

# Safety Procedures

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Unabridged Report of the Safety Task Force

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This report contains recommended purchases of items and suggested courses of training, a basic plan for prescribed crises, and suggestions for plan dissemination, implementation/training and maintenance.

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## CHURCH SAFETY PLAN:

### A Set of Recommendations to the Board of Trustees

A house of worship is often regarded as a safe area where violence and emergencies seldom occur. It is motivated by a comforting assumption that bad things don't happen in good places. Unfortunately, bad things *do* occur in houses of worship and not infrequently. We are not immune from fires, tornados, wind storms, floods, earthquakes, health crises and violence. Many of these incidents also occur with little or no warning. Churches across the country are developing and updating plans and procedures for the safety and security of their congregations, their staff, and their facilities.

The goal of the First Congregational United Church of Christ (FCUCC) Safety Task Force is to generate safety guidelines and procedures that inform and educate church members and other individuals who use the church building. The content was developed in consultation with Fema's *Guide for Developing High Quality Emergency Operations: Plans for Houses of Worship* (2013). In addition the committee consulted with the Waterloo Department of Public Safety and the Waterloo Fire Department. These guidelines and procedures are designed to help safeguard those using the church in several threatening situations.

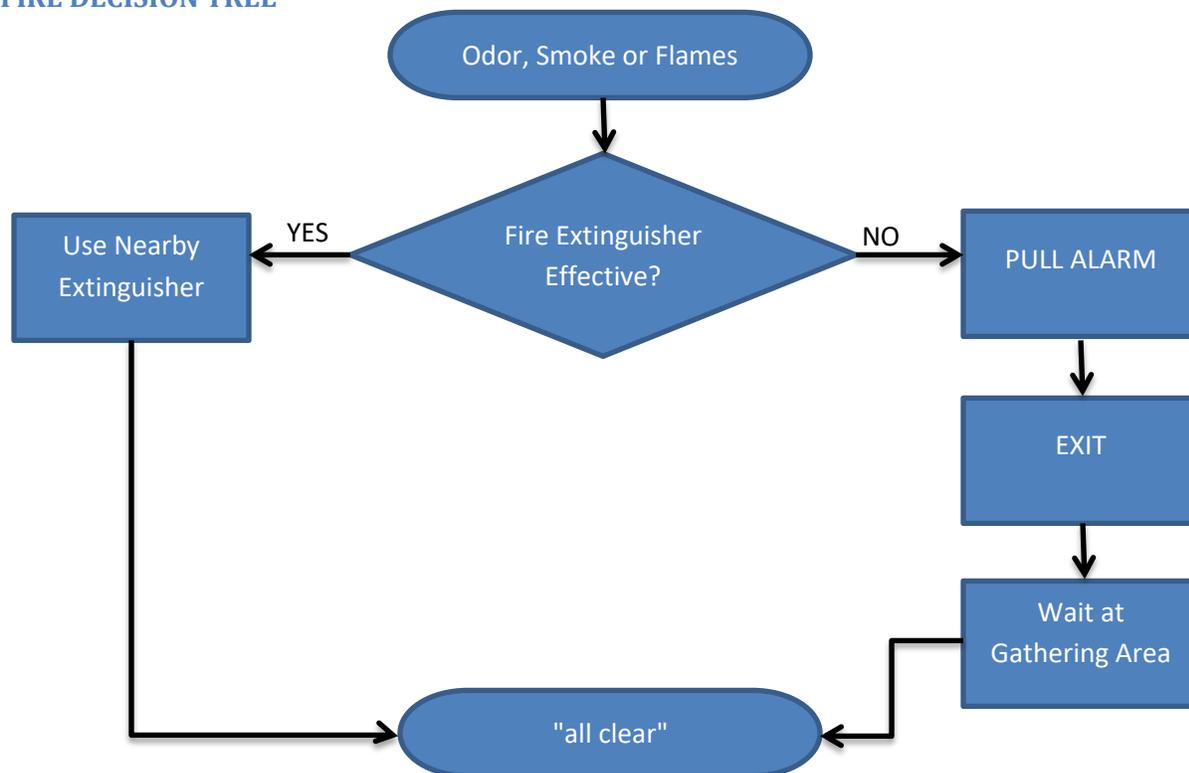
## BASIC PLAN

There are four crises to be addressed by these recommendations. They are (1) Fire, (2) Health Crisis, (3) Weather Crisis, and (4) Dangerous Intruder. Each of these is introduced with basic considerations and followed by a decision tree to assist implementation of the plan.

