PREVENTING ATTACKS ON GURDWARAS

Resources and Best Practices for Sangat Safety and Security

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For more information about the Sikh Coalition, visit [www.sikhcoalition.org](http://www.sikhcoalition.org).
For additional questions or information about gurdwara security, please email community@sikhcoalition.org.

This toolkit is in English because English is necessary to engage government agencies, but if you require information in Punjabi, please contact our team.
Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh!

On behalf of the Sikh Coalition, thank you for your interest in this Gurdwara Security Toolkit.

The Sikh Coalition shares this resource in an effort to ensure that our gurdwara and sangat leadership continue thinking critically about safety and security. When a neo-Nazi walked into the Oak Creek gurdwara in Wisconsin on August 5, 2012, our worldview changed forever as we witnessed the devastation such an event can cause. Oak Creek was the deadliest act of violence inside an American house of worship since the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama in 1963. Sadly, since then, additional gurdwaras and other American houses of worship have been actively targeted through vandalism, arson, bomb threats, bioterrorism, and mass shootings. The Sikh American community and our gurdwaras remain targets.

Sikhs have a long tradition of defending gurdwaras, and in an effort to better protect our sangat and gurdwara, we must be prepared. Since we formally launched our gurdwara security project in 2017, we have engaged with gurdwaras nationwide who are thoughtful about approaching this unique and difficult challenge. However, many are not necessarily aware of the wealth of resources – including free security consultations and safety checks – that are available to assist in protecting our community spaces. The expertise, knowledge, and recommendations shared is all provided at no cost and includes some of the best guidance in the field.

Every gurdwara is different and has unique security challenges that can only be identified by security experts. In this toolkit, we provide information to help gurdwaras determine how to address their specific security needs through training, enhancing security features, or even improving their relationships with emergency response officials.

These resources are designed to help gurdwara leadership put a plan in place to better ensure that our gurdwaras continue to thrive and prosper as safely as possible. The challenges our communities face can be daunting, but we believe that proper planning and preparedness will help us face and conquer these challenges.

In Chardi Kala,

Satjeet Kaur
Executive Director
The Sikh Coalition
ABOUT THE SIKH COALITION

Whether it’s working to secure safer schools, prevent hate and discrimination, create equal employment opportunities, or empower Sikh communities, the Sikh Coalition’s goal is working towards a world where Sikhs and other religious minorities in America may freely practice their faith without bias and discrimination. For 20 years, the Sikh Coalition has been a national community-based organization with offices and staff in New York City, California (Bay Area and Los Angeles), Washington D.C., and Chicago working with hundreds of volunteer community advocates to protect Sikh civil rights across the United States. The Sikh Coalition is a nonprofit and nonpartisan organization. Our funding comes from grants, private foundations, and individual donors; we receive no funding from any government agencies or institutions.

To learn more about the Sikh Coalition’s work, including our free legal resources aimed at protecting the individual rights of Sikh Americans, visit www.sikhcoalition.org.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit is a resource to understand the importance of gurdwara security so that gurdwara leadership can make the best decisions for the safety and security of sangats. We created this toolkit so that you can navigate topics based on the information most useful or necessary to your gurdwara. However, if your gurdwara committee is seriously considering applying for federal grants to upgrade security, we highly recommend reading the entire toolkit from start to finish because every aspect provides important information related to the grant application process.

This toolkit has deliberately been published only in English because that is the primary language in which outside security interactions, including government agencies, will take place. If you require information in Punjabi, please contact our team.

The first sections provide context about the importance of securing our gurdwaras and what sangats should do in case an incident or emergency occurs. Next, we discuss best practices for securing gurdwaras and important information related to gurdwara security assessments, which are critical for the grant application process. Finally, we close with a discussion on important considerations on firearms at the gurdwara and additional resources for sangats on identifying hate crimes, active shooter trainings, and more.

No matter where your gurdwara is with their internal gurdwara security review process, you can contact the Sikh Coalition. Consulting us is completely free, and we are here to provide information and assistance at community@sikhcoalition.org. Our team will be happy to answer questions and share expertise in English or Punjabi.
Sikhs have always faced bias-based violence in the United States. However, after the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001, there was a sharp increase in hate crimes and discrimination. Moreover, the attack on the Oak Creek, Wisconsin gurdwara in 2012 was a wake up call. At the time, it was the deadliest attack on an American house of worship in nearly 50 years.

