3 feet away from the walls of the building.
  - Tree branches 6 feet or lower from the ground should be removed.
- Relocate trash containers or other items that may obstruct entry or exit or can be used to scale the building.
- Relocate trash containers away from the building.

Regularly patrol facility grounds at the opening and closing of the facility.
- Look for and report any suspicious individuals.
- Be on the lookout for any damage to the building or surrounding infrastructure and make immediate repairs.

Ensure fire hydrants are accessible and visible.

Identify and coordinate with local authorities (if applicable) outside assembly areas (primary and secondary) to use in the event of a building evacuation.

Control the Flow

A simple security measure is controlling the flow or movement of both human and vehicular traffic.

Implement traffic control measures.
- Prevent parking directly adjacent to entrances to the facility.
  - Bollards, benches, fences, planters, and landscaping can all be used to prevent parking.
- Set up cones to limit access to restricted areas and serve as an early alert system.

Limit entrance points — lock doors and windows, delivery bays, and roof entrances.

Post Signage

Proper signage can be an effective way to convey that the facility is still open to the community while deterring those who may carry out crimes. In addition, signs serve as early warnings to suspicious individuals when signage is not followed.

Avoid identifying specific parking spots with names or job titles. If a parking spot needs to be saved, it can be marked with a "Reserved" sign. Clearly define visitor parking spaces or areas.

Clearly number internal/external doors and rooms.

Clearly identify the main entry and use signage to direct visitors from secondary entrances to the main entrance.

Ensure there is internal signage that identifies important emergency information, such as exit and evacuation routes.
- Make sure exit signs are working and lit up.

Consider putting up signs that deter specific actions.
- Signs that identify the firearm policy:
  - "Firearms are not allowed in the building."
- Signs indicating there is a bag/package search policy:
  - "All persons/bags are subject to search upon request."

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- If applicable, signs indicating that the facility is under surveillance:
  - "This property is under 24/7 surveillance."

Secure the Facility

Securing the facility is vital to keeping threats out of the building and hindering attempts to damage the building and/or harm occupants.

Secure external doors and windows.

During operating hours, limit the number of open doors to what is necessary.
- Ideally, a building will have one entrance point and multiple exit points.

Ensure building ingress and egress are controlled and accessible.
- Make sure external exits cannot be opened from the outside of the building.
- Ensure that all emergency exits are not blocked and are properly alarmed.

Ensure all windows and doors are free of damage and repaired when necessary.

Where possible, install internal locks to segment/secure your building internally.

Ensure that any tenants in your facility are aware of and adhering to security procedures.

Be cautious of suspicious mail and follow suspicious package handling protocol.

Characteristics of suspicious mail include:
- No return address
- Excessive tape
- Misspelled words or incorrect titles
- Excessive postage
- Stains or strange odors
- Odd shape

Limit the amount of information you share online regarding the facility.

Control Access

Openness is a pillar of the Jewish community. Access control does not seek to eliminate the openness of the community but rather to restrict the access of those who have ill intentions.

Ensure doors and windows are locked.
- When necessary, grant access to authorized individuals.

Establish visitor check-in procedures.
- Ideally use a visitor management system, but even sign-in/sign-out sheets for visitors can be effective.
- If applicable, have someone at the entrances, such as a greeter, trained in suspicious behavior detection.

Restrict access to certain parts of the facility.

Use Alarm Systems

In addition to alerting the appropriate individuals that an unauthorized individual or individuals have gained access, alarms may deter the individual(s) completely.

If your facility has alarm systems, ensure they provide adequate coverage for access points and areas where valuable items are stored.

Ensure windows and doors, where possible, are alarmed.
- Alarm systems for windows and doors come at various price points, but inexpensive options can be found at your local hardware store or online.
- Ensure procedures are established and documented that dictate the steps required to ensure that an alarm event is assessed and a response initiated within an appropriate timeframe.

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- **Install duress/panic devices.**
  - Consider installing fixed audible panic alarms at your facility's reception desk, bimah, rabbi's office, etc.
  - Obtain wireless remote panic buttons that can be carried and utilized throughout the building. Implement a device testing schedule following the manufacturer's recommendations.
  - Establish an Incident Response Protocol to help ensure roles and responsibilities are clearly defined for office staff members, emergency contact individuals, and local law enforcement.

- **Implement an internal low-cost alarm system by triggering a response with additional voice or sound.**
  - Airhorns, bullhorns, etc. are inexpensive ways to elicit responses.
  - Develop a procedure that identifies what each phrase or sound means and put them on a laminated card.

Staff the Phones

Threats to the facility may be received over the phone. Having procedures to address threats received via the telephone — and training staff on the procedures — is a key preventative measure.

- **Have caller ID set up.**

- **Inform people about the types of information that should not be given out over the phone to ensure that safety and security information is not leaked.**

- **Provide training for all staff on how to handle difficult calls.**

- **Have an incident (threat, bomb, etc.) checklist by every phone.**

Stock Medical Supplies

In the event of a medical emergency, proper medical supplies can save lives.

- **Host a Stop the Bleed® (STB) training for staff and community members and install STB kits at the facility.**

- **Host automated external defibrillator (AED) training for staff and community members and ensure you have the appropriate number of AEDs.**

- **Ensure the facility has general first aid supplies, including personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks and gloves.**

- **Make sure staff members know where all medical supplies, including defibrillators, are located and how to access them.**

Light up the Night

Criminals do not like to be seen when they are committing crimes. Lighting up the facility and its grounds increases visibility and serves as a deterrent for criminals who do not wish to be detected.

