



PREVENTING ATTACKS ON GURDWARAS

RESOURCES AND BEST PRACTICES
FOR SANGAT SAFETY AND SECURITY



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For more than 20 years, the Sikh Coalition has fought for a world where Sikhs and other marginalized religious groups in America may freely practice their faith without bias and discrimination. Our work includes efforts towards securing safer schools, preventing hate and discrimination, creating equal employment opportunities, empowering local Sikh communities, and raising the Sikh profile.

We are a national organization with a strong community focus, staff in all parts of our country, and hundreds of volunteer community leaders and advocates aiding in our mission to protect Sikh civil rights at the local, state and federal levels.

As a nonprofit and nonpartisan organization, our funding comes from grants, private foundations, and individual donors; we accept no funding from any government agencies or institutions.

For more information on the Sikh Coalition's work, including our free legal resources to safeguard the individual rights of Sikh Americans, please visit: sikhcoalition.org.

For additional questions or information about gurdwara security, including to start the security assessment process for your gurdwara, please email community@sikhcoalition.org.

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A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh!

On behalf of the Sikh Coalition, thank you for your interest in this Gurdwara Security Toolkit—a resource we offer in order to encourage gurdwara leadership to continuously evaluate the safety and security measures in place to protect our sangats.



Harman Singh

*Executive Director
The Sikh Coalition*

On August 5, 2012, a white supremacist with neo-Nazi ties entered the gurdwara in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, and profoundly changed our worldview with respect to the fear of anti-Sikh mass violence in the United States. **Oak Creek marked the deadliest attack in 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 by vandalism, arson, bomb threats, bioterrorism, transnational repression, and further mass shootings. The Sikh American community and our gurdwaras remain at risk.

Sikhs have a long tradition of defending gurdwaras; to better protect our sangats, we must be prepared. Since the launch of the Sikh Coalition's gurdwara security project in 2017, we have engaged with gurdwaras nationwide who are thoughtfully addressing this unique and challenging issue. However, many are unaware of the wealth of resources—including free security consultations, safety checks, and grants—that are available to assist in protecting our community spaces. The expertise, knowledge, and recommendations are provided free of charge and include some of the best guidance in the field.

Every gurdwara is unique and faces distinct security challenges that can only be identified by security experts. This toolkit provides information to help gurdwaras determine how to address their specific security needs through training, enhancing security features, or improving their relationships with emergency response officials.

These resources are designed to help gurdwara leadership develop a plan to ensure that our gurdwaras thrive and prosper as safely as possible. While the threats our communities face can be daunting, we believe that proper planning and preparedness will enable us to confront and overcome these challenges.

Chardi Kala,

Harman Singh



HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit is designed to help community leadership understand the importance of gurdwara security and make informed decisions for the safety of their sangats. This resource allows you to navigate topics based on what is most useful or necessary for 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 given that every section contains crucial information related to the grant application process.

The initial sections provide context about the importance of securing our gurdwaras and outline steps sangats should take in the event of an incident or emergency. Next, we cover best practices for securing gurdwaras and essential information related to gurdwara security assessments, which are critical for the grant application process. Then, we discuss important considerations regarding things like firearms at the gurdwara and transnational repression, and more. And finally, we conclude with an overview of government resources across numerous agencies that are relevant to the ongoing task of gurdwara security and emergency preparedness.

Regardless of where your gurdwara stands with its internal gurdwara security review process, you can contact the Sikh Coalition team for assistance. Consulting with us is completely free, and we are here to offer additional information at community@sikhcoalition.org. Our team is happy to answer questions and share our expertise in English or Punjabi.



GURDWARA SAFETY AND SECURITY IN THE UNITED STATES

Sikhs have long faced bias-based violence in the United States, but the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, led to a sharp increase in hate crimes and discrimination. The 2012 attack on the gurdwara in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, served as a wake up call, marking the deadliest attack on an American house of worship in nearly 50 years.

For many, the deadly violence inside one of our gurdwaras highlighted that our houses of worship are not as safe as they could be. The unfortunate truth is that our mission of welcoming everyone can sometimes conflict with the need to keep sangats secure.

Since 2012, several more deadly attacks on American houses of worship have underscored the ongoing safety concerns posed by hate crimes against marginalized communities. Gurdwaras, synagogues, mosques, and mandirs continue to face threats, vandalism, arson, and deadly acts of terror. In 2018, the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, experienced a tragic act of hate violence, resulting in the deaths of 11 worshippers and injuries to seven others.

Since 2017, as a service to the sangat and in response to growing concerns about hate crimes against the U.S. Sikh community, the Sikh Coalition has been working with sangats nationwide to prioritize gurdwara safety and security. This toolkit details the role the Sikh Coalition can play and highlights the many free resources and training opportunities provided by federal and state agencies to help gurdwaras and other places of worship minimize the risk of attacks.

THERE ARE MORE THAN

300

GURDWARAS
NATIONWIDE

MORE THAN A

100

GURDWARAS HAVE
TAKEN PROACTIVE
STEPS FOR GREATER
SECURITY

JUST

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FREE CONSULTATION
CAN HELP PROTECT
YOUR SANGAT

ENSURING YOUR GURDWARA IS PREPARED FOR EMERGENCIES

Gurdwara security is not a task that can be completed once and then forgotten about. Top security **professionals emphasize the importance of continually improving and updating security measures.** As the challenges we face evolve, our security strategies must also remain current and effective.