For many, the deadly violence inside one of our gurdwaras made us aware that many of our houses of worship are not as safe as they could be. The mission of welcoming everyone can, at times, be at odds with keeping our sangats secure.

Since 2012, there have been several more deadly attacks on American houses of worship as hate crimes against minority communities continue to pose legitimate safety concerns nationwide. Like gurdwaras, synagogues and mosques continue to also receive threats and experience vandalism, arson, and deadly acts of terror. In 2018, the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Tree of Life Synagogue saw 11 worshippers killed and seven injured in yet another act of deadly hate violence.

Since 2017, as a service to the sangat and in response to concerns about increasing hate crime risks against the U.S. Sikh community, the Sikh Coalition has been working with sangats nationwide to make gurdwara safety and security a priority. This toolkit will detail the role that Sikh Coalition can play – as well as the many free resources and training opportunities that federal and state agencies have developed to help gurdwaras and other places of worship minimize the risk of attacks.
ENSURING YOUR GURDWARA IS PREPARED FOR EMERGENCIES

Gurdwara security is not something that can be checked off the to-do list once every few years and forgotten about. Indeed, top security professionals state that it is important to always be thinking about ways to improve and work on security; because the challenges we face will always change, our security must also remain up to date.

Whether your gurdwara is just starting to consider this question or already well-advanced in security, it is important to make sure you have the most up to date information. Let’s start with an assessment on whether you believe that your gurdwara needs additional assistance:

Example 1: It is a normal Sunday at the gurdwara. There is kirtan, langar, and Khalsa school simultaneously going on. Suddenly, the fire alarm is sounded. Everybody starts rushing to the exit doors, and the fire department is alerted.

Does your gurdwara have the following plans and steps in place?
• Who is helping senior members of the sangat?
• Are there any disabled members who need additional assistance? If so, who is providing that assistance?
• What are we doing with Guru Granth Sahib Ji’s saroops? Who is in charge of safely escorting them out?
• How are we ensuring all the Khalsa school children make it out safely?
• Is there a way for us to know if someone got left behind?
• How are we providing first aid to anyone who might have been injured?

Example 2: On a weekday morning, the Granthi Singh who lives on the premises goes outside the gurdwara building for his routine morning walk. As he turns the corner, he notices some spray cans on the ground and several words and symbols painted on the side of the building.

What should the Gurdwara do in response?
• What should be the first call he makes? What is the second?
• Who from the leadership committee comes to the gurdwara sahib to handle next steps?
• Who will be designated as the primary point of contact for law enforcement and possibly the media?
• How will the spray cans and graffiti be handled?
• How will this information be communicated to the sangat?

These types of situations regularly happen at U.S. gurdwaras. We can take steps to be prepared in order to handle these scenarios and much more serious incidents through preparation, thereby avoiding or minimizing the loss of property, injuries or deaths, and any other consequences. This guide will help you get started on a path towards being able to better answer these example questions and give the sangat peace of mind about their safety.
REPORTING INCIDENTS AND THREATS

Threats, violence, vandalism, theft, arson, bioterrorism, and cybercrimes are all serious incidents that should be reported immediately. The first step should usually be reaching out to the local police by calling 911; they will connect you with the right law enforcement agencies and first responders if needed.

The Sikh Coalition also provides completely free and confidential services in English and Punjabi, including lawyers to assist with the prosecution of hate crimes, assistance with meeting gurdwara security needs, Sikh education and awareness through media and interfaith engagement, and hosting workshops with the sangat to educate them on their rights. When you report these security incidents to the Sikh Coalition, we can tailor our support to meet your gurdwara’s needs.

What To Know When You Report Hate Incidents:

If you or someone you know has experienced a crime, threat, or property damage because of their Sikh identity, call law enforcement immediately and get medical attention if needed. Please be aware that law enforcement should not ask you about your immigration status, and in the event that they do, you have the right to not answer the question. The Sikh Coalition is here as a free and confidential resource for anyone who thinks they might have experienced a hate crime. If you would like to have a free and confidential consultation with experienced attorneys in either English or Punjabi, please contact the Sikh Coalition at 212-655-3095 or fill out our reporting form.