### FIRE

- A primary safety procedure for fire is to **LEAVE** the building.
- You investigate whether you can e extinguish the fire easily, quickly, safely and completely with extinguishers nearby.
- If you conclude a nearby extinguisher cannot extinguish the fire, you **EXIT** immediately.
- You **PULL** the alarm as you pass it near the exit door.
- You call **911** after exiting, when the origins of a pungent smell of smoke cannot be located.
- Ushers disable elevators to prevent anyone being trapped inside.
- Ushers greet fire fighters and help direct them to the source and nature of the fire.
- You go to the **gathering area** at the church garage and playground on the south end of the parking lot.
- You help identify **children's** parents to help reunite them.
- You identify whether people with **mobility restrictions** have safely reached the gathering area.
- You identify to fire fighters **interior locations** where people may be present.
- Fire fighters signal "**all clear**" which allows you to leave.

### FIRE DECISION TREE



### EXIT Routes:

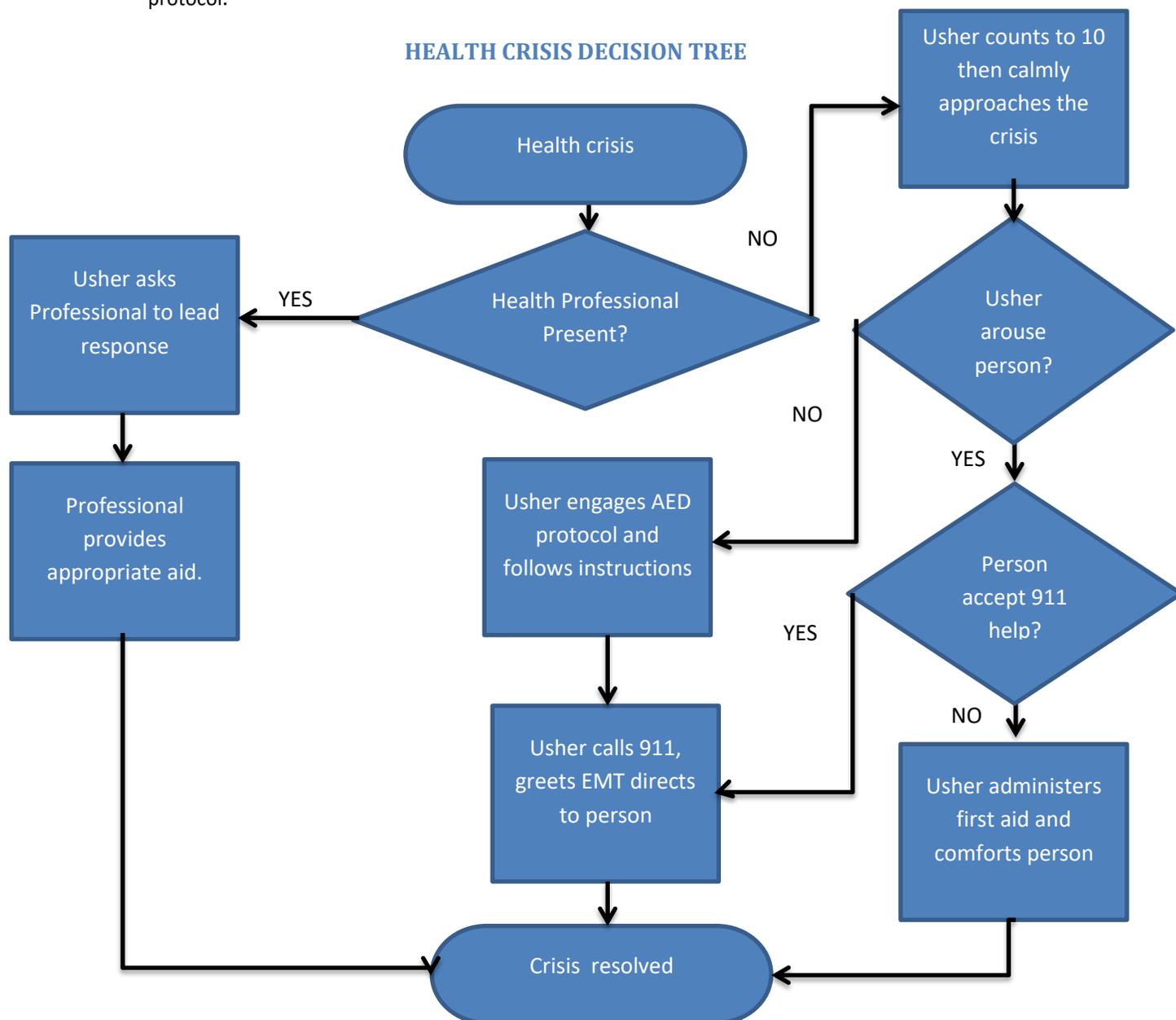
- Gathering area is the **garage near the playground** at the south edge of the parking lot.
- Office Personnel go to the gathering area by **nearest EXIT**.
- Persons in the **nursery** go to the gathering area through the **crossroads EXITS**.
- Persons in **basement** go to the gathering area via east and north stairwell to corner of **4<sup>th</sup> and South streets**.
- Persons in main **sanctuary** go to the gathering area via the nearest EXIT to **4<sup>th</sup> or South street**.
- Persons on **upper level** go to the gathering area via east and north stairwells to **4<sup>th</sup> or South street**.