Whether your gurdwara is just starting to consider security measures or is already well-advanced, it is important to make sure you have the most up-to-date information. To start, assess whether your gurdwara might need additional assistance:

EXAMPLE 1

It's a typical Sunday at the gurdwara, with keertan, langar, and Khalsa School all happening simultaneously. Suddenly, the fire alarm goes off. Hearing the sound, 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 is the plan for safely escorting Guru Granth Sahib Ji's sarroops? Who is responsible for this seva?
- How are we ensuring that all Khalsa school children exit safely?
- Is there a system in place to check if anyone has been left behind?
- How are we administering first aid to anyone who might be injured?

EXAMPLE 2

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

What should the Granthi Singh and Gurdwara do in response?

- What should be the first phone call he makes? What is the second?
- Who from the leadership committee should come 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?
- What training/discussions took place with the Granthi Singh to make sure information about how to address this scenario was conveyed promptly and correctly?

EXAMPLE 3

A new frequent visitor to your gurdwara seems unusually curious about the community's affairs. The visitor, identified only as “Mr. Singh,” has been seen attending services and mingling with the sangat. He initially presented himself as a new immigrant looking to mix into the local Sikh community, but over a period of a few weeks, he started asking some more pointed questions, like how long certain sangat members had been in the United States; if they are permanent residents, refugees, or asylum seekers; and what kind of connections they have back in India.

Strangely, Mr. Singh is only interested in engaging specific individuals—mostly younger and more vocal people, rather than the long-standing members of the sangat—and he rarely participates in the gurdwara’s religious activities.

The gurdwara management takes notice of this behavior. How should they respond?

- Do they issue a community-wide warning asking sangat to be careful about what they share with strangers?
- Who engages with law enforcement to alert them about potential surveillance by a foreign government? Who helps law enforcement understand that diasporic communities can be targeted for intelligence gathering purposes? Are federal or local law enforcement best to engage?
- Does the gurdwara increase their security measures? Do they implement stricter entry protocols for certain events?
- Who from the gurdwara management team will engage government representatives to raise concerns about potential foreign interference and surveillance in their community and ask that this matter be raised with the federal authorities?
- How are we administering first aid to anyone who might be injured?

Situations like these regularly occur at U.S. gurdwaras. By preparing to handle these scenarios and much more serious incidents, we can reduce the risk of property damage, injuries or deaths, and other consequences.

This guide will help you start addressing these concerns and provide the sangat with greater peace of mind about their safety.



Threats, violence, vandalism, theft, arson, bioterrorism, transnational repression, and cybercrimes are all serious and should be reported immediately. The first step is almost always to contact the local police by calling 911; they will connect you with the appropriate law enforcement agencies and first responders if needed. Some crimes also warrant being reported to the FBI, which the Sikh Coalition can assist with.

The Sikh Coalition also offers free and confidential services in English and Punjabi. These services include legal assistance for navigating the investigation and prosecution of hate crimes, supporting gurdwara security needs, reporting instances of transnational repression, offering Sikh education and awareness through media and interfaith engagement, and workshops with sangat members to educate them on their rights. If you report a security incident to the Sikh Coalition, we can customize our support to meet your gurdwara's needs.

WHAT TO KNOW WHEN YOU REPORT HATE INCIDENTS

If you or somebody you know has experienced a crime, threat, or property damage due to their Sikh identity, call law enforcement immediately and seek medical attention if needed. Please be aware that law enforcement should not ask you about your immigration status, and you have the right to not answer the question if they ask. The Sikh Coalition is always present as a free and confidential resource for anyone who believes they may have experienced a hate crime. For 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](#) to learn how to report incidents to authorities and the Sikh Coalition. Our [hate crime poster](#), available in English and Punjabi, can be displayed at your gurdwara. To receive free copies of any of our [available resources](#), please visit [our website](#) or email us at community@sikhcoalition.org.



BEST PRACTICES FOR SANGAT SAFETY AND SECURITY

Certain practices should be implemented in the day-to-day operations of all gurdwaras to help management prevent crimes of opportunity, accidents, and other incidents that could lead to damage, property loss, lawsuits, or worse. Here are some key practices:

GURDWARA SAFETY COMMITTEE

1. Appoint a Safety Committee

- Form a safety team of at least two sangat members responsible for regularly reviewing and updating the gurdwara's safety protocols.
- Train additional individuals to assist with emergency response.

2. Preferred Relationships and Backgrounds

- Committee members with backgrounds or relationships with medical professionals, law enforcement officers, first responders, or technologists (for cyber threats or security footage management) are ideal.
- Strong written and organizational skills are essential for grant writing and effective communication with government agencies, law enforcement, and first responders.

3. Safety Plans

- The safety committee should create detailed safety plans for the gurdwara and work with security experts and/or law enforcement to update and implement these plans.
- Consider safety measures for events outside of regular divaans, such as Akhand Paaths (with sangat members present during the day and night) or during weddings, funerals, and special programs (with non-regular sangat attendees). Each different type of event may require a distinct safety plan.

PHYSICAL BUILDING SAFETY

1. Lock Doors

- Ensure doors are locked when buildings are not in active use.
- Caretakers should lock all gates and entry areas, especially when there is no divaan or minimal sangat present.

2. Surveillance and Alarms

- Install cameras at all entry points and around the Nishaan Sahib and set up security alarms.
- Display clear signs indicating that the area is under video surveillance and alarmed.

3. Additional Buildings

- Ensure that any buildings used for a clinic, food pantries, or Khalsa schools are also covered by the security system and monitored at all times.

4. Lighting and Monitoring

- Keep parking areas well lit and monitored by security cameras.
- Have security cameras continuously monitored by a designated person, and save footage for 30-90 days.
- Develop a plan for monitoring and storing video footage.

5. Vehicle Barriers

- Install bollards (short, sturdy posts) between the gurdwara building and parking areas or the street to prevent vehicles from ramming into the building, either accidentally or intentionally.