Help Educate the Sangat about their Rights:

Download our FAQ guide on hate crimes and hate speech and learn how to report incidents to authorities and the Sikh Coalition. Our hate crime poster can be displayed at your gurdwara and is available in both English and Punjabi. To receive free copies of any of our available resources, please email us at education@sikhcoalition.org.
BEST PRACTICES FOR SANGAT SAFETY AND SECURITY

There are certain practices that all gurdwaras should use in their day-to-day operations in order to help management avoid crimes of opportunity, accidents, and other incidents that may result in damage, loss of property, lawsuits, or worse. Some of these practices are as follows:

Gurdwara Safety Committee:

1. Appoint a safety committee that is in charge of reviewing and updating safety protocols for the gurdwara on a regular basis. There should be at least two gurdwara leadership members and additional sangat members committed to helping with emergency response.
2. It is best if the committee members have backgrounds in or relationships with: medical professionals, law enforcement officers, first responders, or technologists (to respond to cyber threats or manage security footage).
3. Committee members should also have good writing and organization skills to help with both grant writing and communicating effectively with government agencies, law enforcement, and first responders.
4. Task the safety committee with creating detailed safety plans for the gurdwara and working with security experts and/or law enforcement to update and put into effect those plans.
5. Encourage the safety committee to think about events outside of regular diwans. This could include Akhand paths (where a handful of sangat members are in the gurdwara day and night) or during weddings/funerals/special programs (when non-regular sangat comes to gurdwara). Each of these events may require different safety plans.

Physical and Building Security:

1. Keep doors locked when buildings are not in active use. (If there is a caretaker who lives at the gurdwara, they should make sure all gates and entry areas are locked, especially when there is no divan happening or there is very little sangat.)
2. Make sure there are cameras facing all entry areas as well as the Nishaan sahib and that there are security alarms in place. Place accessible signs that inform everyone the area is under video monitoring and alarms.
3. If the gurdwara runs a clinic, food pantry, or Khalsa school in a separate building, make sure that those buildings are also covered by the security system and monitored at all times.
4. Make sure the parking areas are well lit and are also monitored by security cameras.
5. Security cameras should always be monitored by a person at the gurdwara or elsewhere, and footage should be saved. Saving video footage for 30-90 days
is the most common length of time and an essential investigation tool in the event a crime is committed. We encourage gurdwara leadership to develop a specific plan for monitoring and saving video footage.

6. Install bollards (a short, sturdy post) between the gurdwara building and the parking or the street to prohibit vehicles from ramming into the building either by accident or on purpose.

7. Keep the surroundings of the buildings clean of garbage, forestry, or other debris that might be easily used to light a fire and destroy property.

8. Make sure there are fire alarms and extinguishers available throughout the building. Regular maintenance and inspections of fire fighting equipment should be documented.

9. Keep stairways clean and free of blockages to ensure there are no barriers for the sangat to evacuate. Also, mark exits with proper signs and keep the exit paths clear.

10. All emergency exit doors should be locked from the outside and only be able to be opened from inside the building.

11. If the gurdwara is planning for a new construction or renovation, it is highly recommended that you get a security assessment done beforehand so that the recommendations of the security expert can be included during the renovations rather than at a later time (which may create extra costs and additional inconvenience).

Health and Sangat Safety:

1. Have volunteers act as ushers at the front door, especially during big events. They should stay vigilant and be trained on how to handle anyone who looks suspicious. With the right training, they can identify that someone who is wearing a long overcoat or a bulky jacket when it is hot outside may be carrying a weapon. (There are several resources listed to help train sangat members on pages 18-19.)

2. Have several sangat members trained to conduct CPR and the Heimlich maneuver so that they can help in case of an emergency. Have their names and numbers saved should they be needed during an emergency.

3. Keep a well stocked first aid kit in a place that is easily accessible and visible to everyone. Check this kit regularly to make sure it is filled and does not have expired products.

4. Put into place plans to address a threat through mail and delivery packages (e.g. powdery substances or strange items). Think about who opens the mail and if they know what to do if they receive suspicious or unmarked packages. The Department of Homeland Security has additional guidance on this topic.