### Trapped in Shelter

- Secure breathing by wetting a cloth and holding over your nose and mouth.
- If you are trapped inside the building after the crisis has passed, phone 911 and give them your exact location. For instance, "I am trapped in the First Congregational United Church of Christ Church at 608 West Fourth Street in a basement room located at the southeast corner of the building. There are no others with me. I have no medical condition needing urgent attention. I have a whistle that I will continue to blow until I hear rescuers. I have been able to break a window and hang a cloth in the opening to help rescuers."
- You identify your location with visible signs such as flags, lights, noise or phone communication.
- You notify relatives about your location and condition by using your cell phone.
- If you have no cell phone service, continue to display flags, lights and noise until rescued.

## HEALTH CRISIS

- Doctors, Nurses, EMTs and other healthcare individuals identify themselves to the Ushers when attending services.
- Church staff and leaders identify qualified persons among our church members who are willing to be called upon to assist in a health emergency during a church service.
- The church secretary provides a list of these persons to Ushers.
- Before each service begins, Ushers take note of persons in attendance whose names are on this list.
- Ushers know the location of the AED kit and the first aid kit in the sanctuary
- During the course of the service, Ushers watch for individuals who may be experiencing a health emergency.
- Upon becoming aware of an emergency in progress, Ushers engage the “health crisis” decision-tree protocol.