6. Clean Surroundings

- The safety committee should create detailed safety plans for the gurdwara and work with security. Keep the area around the buildings free of garbage, forestry, or other debris that could be used to start a fire and cause property damage.

7. Fire Safety

- Install fire alarms and extinguishers throughout the building and document regular maintenance and inspections of this equipment.

8. Clear Pathways

- Ensure stairways are clean and free of obstructions to allow for safe evacuation.
- Mark exits with proper signs and keep exit paths clear.
- Lock emergency exit doors from the outside so that they can only be opened from inside the building

9. Construction and Renovation

- Before any new construction or renovation, obtain a security assessment to incorporate the recommendations of the security expert during the renovations, which ideally minimizes extra costs and inconvenience later.

HEALTH AND SANGAT SAFETY

1. Ushers for Security

- Assign volunteers to act as ushers at the front door, especially during large events.
- Ushers should remain vigilant and be trained to handle suspicious individuals. Proper training can help them identify potential threats, such as someone wearing a long overcoat or bulky jacket in hot weather, which may indicate they are carrying a weapon. (Refer to page 16 for training resources.)

2. Emergency Response Training

- Train several sangat members in CPR and the Heimlich maneuver.
- Keep these individuals' names and contact information readily available for emergencies.

3. First Aid Kit

- Maintain a well-stocked first aid kit in a visible and easily accessible location.
- Regularly check and restock the kit, ensuring that no products are expired.

4. Mail and Package Safety

- Develop plans for handling suspicious mail and delivery packages (e.g. powdery substances or strange items). Ensure that those who open the mail are trained on how to respond to suspicious or unmarked packages. The Department of Homeland Security provides [additional guidance](#) on this topic.

5. Bioterrorism Awareness

- Be vigilant about bioterrorist threats, such as attempts to spread highly contagious diseases or poisons on doorknobs, food, water, airways, or meeting areas.
- Implement preventative steps like regulating access to heating and air conditioning systems or food supplies.

6. COVID-19 Precautions

- Continue following all necessary health and safety precautions outlined by local, state, and federal public health experts due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.
- Refer to the [COVID-related resources](#) created at the onset of the pandemic for guidance.

7. Cybersecurity Plans

- Develop plans to protect the gurdwara in case of a cyberattack on the security system or email/donor management system.
- Consider how to safeguard the sangat's credit card information, contact details, website, Wi-Fi, streaming services, and social media accounts.
- CISA provides [guidance](#) to help create a cybersecurity plan.

SAFETY AND SECURITY DRILLS

1. Evacuation Plan

- Establish an evacuation plan and ensure the sangat practices it regularly.

2. Fire Drills

- Organize and practice fire drills, which are designed to test the effectiveness of the evacuation plan, to ensure everyone understands the procedure in case of an actual fire emergency.

3. Safety Plan Communication

- Once a safety plan is created, communicate it to the sangat so they know what to do in an emergency, such as when to evacuate or when to lock the doors and barricade in place. This is crucial for scenarios like an active shooter or other threats at the gurdwara.

4. Family Reunion Plans

- Encourage families to make their own plans for reuniting in case of a mass evacuation, recognizing that families may not always be physically together at gurdwara.

5. Mass Communication System

- Implement a mass text or mass email system to allow leadership to communicate with the sangat in real-time during an emergency.



If your gurdwara already conducts fire or safety drills, please reach out to our team; We would love to hear about your experiences and share them with gurdwaras across the country.

If you have other similar safety and preparedness measures in place, please contact us at community@sikhcoalition.org.



A gurdwara security assessment is a comprehensive process that involves inspecting and reviewing various aspects of a gurdwara, including the building, land, neighborhood, online presence, and sangat. The process typically 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 will then provide the leadership team site-specific recommendations in a report on necessary improvements and prioritize their importance.

In many cases, a security assessment is the first and most crucial step towards enhancing the safety of a gurdwara. These security consultations are a free service provided by federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, and they are often a prerequisite for applying for federal or local security upgrade grants (see more details on this later in the document).

We strongly recommend that sangats work with a trained security professional to complete the security assessment rather than attempting a self-guided security assessment. A trained and qualified security expert can identify potential threats that might otherwise be overlooked. For instance, an exposed heating and air conditioning system can be a conduit for spreading dangerous chemicals, poisons, or contagious diseases.

According to one model, key considerations in any professional security assessment are as follows:

- 1. Security of the Premises:** Measures in place to prevent crimes, violence, and loss or damage to property for any reason.
- 2. Safety of the Sangat and the Premises:** Measures to address issues like accidents, illness, injuries, or any other potential harm to sangat members, staff, or the building.
- 3. Emergency Preparedness:** Specific steps for staff members, volunteers, and sangat members to respond to and recover from threats and harmful events.
- 4. Recovery Planning:** Plans that guide the sangat and gurdwara to recover and continue operating in the event of an interruption caused by an incident or threat.



For the most thorough and comprehensive gurdwara assessment, the best option is to invite local or federal law enforcement to conduct the security assessment. This not only streamlines the process, but also helps build relationships with law enforcement agencies and enhances their situational awareness of the gurdwara in case of an emergency. This familiarity with the location and layout of the gurdwara, and its attached buildings could save time and lives during a crisis.

While involving local or federal law enforcement is highly recommended, gurdwaras have several options for completing a gurdwara assessment. Here are some commonly used and recommended methods to:

FEDERAL: DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

DHS has assigned Protective Security Advisors (PSAs) for every state. These officers will spend a few hours at the gurdwara with their appointed contact to conduct the security assessment. They will listen to concerns and gather information about any past incidents, threats, or suspicious individuals. Sometimes, the PSA will also invite local law enforcement officials to help the gurdwara build a relationship with them. DHS can also provide information on additional training and security resources.