5. Be mindful of bioterrorist threats (e.g. someone attempting to spread a highly contagious disease or poison onto door knobs, food, water, airways, or meeting areas). Preventive steps could include regulating who has access to the heating and air conditioning system or food supplies and measures to keep those safe.

6. As of the time of writing, the COVID-19 pandemic continues, and we must
continue to follow all necessary health and safety precautions outlined by local, state, and federal public health experts. For reference, please refer to the COVID-related resources that we created at the onset of the pandemic.

7. Create plans on how to protect the gurdwara in case of a cyberattack on the security system or email/donor management system. Think about how the gurdwara will protect the sangat’s credit card information and contact information, website, WiFi, streaming services, and social media accounts. CISA has guidance to help with creating a plan.

Safety and Security Drills:

1. Organize and practice fire drills. Fire drills are important in order to understand how things will work in case there is an actual fire emergency; practice will also help in testing if the evacuation plan works for the sangat.
2. Put an evacuation plan in place and make sure the sangat practices it.
3. Once a safety plan is created, communicate it to the sangat so that they know what to do in an emergency (e.g. when to evacuate or when to lock the doors and barricade in place). This is especially important in case there is an active shooter or another threat at the gurdwara.
4. Remember that families are not always together at gurdwara. It is important to encourage families to think about making their own plans on how they will be reunited in case a mass evacuation takes place.
5. Implement a mass text or mass email system in case there is an emergency at gurdwara sahib so that leadership can communicate with the sangat in real-time.

If your gurdwara already conducts fire or safety drills, please reach out to our team. We would love to hear about it and share your experiences with other gurdwaras across the country. If you would like to share what other plans your gurdwara has put in place, please reach out to us at community@sikhcoalition.org.
UNDERSTANDING GURDWARA SECURITY ASSESSMENTS

A Gurdwara Security Assessment is a thorough process which involves inspecting and reviewing all relevant parts of a gurdwara which include the building, land, neighborhood, online presence, and the sangat. The process usually begins with a visit from a security expert who will inspect the gurdwara and ask questions to better understand how the gurdwara serves the sangat. They share specific recommendations on what requires improvement and how important each recommendation is.

In many cases a security assessment is the first and most important step towards making the gurdwara safer. The security consultations are a free service provided by federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, and they are a prerequisite for applying for most federal or local security upgrade grants (more on this later in this document).

It is strongly recommended that a trained security professional work with the gurdwara to complete the security assessment rather than self-guided security assessment. A trained and qualified security expert has the expertise to recognize things that we may overlook but could well be a security threat. For example, if the heating and air condition system is exposed, it can be used to spread dangerous chemicals, poison, or contagious diseases. Therefore, getting an expert perspective is very important when it comes to security. The security expert shares their findings in a report which is specific to that particular site and is shared with the gurdwara leadership.

Key considerations in any professional report are as follows:

- **Security of the premises:** This includes safeguards in place to prevent crimes, violence, and loss of or damage to property for any reason.
- **Safety of the sangat and the premises:** This covers issues like accidents, illness, injuries, and any other potential harm that can be caused to the sangat members, staff, or even the building.
- **Emergency preparedness:** Specific steps taken by staff members, volunteers, and sangat members to respond to and recover from any threats and harmful events.
- **Recovery planning:** Any plans that guide the sangat and gurdwara to recover and continue operating in case there is an interruption caused by an incident or threat.
RESOURCES FOR SANGATS TO GET SECURITY ASSESSMENTS

For the most thorough and complete gurdwara assessment, the most highly recommended option is to invite local or federal law enforcement to conduct the gurdwara security assessment. In addition to streamlining the process, this also can have the benefit of building relationships with law enforcement agencies and increasing gurdwara situational awareness for those agencies in the event of an emergency. This simple step could save a lot of time and lives if the first responders know the location and layout of the gurdwara and attached buildings.

While using local or federal law enforcement is often the highly recommended option, there are many ways that gurdwaras can successfully complete a gurdwara assessment survey. Below are the most commonly used and recommended methods to obtain security assessments.