- **Ensure the property, including the building and grounds, is well lit and there are no dark spots for people to hide.**

- **Inspect existing lighting for damage and repair any damage immediately.**

- **Consider low-cost lighting options:**
  - Motion detector lights
  - Pathway lights

Coordinate with Law Enforcement and First Responders

Working with your local law enforcement and first responder agencies is key to ensuring not only increased facility safety but also efficient and effective response in the event of an incident.

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- **Form a security committee to liaise with local law enforcement and first responders.**
- **Invite local response agencies such as police and fire to tour your facility and give safety/security suggestions.**
- **Offer facilities as training locations.**
- **Provide snacks and bathroom facilities for law enforcement to increase their presence during patrols.**
- **Coordinate with law enforcement to seek patrols during low-traffic, high-crime times.**
- **Invite members who work in law enforcement or as a first responder to serve on your security committee.**
- **Develop plans for incident response and include local first responders as part of the planning committee.**
- **Inform law enforcement before high-profile or high traffic-events and request extra patrols or attention during the event.**
- **When possible, train and exercise with local first responders.**

Low-Cost/No-Cost Security Measures Checklist

This checklist will guide you in completing a facility security self-assessment. Take this document with as you walk through your facility and check "yes" for security measures that are currently in place and "no" if they do not exist. For items that do not exist, coordinate with your local law enforcement agency or security professional, or contact the Secure Community Network (SCN) for guidance on how to implement those measures at your facility.

Secure the Property	Yes	No
Are your property lines clearly defined?		
Are there any spots where someone could hide, such as overgrown shrubbery or dumpsters near the building? *Is shrubbery trimmed to be no higher than 2 feet and at least 3 feet from the building?* *Is the lowest branch on all trees higher than 6 feet?*		
Is there anything near the building that could be climbed to gain access to the roof or an upper-story window?		
Are all entrances and exits clear and unobstructed?		
Is the property regularly monitored for suspicious people and/or damage?		
Are fire hydrants easily seen and accessible?		
Have outside assembly areas (primary and secondary) been identified (and coordinated with local authorities if applicable) to use in the event of a building evacuation?		

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LOW-COST/NO-COST SECURITY MEASURES FOR JEWISH FACILITIES

Control the Flow	Yes	No
Is the building easily accessible by vehicular traffic? *Are unvetted vehicles restricted from parking near the building?* *Are there any traffic control measures in place?* *Can existing things such as benches, planters, etc. be moved to control traffic?*		
Do you limit entrance points to the building?		

Post Signage	Yes	No
Are your visitor parking lots clearly marked?		
Is your main entry clearly identified? *Are there signs that direct visitors away from other entrances and to the main entrance?*		
Are internal and external doors clearly numbered or identified?		
Do you have any “deterring” signs (e.g., firearm carry, search policy, or property surveillance)?		

Secure the Facility	Yes	No
Can external doors and windows be easily secured?		
Do you limit the number of open doors during operations?		
Are doors and windows damage free?		
Are entrance and exit points clear?		
Can emergency exits only be opened from inside?		
Are there internal locks installed so that the building can segmented/secured internally?		
If you are in a shared building, do you ensure tenants are aware of and follow security procedures?		

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LOW-COST/NO-COST SECURITY MEASURES FOR JEWISH FACILITIES

Control Access	Yes	No
Do you have a visitor check-in procedure? *Do you have reception staff or ushers/greeters?* *Are they trained on suspicious behavior indicators and what to do?*		
Can you restrict access to certain parts of the building?		

Use Alarm Systems	Yes	No
Does your facility have an alarm system? *Is your facility adequately covered by the alarm system?* *Are windows and doors alarmed?* *Has the alarm system been recently tested to ensure it works?*		
Does your facility have panic alarms?		
Do you have procedures that identify sound or voice signals (e.g., one horn means an active intruder) that would trigger a response?		
Is your alarm system code changed on a regular basis?		

Staff the Phones	Yes	No
Do you have caller ID set up on facility phones?		
Are staff members trained on how to handle threats received via phone? *Do you have a threat checklist by each phone?* *Are there guidelines for staff as to what information should not be shared over the phone?*		

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Stock Medical Supplies	Yes	No
Do you have a first aid kit?		
Do you have any personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks and gloves?		
Have your staff and members been trained on Stop the Bleed® (STB)?		
Do you have STB kits that include tourniquets?		
Have your staff and members received automated external defibrillator (AED) training?		
Do you have the required number of AEDs per local regulations?		

Light up the Night	Yes	No
Are your parking areas well lit?		
Are paths and/or walkways well lit?		
Do any of the lighting structures need repair?		
Is there lighting on the exterior of the building?		
Does the facility have motion detector lights?		
Are there any dark, unlit areas that could provide hiding spots?		
Is there an easily accessible, readily available supply of extra bulbs?		

Coordinate with Law Enforcement/First Responders	Yes	No
Do you coordinate with law enforcement and local response agencies regularly?		
Has your facility been toured by local first responders such as police and fire? *Have you shared your facility floor plans with local first responders such as police and fire?*		
Do you offer to host trainings at your facility for first responders?		
Do you participate in any training or exercises with local first responders?		
Have you developed any incident response plans? *If you have incident response plans, were local responders invited to give input?*		

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Should you or your organization desire professional support, guidance, and assistance in implementing any of the above, designing a strategic security framework, undertaking threat assessments, or providing training, or if you are in need of support for an incident or issue, please contact the SCN Duty Desk.

SCN Duty Desk: 844.SCN.DESK or email: DutyDesk@SecureCommunityNetwork.org

The Secure Community Network (SCN), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, is the official safety and security organization for the Jewish community in North America. Founded in 2004 under the auspices of Jewish Federations of North America and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, SCN serves as the central organization dedicated exclusively to the safety and security of the American Jewish community.