STATE AND LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT

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

PRIVATE AGENCIES

Gurdwara leadership can also hire a private security agency to conduct the assessment. Unlike law enforcement, private security agency assessments may not be free, so it is essential to understand the associated costs and qualifications before engaging their services. Note that private agency consultations may not help the gurdwara build a relationship with first responders.

CYBERSECURITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE SECURITY AGENCY (CISA) SELF-ASSESSMENT

[CISA](#) offers a self-assessment tool that can be completed independently. While this assessment can be lengthy and time consuming and may not be as beneficial as in-person assessments by federal, state, local, or private agencies, it is useful in certain situations—such as when a grant application is due immediately and scheduling with an external agency is not feasible due to time constraints.

A NOTE ON COMMUNITY CONCERNS AROUND LAW ENFORCEMENT

As a civil rights organization, the Sikh Coalition prioritizes the protection of the civil liberties of all Americans. This includes being acutely aware of potential law enforcement programs and policies that might infringe upon or harm the rights of Sikhs or other marginalized religious communities. It is important to note that the DHS is responsible for immigration enforcement.

The Sikh Coalition has received assurances from DHS that information from gurdwara security assessments is not shared with any other government agency, including Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). However, if sangat members are uncomfortable with inviting DHS for a security assessment for this reason, we recommend considering other options listed above.

Additionally, gurdwaras considering using local or federal law enforcement for their security assessment should be aware of the post-9/11 law enforcement programs that have involved American houses of worship in mapping, monitoring, and entrapping people. Although many of these programs have reportedly focused on non-Sikh communities or have been ruled unconstitutional, it is crucial to recognize that such programs have existed and posed real threats to civil liberties.



SIKH COALITION SECURITY ASSESSMENT ASSISTANCE

The Sikh Coalition has helped more than 100 gurdwaras across the country in obtaining security assessments. We have facilitated introductions to state-specific Protective Security Advisors (PSAs) and guided gurdwaras through the entire process. If you choose to use law enforcement for your assessment, we will help with introductions to the appropriate agency, ensure a consultation takes place, and verify that a final report on security recommendations is issued. However, please note that the Sikh Coalition will not have access to the contents of your security recommendations.

As with all of our services, our assistance with security assessments is provided free of charge to the sangat and is available in English and Punjabi. To get started, contact us at community@sikhcoalition.org. We can also connect interested individuals with other gurdwaras that have completed their assessments so they can share their experiences and best practices.

Finally, the Sikh Coalition has a list of recommended independent organizations and individuals with grant writing expertise. We have done our due diligence in vetting these referrals and we are happy to share these with you. Please note that some of our referrals come with a certain cost and the funds paid will go directly to the chosen grant writer. There is no obligation to work with anyone we recommend and if you prefer to conduct your own research, please feel free to do so.

GURDWARA LEADERSHIP SECURITY ASSESSMENT FLOWCHART

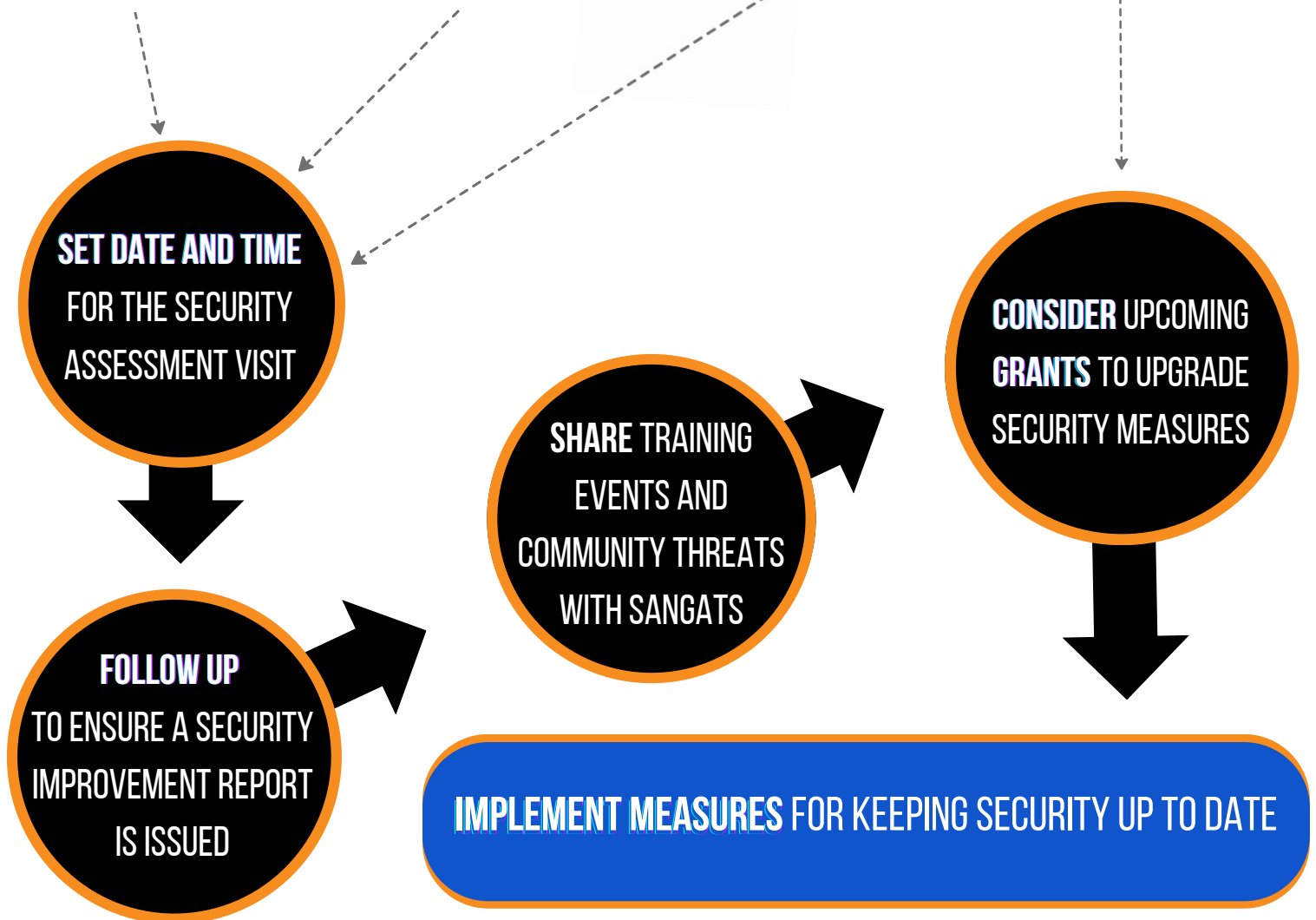
FIRST, CONTACT THE SIKH COALITION FOR ASSISTANCE IN DETERMINING THE BEST SECURITY ASSESSMENT OPTION:

OPTION 1
DEPARTMENT OF
HOMELAND SECURITY

OPTION 2
STATE AND LOCAL
LAW ENFORCEMENT

OPTION 3
PRIVATE
AGENCIES

OPTION 4
SECURITY
SELF-ASSESSMENT





GRANTS FOR SECURITY UPGRADES

Each year, federal and state governments offer grants to houses of worship and nonprofits to enhance their security. These grants require a completed security assessment and a formal written proposal detailing the threats the gurdwara faces. A key element in the grant application process is demonstrating that funding will address credible threats. If state authorities deem the threat credible, the application will advance to the competitive pool. It's important to note that this process is highly competitive, and a successful application submission does not guarantee grant approval.


It is important to note that grants operate on reimbursement basis. This means that after receiving formal approval, the gurdwara must pay for security services and improvements upfront, and then seek reimbursement from the state. To ensure full reimbursement, the gurdwara must follow strict guidelines and maintain thorough documentation for all expenses. For example, if installing new security cameras, the gurdwara must conduct a competitive bid with multiple vendors to secure the best price before proceeding with the installation.

Per the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) [website](#), faith-based and nonprofit organizations used \$305 million in Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) funding to improve their security measures in 2023. The total amount of funds [available](#) under the FY 2024 NSGP is \$454.5 million. Nonprofit subapplicants can apply for up to \$150,000 per site; the exact amounts will be determined by your location and any rules set by your respective State Administrative Agency (SAA). Please check [FEMA FAQs](#) for more information on urban vs. non-urban areas. According to [public reporting](#), just over 40 percent of NSGP applications received a grant in 2023.

Allowable NSGP expenses include resources to purchase surveillance equipment, develop evacuation plans, training or response activities, and additional warning systems. More details about the NSGP—including the *Notice of Funding Opportunity (actual details of the grant)*, *allowable expenses*, and *related documents*—can be found on [FEMA's website](#).

Important points before you consider applying for federal security grants:

- 1. Know the Deadlines:** The application process typically occurs only once in the first half of the year. Start early to avoid any last minute rushes.
- 2. Prepare in Advance:** It is critical to begin preparing your application and gathering necessary documents well ahead of time. Please refer to and thoroughly review this FAQ for further details.
- 3. Reimbursement-based Grants:** These grants require organizations to spend the money out of pocket first (up to the approved amount and specific requirements) and then submit documentation for reimbursement from the state government.
- 4. Application Process:** Gurdwaras must apply to their State Administrative Agency (SAA) for NSGP funds. Direct applications to FEMA are not permitted; you must contact your SAA for application details and procedures. Your SAA may also have different/earlier deadlines for submission than FEMA.
- 5. State-specific Grants:** Some states offer additional grants beyond federal funding. States like New York, New Jersey, California, and Pennsylvania have provided their own grants for nonprofit security enhancements. State agencies such as the state department of homeland security or state emergency management agencies can also assist with security assessments.
- 6. Community and Interfaith Relationships:** Building relationships with different houses of worship and interfaith organizations in your local community or state can be immensely beneficial for information sharing and other assistance. Other faith communities often have more experience with federal grant applications and may be willing to assist you in the process.



For more information on how to apply for grants, visit www.grants.gov/learn-grants.html, call 1-800-518-4726, or email support@grants.gov.

While the Sikh Coalition does not have sufficient staff or volunteers to assist with the application process directly, we do share referrals for grant writers and can connect you with other gurdwaras that have successfully obtained security grants in order to share their experiences. Please contact us at community@sikhcoalition.org for additional information on the grant application process.



FIREARMS AND/OR ARMED SECURITY AT THE GURDWARA

Below is a list of serious considerations for gurdwara leadership to take into account before establishing any policy related to firearms in the gurdwara, which were adapted from a similar list of questions posed by the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh. We strongly advise gurdwaras to engage in transparent discussions with their sangat on this issue and consult with law enforcement and/or legal counsel to critically assess all long-term legal and safety implications. Ultimately, this is a thoughtful and deliberate decision that each sangat must make in close collaboration with local law enforcement and in accordance with respective state laws.