Federal – Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

DHS has assigned Protective Security Advisors (PSAs) for every state. These officers will join the appointed contact for a few hours at the gurdwara to show them around and complete the security assessment. They will listen to concerns and will want to understand if there have been any past incidents, threats, or suspicious individuals of concern. Sometimes the PSA will also invite local law enforcement officials to help the gurdwara build a relationship. Federal agencies like DHS are able to provide information on additional training and security resources.

State and Local Law Enforcement

Gurdwara leadership can also ask state and local police departments to provide a security assessment for the facility at no cost.

Private Agencies

The gurdwara leadership can also consult a private security agency to conduct this assessment. Unlike law enforcement, private security agency assessments may not be free, so you should get a full understanding of costs associated and their qualifications before inviting them to provide a gurdwara security assessment. Private agency consultations will also not help the gurdwara build a relationship with first responders.

Security Self-Assessment

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) has created a self-assessment which can be completed independently. This assessment can be very lengthy and time consuming and may not be as helpful as in-person assessments by federal, state, local, or private agencies. However, it is a helpful
tool in some cases – for example, if a grant application is due immediately and scheduling with an external agency is not possible due to time constraints.

As a civil rights organization, the Sikh Coalition takes protecting the civil liberties of all Americans extremely seriously. This includes remaining hyper-sensitive to potential problematic law enforcement programs and policies that could infringe or harm the rights of Sikhs or other minority religious communities. It is critical to know that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is responsible for immigration enforcement. The Sikh Coalition has been told directly by DHS that it does not share any information from gurdwara security assessments with any other government agency, including Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). That said, if sangat members are not comfortable with inviting DHS to complete a security assessment for this reason, we recommend other options as listed above.

Every gurdwara who considers using local or federal law enforcement for their gurdwara assessment should also be aware of the previously reported post-9/11 law enforcement programs that have used American houses of worship to map, monitor, and entrap people. While many of these programs have reportedly focused on non-Sikh communities or been ruled unconstitutional, it is essential to understand that these programs have existed and posed real threats to civil liberties.

SIKH COALITION SECURITY ASSESSMENT ASSISTANCE

The Sikh Coalition has helped more than 75 gurdwaras across the country in getting their security assessments conducted. We have introduced these gurdwaras to their state specific Protective Security Advisors (PSAs) and guided them through the entire process. If you decide to use law enforcement instead, we will help make introductions with the appropriate law enforcement agency, verify that a consultation takes place, and ensure that a final report on security recommendations is issued. Please note, however, that the Sikh Coalition will not be able to see the contents of your security recommendations.

Like all of our work, these services are absolutely free for the sangat and are available in English and Punjabi. Contact us at community@sikhcoalition.org to get started. We can also connect interested individuals to other gurdwaras who have already gotten their assessments done so that they can share their experience and best practices.
GURDWARA LEADERSHIP

- Contact Sikh Coalition
  - Determine best option for security assessment
    - Department of Homeland Security
    - State and local law enforcement
    - Private Agencies
      - Security Self-Assessment

- Set date and time for the security assessment visit
- Follow up to ensure a security improvement report is issued
- Share training events and community threats with sangats
- Consider upcoming grants to upgrade security measures
- Implement measures for keeping security up to date

*The Sikh Coalition is not able to assist with actual grant applications.
Every year, the federal government and state governments provide money for houses of worship and nonprofits to help improve their security. These grants are contingent on a completed gurdwara security assessment; they also require a formal written proposal submission, including information about threats the gurdwara faces. A critical factor in the grant making process is to establish that funding will go towards eliminating credible threats. If the threat is deemed credible and justified by the state authorities, the submission will move into the competitive pool of applications. This grant process is highly competitive, and the successful submission of an application does not guarantee a grant approval.

The grant is a reimbursement grant. This means that once a formal approval has been given, the gurdwara has to pay for the security services and improvements up front, which will then be reimbursed by the state. Please note that in order to get full reimbursement the gurdwara has to adhere to strict guidelines and maintain proper documentation when paying for services and improvements. For example, if the gurdwara is getting new cameras, before getting them installed the gurdwara has to conduct a competitive bid with several vendors in order to get the best price.

