



# ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS

## Safety and Loss Control News

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## Securing Your Facilities

A staff member arrived at her parish in the morning, only to pull on the door and find it open. Initially, the thought of a break-in or theft might have been the reason for the open door. However, after several similar incidents, her first thought was, "Okay, who left the door unlocked?"

Some of us can remember when parishes used to leave their doors unlocked around the clock. The reason for this was to allow members to come in and spend quiet time whenever they needed it. And frankly, most of the time it worked. Unfortunately, times have changed. Instead of righteous respect, more and more criminals increasingly view parishes as an easy target, especially with the valuable items that are found on their premises. In the past, building contents were limited to hymnals, choir robes, bibles, etc. Nowadays, parishes house sound boards and equipment, instruments, DVD players, computers, TVs, etc., all of which are in high demand and profitable when sold on the street.

### Theft Claims Examples: Costs can add up

Consider the following claims data from parishes that have experienced theft:

- Contractor discovered water running out of a building from a break-in and theft: \$191,500
- Seventeen windows stolen from a parish building: \$147,714
- Unidentified person broke into school structure and broke a water line causing water damage to the structure: \$96,000
- Discovered that unknown individuals had broken into a building for unknown period of time. Contents missing: \$79,584

### Securing Parish Facilities

To avoid these types of claims, we'll take an in-depth look at the following key principles for parish security:

- Communicate
- Shut It Up Tight

- Limit Access
- Check It Regularly
- Handle Concerns Quickly
- Work On Making It Better—Evaluate

Though every parish is unique in how they approach this issue, these key principles can be helpful, regardless of size, location or type of parish.

### Communicate

The security of the parish facility is everyone's responsibility. Therefore, clearly communicating the responsibility of each member and group is a good first step. Let everyone know what you expect of them. Have policies and find as many ways as possible to communicate to the masses. Approach parish security from a stewardship issue. Help people know that caring for the facilities and property God has given to their care, is a faithful act of stewardship.

### Shut It Up Tight

Some parishes are fortunate enough to have a full-time custodial staff. Some even have around-the-clock security. But many rely on a small staff of volunteers. Regardless of the size of your parish, someone should be responsible for doing a walk-through at the end of the day. Not only are you looking for open doors and windows, but also safety concerns. A candle that was not extinguished or a leaky toilet can cause a great deal of damage. Someone (both during the week and after services) should be designated to do a complete walk-through, and make sure the facility is safe and secure.

### Limit Access

Regardless if you still use the key system or have a security/electronic access system, you will want to find ways to limit access to the facility and the areas within the facility to those who are authorized. Re-keying is an project expense the parish may need to plan for. Each year a list should be made of those



***Instead of righteous respect, more and more criminals increasingly view parishes as an easy target, especially with the valuable items that are found on their premises.***

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# Protecting Your Property from Power Surges

## What is a power surge?

Power surges are responsible for causing hundreds of millions of dollars in property damage each year in the United States. When a power surge occurs, it may instantly overload and short out the circuitry of electronics that are plugged into a wall outlet or unprotected power strip. Over time, power surges can cause cumulative damage to electronic property, incrementally decreasing the lifespan of televisions, computers, alarms and anything else that is plugged into the outlet. Knowing what a power surge is, how it can damage electronic equipment and the ways that you can protect your property will help save money and prolong the life of electronic equipment.

## What causes power surges?

Power surges can originate from a number of sources. The most common source of externally generated surges is from the local electric company. Problems such as faulty wiring by a utility, equipment breakdowns, downed power lines, grid shifting and capacitor switching are common power surges. Large users of the same power line at other facilities is also a common source. Heavy electrical equipment that frequently turns on and off, such as heating/air conditioning equipment, high-powered motors and elevators can create sudden, brief demands for power that can disrupt the steady flow of electricity. When the voltage flow is disrupted, anyone connected to these same power lines can experience a power surge. Externally generated surges can also occur when two power lines come into contact with each other as a result of fallen tree limbs, vehicle crashes that damage power poles, ice storms or animals.

Lightning is another cause of power surges. Although direct lightning strikes are rare, when a bolt of lightning strikes exposed cables feeding electrical equipment, the enormous power surges it produces are devastating to anything connected to that power source. Indirect lightning strikes can also cause power surges. The strong electromagnetic fields within lightning can trigger power surges that affect power, telecommunications, and radio transmission lines, which in turn affect electronic equipment inside a facility.

## Protecting Your Property

Surge protectors are an inexpensive device used to protect electronic equipment from power surges. Although they are not designed to stop high-powered surges such as lightning strikes (there are a number of good lightning protection systems on the market that can help your organization address this exposure), they are valuable to reducing surges that may be caused by the local electric company and from the constant switching on and off of high powered electrical devices (refrigerators, air conditioners, elevators, etc.) within the facility. Some of the



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protective devices to consider include:

### Point-of-Use Surge Protection Devices (SPDs)

These devices, combined with a good grounding system, can protect electronic and electrical appliances from common power surges. A surge protection device does not stop a surge, but rather diverts it to the ground. These devices resemble a common power strip. (Keep in mind that not all power strips are equipped to provide surge protection.) Prior to purchasing a surge protection device, make sure it states that it provides surge protection. There are also special outlets that can be installed that provide power surge protection. These types of outlets are good for locations where there isn't room for a plug-in surge protector, such as near a countertop or microwave oven.