- **State Laws and Licensing:** What do state laws say about firearms? Each state has specific regulations governing who can possess firearms and the licensing process required to carry one legally.
- **Liability for the Gurdwara:** It's important to discuss liability concerns with your insurance company. If a sangat member, who is not an employee, carries a firearm for gurdwara security, what liability does that create for the gurdwara and the individual? In the event of an accidental injury to a sangat member or bystander, who would be responsible for covering the costs of medical treatment or damages?
- **Screening, Training, and Supervision:** How will the gurdwara leadership screen and select which sangat members are permitted to carry firearms? What training will be required, who will cover the costs of firearms and training, and how will coordination with law enforcement be managed in an emergency?
- **Signage and Policies:** Will the gurdwara post signs or publicly disclose that certain sangat members are armed? How will these individuals be identified during an emergency? What policies, procedures, and restrictions will be established regarding patrol duties, weekly attendance, roles in emergencies, and other relevant considerations?
- **Local Law Enforcement:** What recommendations do local police have to ensure that they are fully aware of who is armed in the event of an active shooter scenario? What do they advise for the safety of both the gurdwara and the surrounding neighborhood?



ਵਿਅਕਤੀਗਤ ਧਮਕੀ

ਇੱਕ ਸਰੀਰਕ ਵਿਅਕਤੀਗਤ ਧਮਕੀ ਉਦੋਂ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਹੈ ਜਦੋਂ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਧਮਕੀ ਦੇਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਵਿਅਕਤੀ ਦੀ ਨੇੜਤਾ ਦੇ ਕਾਰਨ ਅਟੱਲ ਖਤਰੇ ਵਿੱਚ ਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ।
ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਕੋਲ ਤਿੰਨ ਵਿਕਲਪ ਹਨ:

- ਦੌੜੋ:** ਭੱਜਣ ਦੇ ਰਸਤੇ ਦੀ ਪਛਾਣ ਕਰੋ। ਕੋਈ ਵੀ ਅਜਿਹੇ ਸਮਾਨ ਨੂੰ ਸੁੱਟੋ ਜੋ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਹੌਲੀ ਕਰ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ। ਜੇ ਸੰਭਵ ਹੋਵੇ, ਤਾਂ ਦੂਜਿਆਂ ਦੀ ਭੱਜਣ ਵਿੱਚ ਮਦਦ ਕਰੋ। 911 'ਤੇ ਕਾਲ ਕਰੋ
- ਲੁਕੋ:** ਖਤਰੇ ਦੀ ਨਜ਼ਰ ਤੋਂ ਦੂਰ ਲੁਕੋ। ਦਰਵਾਜ਼ੇ ਬੰਦ ਕਰੋ ਜਾਂ ਪ੍ਰਵੇਸ਼ਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਬੰਦ ਕਰੋ। ਆਪਣੇ ਸੈੱਲ ਫੋਨ ਨੂੰ (ਵਾਈਬ੍ਰੇਟ ਮੋਡ ਸਮੇਤ) ਚੁੱਪ ਰੱਖੋ ਅਤੇ ਖਤਰਾ ਖਤਮ ਹੋਣ ਤੱਕ ਚੁੱਪ ਰਹੋ।
- ਲੜੋ:** ਲੜਨਾ ਇੱਕ ਆਖਰੀ ਰਸਤਾ ਹੋਣਾ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਕੇਵਲ ਉਦੋਂ ਹੀ ਜਦੋਂ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਜਾਨ ਨੂੰ ਅਟੱਲ ਖਤਰਾ ਹੋਵੇ। ਧਮਕੀ ਨੂੰ ਅਸਮਰੱਥ

ਫੋਨ ਤੇ ਧਮਕੀ

ਫੋਨ ਦੀ ਧਮਕੀ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਮਿਲੀ ਧਮਕੀ ਹੈ। ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਾਲਰ ਅਤੇ ਧਮਕੀ ਬਾਰੇ ਵੱਧ ਤੋਂ ਵੱਧ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਕਰਨ ਦੀ ਕੋਸ਼ਿਸ਼ ਕਰਨੀ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ, ਜਦੋਂ ਤੱਕ ਖਤਰਾ ਨੇੜੇ ਨਾ ਹੋਵੇ ਜਾਂ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਜਾਂ ਹੋਰਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਫੌਰੀ ਨੁਕਸਾਨ ਨਾ ਪਹੁੰਚ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੋਵੇ।

- ਸ਼ਾਂਤ ਰਹੋ ਅਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਬੰਦ ਨਾ ਕਰੋ।
- ਜਿੰਨਾ ਚਿਰ ਹੋ ਸਕੇ ਕਾਲਰ ਨੂੰ ਫੋਨ ਤੇ ਰੱਖੋ ਅਤੇ ਇਹ ਨਿਰਧਾਰਤ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਲੈਣ ਦੀ ਕੋਸ਼ਿਸ਼ ਕਰੋ ਕਿ ਧਮਕੀ ਵਿਲੱਖਣ ਜਾਂ ਵਾਸਤਵਿਕ ਹੈ, ਜਾਂ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਜਾਂ ਦੂਜਿਆਂ ਲਈ ਤੁਰੰਤ ਖਤਰਾ ਪੈਦਾ ਕਰਦੀ ਹੈ।
- ਜੇ ਸੰਭਵ ਹੋਵੇ, ਤਾਂ ਨੇੜਲੇ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸੁਣਾਨ ਲਈ ਫੋਨ ਕਾਲਰ ਨੂੰ ਸੁਣਾਨ ਲਈ ਚੁੱਕ ਕੇ ਦੂਰ ਕਰੋ।
- ਜੇ ਸੰਭਵ ਹੋਵੇ ਤਾਂ ਕਾਲ ਰਿਕਾਰਡ ਕਰੋ।