Gurdwaras should plan to have their security assessments completed before applying for grants during the beginning of the year. The security assessments are important because they help determine which gurdwaras are at risk and therefore eligible to receive funding. Make sure to assign a specific person who can communicate via email with state government agencies and has strong written and spoken English skills.

Per the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) website, $90 million² were allocated towards these grants in 2020.

Applicants in urban areas can apply for up to $100,000; applicants outside urban areas may have a lower limit depending on rules set by the State Administrative Agency. (Applicants in urban areas may also be more likely to receive funding. Check FEMA FAQs for more information on urban vs. non-urban areas.) According to information the Sikh Coalition has received, just under 50 percent of the applications received a grant in 2020.

Allowable funding includes resources to create plans, surveillance equipment, training or response activities. More information and resources on the Nonprofit Security Grant Program, including the Notice of Funding Opportunity (actual details of the grant), allowable expenses, and related documents are available on FEMA’s website.
Important points before you consider applying for federal security grants:

- Know the deadlines for the application process. The application process window is usually once in the first half of the year, and you do not want to start the process late.
- It is strongly recommended to work well ahead of time to prepare your application and gather documents you need. Please refer to and thoroughly review this FAQ for further details.
- These grants are reimbursement-based, which means that once the organization is approved for the grant, they will have to spend the money out of pocket first (up to the amount and the specific requirements for which the gurdwara has been approved) and then provide documents for payment from the state government.
- Gurdwaras must apply to their State Administrative Agency (SAA) for Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) funds. Gurdwaras cannot apply to FEMA directly – they must apply to the SAA. You must contact your SAA for information to understand the application process and how to apply.
- Some states also offer additional grants separate and apart from federal funding. A few states that have offered their own grants for non-profit security enhancements in the past few years are New York, New Jersey, California, and Pennsylvania. State agencies like the state department of homeland security or state emergency management agencies can also assist with security assessments.
- Creating relationships with different houses of faith and interfaith organizations in your local community or state can be immensely helpful for information sharing and other assistance. Many other faith communities have a lot more experience with federal grant applications and may be willing to help you in the process.

The application process for a security grant requires a lot of paperwork to complete to be eligible for the grant. It is important that gurdwaras start that process well in advance of the grants being announced, which is in the first half of the year. The time to complete an application is usually short, which is why we recommend that gurdwaras be prepared so that they do not miss it.

To learn more about how to apply for grants, visit [www.grants.gov/learn-grants.html](http://www.grants.gov/learn-grants.html), call 1-800-518-4726, or email [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov). The Sikh Coalition does not have enough staff or volunteers to assist with the actual application process, but we can introduce you to other gurdwaras that have obtained a security grant and are able to share their experience. Please contact us at [community@sikhcoalition.org](mailto:community@sikhcoalition.org) to get more information on the grant application process.
FIREARMS AND/OR ARMED SECURITY AT THE GURDWARA

For those sangats who are already heavily engaged in discussions or decisions involving firearms inside the gurdwara, we strongly recommend reviewing the points discussed below. Additionally, we advise that gurdwaras discuss any decision transparently with their sangat and consult with law enforcement and/or their legal counsel to critically assess all long-term legal and safety implications.

Below is a list of some of the serious considerations gurdwara leadership should take into account before creating any policy around firearms in the gurdwara. Ultimately, this is a thoughtful and careful decision for each individual sangat to make in close conjunction with local law enforcement and state laws.

- **State laws and licensing**: What does the state law say about firearms? Each state has specific laws around who can have firearms and the licensing process that needs to be completed in order to be eligible to carry one.

- **Liability for the gurdwara**: A discussion with the insurance company will provide clarity on important questions. If a sangat member, who is not an employee, is carrying a firearm for the purpose of gurdwara security, what kind of liability does that create for the gurdwara and the sangat member? If a sangat member or bystander gets hurt accidentally, who will pay for treatment or damages?

- **Screening, training, and supervision**: How will the gurdwara leadership screen and decide which sangat members will carry the firearms, what training will be mandated, who will bear the cost of the firearms and training? How will the gurdwara leadership and armed sangat members coordinate with law enforcement in an emergency?

- **Signage and policies**: Will the gurdwara post a sign or make it known publicly that there are armed sangat members, who they are, and how they will be identified in an emergency? What policies, procedures and restrictions will be put in place for patrol, weekly attendance, roles in an emergency, and other considerations?