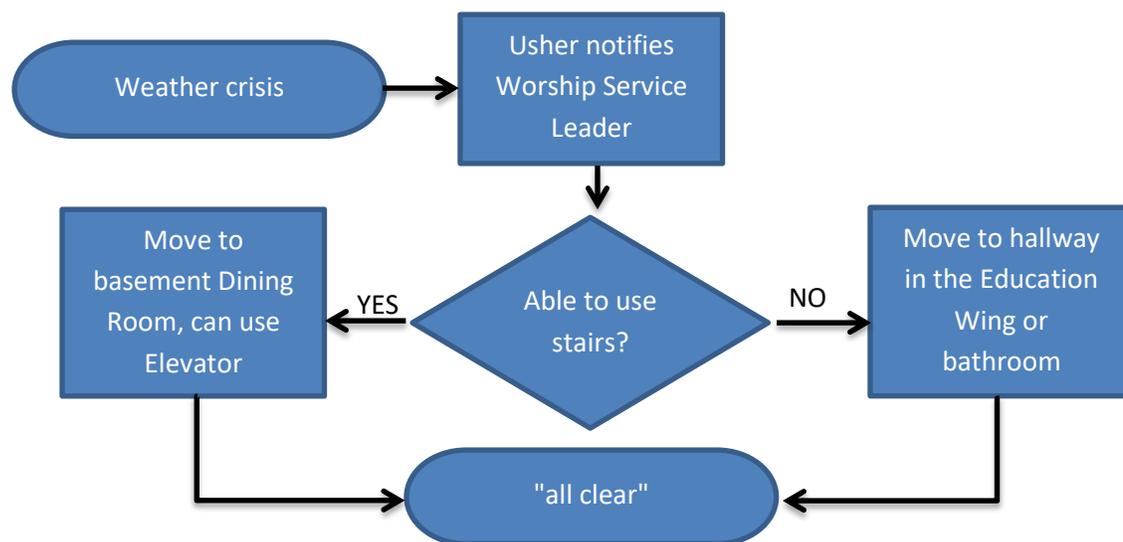
## WEATHER CRISIS

- The primary directive for a weather crisis is to **"find interior shelter inside the building."**
- Ushers monitor local weather information sources for emergency alerts during times when weather crises are high probability events.
- The Lead Usher advises the Senior Minister or other person in charge of the service that a weather crisis exists.
- The Senior Minister or other person in charge of the service announces to the congregation that they should move to interior shelters.
- **Interior shelter locations** in the building are those that are low in the structure (i.e., basements) and away from windows (bathrooms and windowless hallways).
- In the event of a tornado warning, persons who are sufficiently mobile should relocate to the **basement dining area**.
- Ushers facilitate use of the **elevator** for this purpose.
- **Alternate "interior shelter" locations** are (1) hallways in the education wing on the west end, and (2) bathrooms.
- If the weather event is not a tornado (e.g., a snow or ice storm or a rain event) persons shelter-in-place within the building, since location is less critical.

## Trapped in Shelter

- If you are trapped inside the building after the crisis has passed, phone 911 and give them your exact location. For instance, "I am trapped in the First Congregational United Church of Christ Church at 608 West Fourth Street in a basement room located at the southeast corner of the building. There are no others with me. I have no medical condition needing urgent attention. I have a whistle that I will continue to blow until I hear rescuers. I have been able to break a window and hang a cloth in the opening to help rescuers."
- You identify your location with visible signs such as flags, lights, noise or phone communication.
- You notify relatives about your location and condition by using your cell phone.
- If you have no cell phone service, continue to display flags, lights and noise until rescued.

## WEATHER CRISIS DECISION TREE



## DANGEROUS INTRUDER CRISIS

The definition of a dangerous intruder is one who is threatening to attack or is attacking persons with a dangerous weapon, usually in a building, or a confined and populated space. Churches are not immune from this threat. There are two levels of threat : 1. Present on the grounds but outside the building and 2. Inside the building.

### Outside the building.

If a dangerous intruder has *not yet entered the building*, **Lockdown** Procedures should be implemented.

- Ushers move quickly and simultaneously to preassigned exterior doors and lock them with the aid of Allan wrenches, available at each door.
- The Lead Usher calls 911 and stays on the phone until police arrive.
- Persons inside the building locate out of view, keep quiet and help provide information to the Lead Usher.

### Inside the building.

If you know the dangerous intruder *has already entered* the building, **EXIT** the building as quickly as possible. The most effective and appropriate responses to a dangerous intruder are (1) run, (2) hide, (3) fight, usually in this order.

- The person who first sees the dangerous intruder notifies all others present for all to hear.
- Ushers move quickly and simultaneously to prevent the dangerous intruder from entering the sanctuary.
- The Lead Usher calls 911 giving a description of the intruder, intruder's location, weapons present and direction of intruder's movement.