ਇਲੈਕਟ੍ਰਾਨਿਕ ਮੈਸੇਜ ਧਮਕੀ

ਇੱਕ ਇਲੈਕਟ੍ਰਾਨਿਕ ਮੈਸੇਜ ਧਮਕੀ ਸਿੱਧੀ ਮੈਸੇਜਿੰਗ, ਈਮੇਲ, ਜਾਂ ਸੋਸ਼ਲ ਮੀਡੀਆ ਦੁਆਰਾ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਕੀਤੀ ਧਮਕੀ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਵਿੱਚ ਬਲੋਕਮੇਲ ਜਾਂ ਮਾੜੇ ਨਤੀਜਿਆਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਧਮਕੀਆਂ ਸ਼ਾਮਲ ਹੋ ਸਕਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ ਕਰ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤਕਰਤਾ ਪਾਲਣਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੈ

- ਅਗਿਆਤ ਭੇਜਣ ਵਾਲਿਆਂ ਤੋਂ ਮਿਲਿਆ ਕੋਈ ਇਲੈਕਟ੍ਰਾਨਿਕ ਮੈਸੇਜ ਜਾਂ ਅਟੈਚਮੈਂਟ ਨਾ ਖੋਲ੍ਹੋ।
- ਸੋਸ਼ਲ ਮੀਡੀਆ 'ਤੇ ਅਣਜਾਣ ਜਾਂ ਅਣਚਾਹੇ ਵਿਅਕਤੀਆਂ ਨਾਲ ਗੱਲਬਾਤ ਨਾ ਕਰੋ।
- ਯਕੀਨੀ ਬਣਾਓ ਕਿ ਤੁਹਾਡੀਆਂ ਸੁਰੱਖਿਆ ਸੈਟਿੰਗਾਂ ਸੁਰੱਖਿਆ ਦੇ ਸਭ ਤੋਂ ਉੱਚੇ ਪੱਧਰ 'ਤੇ ਸੈੱਟ ਹਨ।

ਸਾਈਬਰ ਹਮਲੇ

ਇੱਕ ਸਾਈਬਰ ਅਟੈਕ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਇਲੈਕਟ੍ਰਾਨਿਕ ਡਿਵਾਈਸ ਲਈ ਖਤਰਾ ਪੈਦਾ ਕਰ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਨਿੱਜੀ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਦਾ ਪਰਦਾਫਾਸ਼ ਕਰ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ। ਮਜ਼ਬੂਤ ਗੁਪਤਕੋਡਾਂ ਦੀ ਵਰਤੋਂ ਕਰੋ ਅਤੇ ਇੱਕ ਤੋਂ ਵੱਧ ਵੈਬਸਾਈਟਾਂ ਲਈ ਇੱਕੋ ਗੁਪਤਕੋਡ ਦੀ ਵਰਤੋਂ ਨਾ ਕਰੋ

- ਐਂਟੀ-ਵਾਇਰਸ ਅਤੇ ਐਂਟੀ-ਮਾਲਵੇਅਰ ਐਪਲੀਕੇਸ਼ਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਵੈਚਾਲਿਤ ਤੌਰ 'ਤੇ ਅੱਪਡੇਟ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਸੈੱਟ ਕਰੋ।
- ਜਿਵੇਂ ਹੀ ਸਿਸਟਮ ਅਤੇ ਸੌਫਟਵੇਅਰ ਅੱਪਡੇਟ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੁੰਦੇ ਹਨ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਲਾਗੂ ਕਰੋ।
- ਦੇ-ਕਾਰਕ ਪ੍ਰਮਾਣਿਕਤਾ ਲਾਗੂ ਕਰੋ।
- ਨਿਯਮਿਤ ਤੌਰ 'ਤੇ ਡਾਟਾ ਬੈਕਅੱਪ ਕਰੋ।
- ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਸੱਕ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਸਾਈਬਰ ਹਮਲੇ ਦਾ ਰੁੱਖ ਹੋਏ ਹੋ:

TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION

In addition to addressing dangers rooted in xenophobia and white supremacy native to the United States, the Sikh Coalition is increasingly conscious of and working in response to another challenge that poses a security concern for Sikhs and gurdwaras across the country: Threats to the civil rights and lives of U.S.-based Sikhs emerging from the government of India (GOI).

Transnational repression is [defined](#) by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as when foreign governments “stalk, intimidate, or assault people in the United States.” This behavior is often used to “silence the voices of their citizens (or non-citizens connected to the country), get information from them, or coerce them to return to the country of origin” and is often used to target activists and dissidents, journalists, and members of religious, ethnic, or political minority groups. We believe that transnational repression represents both a violation of U.S. sovereignty and international democratic norms. It also represents an unacceptable attempt to intimidate voices and invalidate the rights of marginalized communities like ours.

The Sikh community has long been concerned with transnational repression from the Indian government—and the threat is more urgent than ever with the 2023 [assassination](#) of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, [plots](#) to kill Sikhs in the United States, and an [alleged leaked memo](#) from the GOI’s Ministry of External Affairs urging its consulates to launch a “‘sophisticated crackdown scheme’ on organizations in the Sikh diaspora. The Sikh Coalition has confirmed that many U.S.-based Sikh individuals, journalists, activists, elected officials, and organizations have experienced behavior, threats, and dangers under the broad umbrella of transnational repression on the basis of their Sikh identity and/or their political views.

We have documented threats of violence and surveillance, mobility controls for both individuals and gurdwaras, political intimidation, infringement on academic freedom as well as censorship and digital threats.

Accordingly, we are adding this new section to the Gurdwara Security Toolkit because we are gravely concerned about efforts to intimidate, harm, or kill peaceful, law-abiding Sikhs in the United States, including at gurdwaras. We are also alarmed by broader narratives that seek to paint some or all of the Sikh community as dangerous extremists. To help gurdwara leaders mindfully discuss this complex threat among themselves and with their sangats, we would like to share the below recommendations with community leadership to safeguard our sangat across the country against transnational repression.