- **Local law enforcement**: What do local police recommend to ensure that they know who is armed in case of an active shooter scenario? What do local police recommend for the gurdwara and neighborhood?

The Sikh Coalition does not take a position on having armed security at the gurdwara. Instead, we encourage sangat members to understand laws and liability and decide for themselves what it would mean for the sangat to have firearms at the gurdwara.
GOVERNMENT AGENCY ROLES AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

There are several government agencies that are positioned to help make our gurdwaras safer while preparing our sangats for the worst case disasters. Safety does not only mean installing cameras and locks or hiring security – it is equally important that the sangat is trained and prepared for emergencies. Keeping a gurdwara safe is a never-ending process, and the Sikh Coalition is here to help share resources. Provided below are different resources and trainings which can help keep the sangat feel safe and have a better understanding of what to do in case of an emergency.

Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

The Department of Homeland Security works to protect the nation from the many security threats it receives and is also the agency primarily in charge of immigration enforcement. More information is available at www.dhs.gov. DHS works with various federal agencies to ensure that gurdwaras have the right information, training, and experts to respond in times of disaster. DHS has many agencies that work underneath it, and you should be aware of the following agency information:

- The Protective Security Advisors Website has information on how to get a gurdwara security assessment: www.dhs.gov/protective-security-advisors
- The Hometown Security Website provides information on many resources made available to protect houses of worship (including gurdwaras): www.dhs.gov/hometown-security
- The DHS Active Shooter Preparedness Guide has information on how schools and houses of worship can train to respond to an active shooter: www.dhs.gov/active-shooter-preparedness

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) works to ensure that we, as a nation, are prepared to respond before, during, and after disasters. Visit www.fema.gov for more information. At a federal level, FEMA is the primary agency that provides funding for security grants for houses of worship and natural disaster funding.

- The FEMA Emergency Management Institute Website lists different training opportunities and free online courses: www.training.fema.gov/EMI
- The FEMA All-Hazards Emergency Operations Planning Guide is designed to help create plans with specific roles and responsibilities in response to emergencies: www.fema.gov/pdf/plan/sl101.pdf
Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency is the nation’s risk advisor, and works with public and private partnerships to ensure the country is equipped with cybersecurity tools, information, training, and experts. Visit www.cisa.gov for more information.

- The Active Shooter Preparedness Guide helps prepare for and respond to an active shooter incident: www.cisa.gov/active-shooter-preparedness
- The Resources for Houses of Worship Website provides information on steps to take to secure our houses of worship: www.cisa.gov/faith-based-organizations-houses-worship
- The Houses of Worship Self-Assessment Tool is designed to guide members of houses of worship through a security-focused self-assessment to understand risks and work to understand how to address them: www.cisa.gov/houses-of-worship

Department of Justice (DOJ)

The goal of the Department of Justice is to protect and defend the country’s interest according to the law of the United States. This agency houses the government’s attorneys and are able to bring criminal charges against attackers and civil lawsuits on behalf of the United States. Visit www.justice.gov for additional information.

One of the components of DOJ, the Community Relations Service (CRS), provides resources for faith leaders and community members on the best way to protect houses of worship from potential threats, including an understanding of hate crimes, local and federal laws and best practices for safety and security. More information is available at www.justice.gov/crs.

- The DOJ CRS Protecting Places of Worship Guide talks about how houses of worship can be protected through education and dialogue: www.justice.gov/file/1058496/download
- This Hate Crime Website provides information on understanding, preventing and reporting hate crimes: www.justice.gov/hatecrimes
**Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)**

The Federal Bureau of Investigation is a national law enforcement organization. They also provide resources and training related to terrorism, cyber attacks and preventing crime. The FBI also investigates hate crimes.

- The **Active Shooter Resources Website** provides information on how to respond in an active shooter training situation: www.fbi.gov/about/partnerships/office-of-partner-engagement/active-shooter-resources

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**ENDNOTES**

3. Adapted from “Talking Points on the Issue of Firearms in the Congregation” by Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh
5. https://www.fema.gov/about
6. https://www.justice.gov/about
7. https://www.fbi.gov/about