### Point-of-Use Devices Combined with Other Devices

Combining a point-of-use device with another device such as a service entrance surge protector or an electrical panel surge protector provides two tiers of protection against power surges.

- Service Entrance Surge Protection Devices:

These devices mount in or onto the main electrical panel or at the base of the electric meter. It protects items such as motors, lights, outlets, light switches, and all other "hard wired" items within the facility that don't plug into an electrical outlet and can't be connected to a point-of-use surge protection device. If a power surge is created by a

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# Protecting Your Property from Power Surges

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lightning strike, the service entrance surge protection device reduces the power surge to a lower level before it gets to the point-of-use surge protection device. Consult an electrician for advice on how to install this type of device.

## Additional Tips

- Prior to purchasing surge protectors, make sure they are listed as UL Standard 1449. This is a national benchmark that indicates the product has been thoroughly tested.
- Choose a point-of-use surge protector that has an indicating light and/or audible alarm that alerts you to when it needs to be replaced. Check the surge protector periodically to make sure it is working properly.
- Select a surge protector that comes with a manufacturer's warranty. Some warranties cover only the device; others also cover any damaged equipment connected to the device.
- Make sure the outlet that the surge protector device is plugged into is properly wired with a proper ground.
- Do not plug surge protectors into extension cords, another surge protector or into circuits protected by a ground fault current interrupter (GFCI).
- If the surge protector smells hot or burned, immediately discontinue using it.
- Make sure that all of the appliances you are using on the same electrical circuit are compatible. For example, don't use a hair dryer on the same breaker or circuit as your computer.
- Reserve a separate circuit for sensitive electronics such as computers.
- Turn off and unplug equipment from the wall if you suspect that a large surge might be coming, such as a lightning strike during a thunderstorm.

*-Information excerpted from: "Protect Your Property from Power Surges," by Staff Writer State Farm Employee, 2/7/11; "Protecting Commercial Facilities from Power Surges;" and "Using Point of Use Surge Devices Correctly."*

# Securing Your Facilities

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who have a need to get into the parish facilities. From that list, you will want to break it down further as to who should have access to specific areas. It is highly recommended that you lock interior doors into such areas as offices, sound equipment rooms or anywhere that valuables or sensitive information exists. Access to those areas should only be given to those who have been approved. With more and more technology, it is also wise to seriously consider a monitored alarm system for your facility.

## Check It Regularly

Occasionally throughout the year, someone should be asking, "has anything changed that might cause us to want to reexamine who is getting access to the facility?" For instance, if a leader has been asked to resign, or if a staff person has moved on to another parish, you would want to make sure that they no longer have access to the facility and that the keys have been collected, or the electronic access codes have been changed.

## Handle Concerns Quickly

When you do come to the parish and find a door open when it shouldn't be, find out why. Check to see who was there last. Remind them of the concern and your parish's security policies. If outside groups use your parish, the tendency is to give them a key. But do you really want a parish key floating around the community? Alternative methods should be considered, such as charging a fee that will allow a parish member or custodian to unlock and lock the facility for the group. If violations persist, then a new method of securing the facility should be considered.

## Work on Making It Better—Evaluate

Finally, it is a good idea to evaluate your security system regularly. If you have a key system, which is becoming less and less desirable, then consider phasing in an electronic access system. The technology on these systems is increasing and in many cases, the prices are dropping.

Conduct a physical survey of your facility at least annually. Make sure doors and windows have good, working locks. Keep bushes around windows and doors trimmed. In addition, ensure that there is good lighting around the facility whenever it is dark.

Communicate with the congregation and parishioners. Repeated reminders are helpful to keep security practices and policies fresh in everyone's mind. In addition, new members and attendees need to be aware of these practices/policies. If there are lapses in security, communicate more often and discuss alternatives.

Last but not least, due to the change in our economy and the more frequent loss of property and misuse/abuse of parish facilities, leaders should think about what changes they need to make before there is an incident. After two break-ins in the same week, one parish finally got to a place where they were able to say, "Maybe we should rethink our approach." Don't wait for this to happen. Discuss it now and avoid the losses that could occur from having done things "the way they've always been done."

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If there are any subjects you would like to see addressed in this newsletter, or questions about a topic presented, please contact Ms. Amanda Weller, Gallagher Bassett Services, Inc., Two Pierce Place, Itasca, IL 60143, Telephone: 815-236-5170, Email: [Amanda\\_Weller@gbtpa.com](mailto:Amanda_Weller@gbtpa.com).

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## Avoid Frozen Water Pipes This Winter



Frozen and subsequently broken water pipes can do a distressingly thorough job of wreaking havoc on parish buildings, not to mention the dollar amount associated with this event. There are a number of things that can be done to protect your buildings from this kind of winter emergency.

- Place adequate insulation around pipes that are vulnerable to cold air.
- Wrap heat tapes (approved by Underwriters Laboratories, Inc. or other similar organizations) around these pipes.
- If practical, use an indoor valve to shut off and drain the water supply to outdoor faucets during the winter. This will prevent freezing in a short span of pipe just inside the building from the faucet. At minimum, disconnect garden hoses from faucets to release accumulated water.
- Keep water dripping or trickling from the faucet farthest away from where the water enters the building (usually near the water meter). This will keep water moving through most of the plumbing and discourage freezing.
- If the pipes in an exterior wall near a sink are not insulated, leave cabinet doors open beneath the sink to let warm air in.
- When buildings are not in use, ensure that thermostats are set at a temperature that will prevent the freezing of pipes and plumbing.