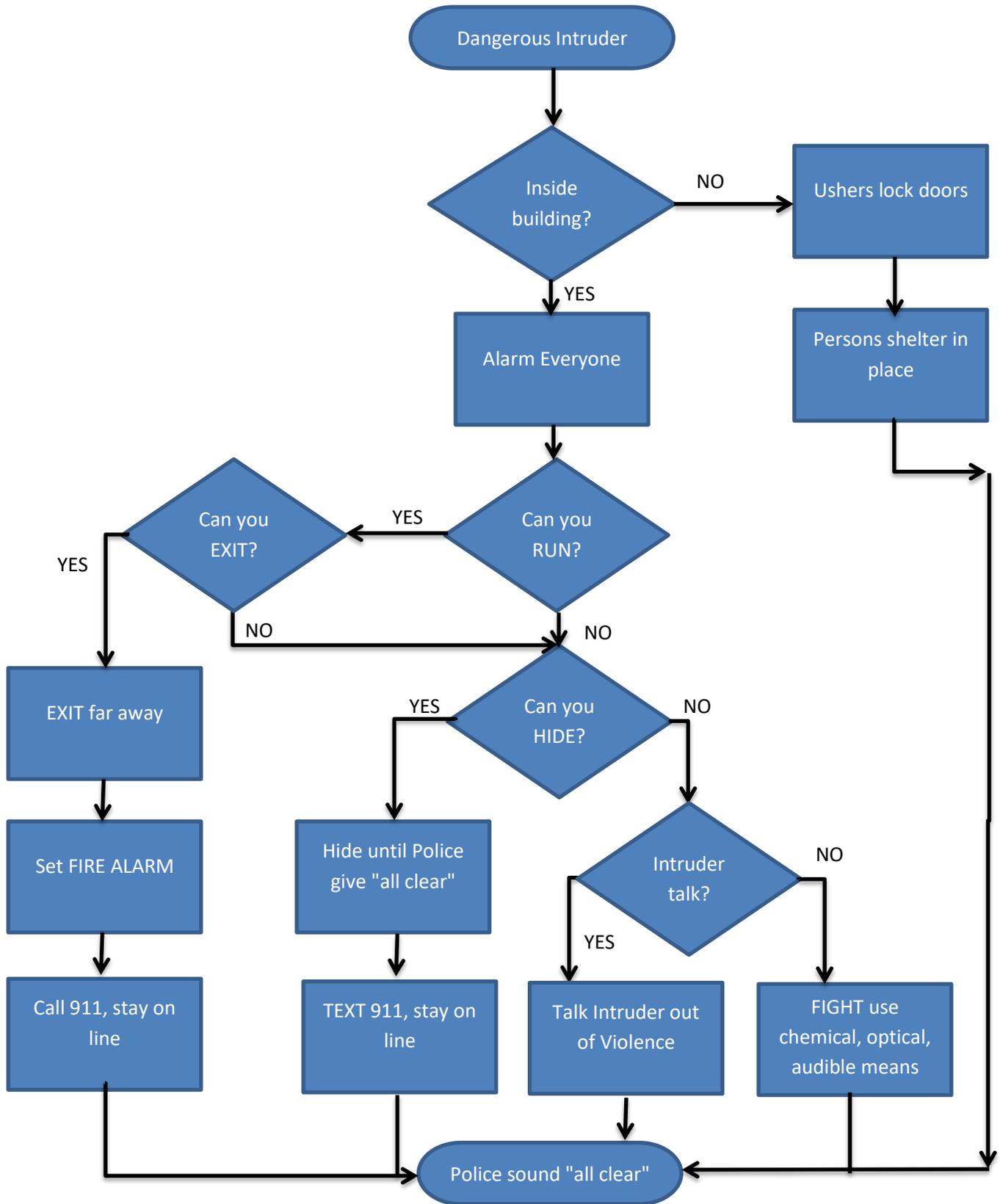
Reactions to this threat should be done **quickly**. Slow and deliberative “play-it-by-ear” decisions are often regrettable.

1. **RUN**
  - a. Evacuate if it is safe to do so. Leave personal belongings behind; visualize possible escape routes, don't run blindly; take others, don't wait to be the last to go; avoid the elevator.
  - b. Once safely outside, **call 911**, stay on line to inform police.
2. **HIDE**
  - a. Lock interior doors of rooms where people are hidden; **silence cell phones**; barricade the doors with heavy furniture; close and lock windows, close blinds or cover windows; turn off lights; remain silent.
  - b. An adult should **TEXT 911** (avoid making any noise until it is safe to do so and stay on the phone until rescuers arrive.
  - c. Do not look for rescuers. This may disclose your location to the intruder.

### 3. FIGHT

- a. Congregants should understand that they might be able to successfully take action to save lives when directly confronted by dangerous intruder. However, this is a very personal decision. Each individual must choose what to do when directly confronting a dangerous intruder.
  - b. Talk to the intruder to establish a personal connection and persuade the intruder to abandon violent behavior.
  - c. Dry chemical fire extinguishers, aimed at the face of the intruder, will blur vision and provide approximately 10 to 15 seconds time to escape.
  - d. Bright LED flashlights aimed at the intruder's eyes make seeing difficult as the eyes try to adjust to the bright light.
  - e. Loud shrilling sounds like whistles or air horns make can disorient the intruder and break concentration. The intruder may break from a trance and abandon harmful ideas.
4. Wait for **Law Enforcement** to announce "all clear".

**DANGEROUS INTRUDER DECISION TREE**



## MAINTENANCE

Finally, a safety plan is not complete without a plan for dissemination, implementation/training, and maintenance. Each of these is addressed in turn.

**Dissemination:** The task force recommends that the guidelines be published for church members and made available (1) on the church website, and (2) as a booklet available from the church office, and (3) as a laminated card located in the hymnal rack at the back of each pew.

**Implementation and Training:** It is recommended that ushers and staff members attend a training session that explains the guidelines and the decision trees.

**Review and Revision:** Provisions for making training available to new ushers should be made. The guidelines and procedures should be updated **every three years** or as otherwise needed.