- Ensure that sangat members who are concerned for their safety and feel comfortable doing so should immediately contact the FBI at tips.fbi.gov or call 1-800-CALL-FBI (1-800-225-5324). Note that the FBI has [more information](#) available in Punjabi, including a January 2024 Punjabi language [public service announcement](#).
- Enhance both physical and digital security measures to better protect personally identifiable information of the sangat like email addresses, home addresses, ACH account information, and more.
- Monitor any unusual activity, including new unknown persons who come to the gurdwara and ask invasive questions about the sangat—including on topics related to committee membership, the gurdwara’s support or non-support for Khalistan, and the immigration status of sangat members
- Train security volunteers about counter-surveillance measures, which can prevent unauthorized access by unknown persons.
- Increase community awareness about how transnational repression manifests, how to report these incidents, and educate community members about their legal rights and about physical and digital security
- Build relationships with advocacy organizations with expertise in managing these issues
- Increase security measures during large events and gatherings like nagar keertans and gurpurabs, as well as any large community events where sangat may engage in awareness efforts around human rights abuses, the Sikh Genocide, and/or advocacy for Khalistan.
- Be prepared to support sangat members who may be facing transnational repression and may approach the gurdwara committee for advice on how to report transnational repression or their fears around the same.



For more information about transnational repression, read The Sikh Coalition’s July 2024 report, ["So Many Targets."](#) In addition to contacting the FBI, we encourage you to reach out to us should you experience any instances of possible transnational repression. For 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](#).



GOVERNMENT AGENCY ROLES AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Several government agencies are positioned and equipped to enhance the safety of our gurdwaras while preparing our sangats for the worst case scenarios. Safety involves more than just installing cameras, locks, or hiring security; it is equally important for the sangat to be trained and prepared for emergencies. Maintaining a safe gurdwara is an ongoing process, and the Sikh Coalition is here to support; below are various resources and training opportunities that can help the sangat feel safer and better understand what to do in case of an emergency.

FEDERAL: DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

The Department of Homeland Security is responsible for protecting the nation against a wide range of security threats and is also the primary agency overseeing immigration enforcement. For more information, visit www.dhs.gov. DHS works with various federal agencies to ensure that gurdwaras have access to the right information, training, and expertise to effectively respond in times of disaster. Below are some key DHS agencies and resources you should be aware of:

- DHS Resources for Leaders of Faith-Based Communities: Offers a variety of resources that may be helpful when facing heightened threats of targeted violence and terrorism: <https://www.dhs.gov/faith-based-tv-resources>
- DHS Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships: Carries out the policies and program priorities of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, DHS, and FEMA for faith and community-based organizations: <https://www.dhs.gov/faith>

FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (FEMA)

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is dedicated to ensuring that our nation is prepared to respond to disasters before, during, and after they occur. For more information, visit www.fema.gov. At a federal level, FEMA is the primary agency that provides funding for security grants for houses of worship as well as funding for natural disaster relief.

- FEMA Emergency Management Institute: Offers various training opportunities and free online courses: <https://training.fema.gov/emi.aspx>
- FEMA All-Hazards Emergency Operations Planning Guide: Helps create emergency plans that outlines specific roles and responsibilities during emergencies: [ready.gov](http://www.fema.gov/pdf/plan/slg101.pdf) or <http://www.fema.gov/pdf/plan/slg101.pdf>
- Guide for Developing High Quality Emergency Operations Plans for Houses of Worship: Provides guidance on addressing threats that houses of worship may face: <https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/developing-eops-for-houses-of-worship.pdf>

CYBERSECURITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE SECURITY AGENCY (CISA)

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency serves as the nation's risk advisor, working with public and private partners to equip the country with cybersecurity tools, information, training, and expertise. For more details, visit www.cisa.gov.

- Security Advisors Website: Provides information on how to obtain a security assessment for your gurdwara: <https://www.cisa.gov/about/regions/security-advisors>
- Physical Security Website: Offers a variety of resources to help protect houses of worship, including gurdwaras: <https://www.cisa.gov/topics/physical-security>
- Active Shooter Preparedness Guide: Helps organizations prepare for and respond to an active shooter incident: <https://www.cisa.gov/active-shooter-preparedness>
- Protecting Houses of Worship: Offers steps to enhance the security of houses of worship: <https://www.cisa.gov/faith-based-organizations-houses-worship>
- Houses of Worship Self-Assessment Tool: Guides members of houses of worship through a security-focused self-assessment to identify and address risks: <https://www.cisa.gov/publication/houses-worship-security-self-assessment>
- Mitigating Attacks on Houses of Worship Guide: Provides information and strategies to protect people and property from threats: <https://www.cisa.gov/publication/mitigating-attacks-houses-worship-security-guide>
- Power of Hello: Offers guidance for observing suspicious behavior, assess risk, and ask for help when necessary: https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/The%20Power%20of%20Hello%20Guide%20for%20Houses%20of%20Worship_508.pdf

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (DOJ)

The Department of Justice is tasked with protecting and defending the nation's interests in accordance with US law. As the home of the government's attorneys, the DOJ has the authority to bring criminal charges against offenders and pursue civil lawsuits on behalf of the United States. For more information, visit www.justice.gov.

One of DOJ's components, the Community Relations Service (CRS), offers resources for faith leaders and community members on best practices to safeguard houses of worship from potential threats. This includes understanding hate crimes, navigating local and federal laws, and implementing proven protocols for safety and security. More information can be found at <https://www.justice.gov/crs>.

- DOJ CRS Protecting Places of Worship: Provides approaches for protecting houses of worship through education and dialogue: <https://www.justice.gov/file/1058496/download>
- DOJ Hate Crimes website: Offers information on understanding, preventing, and reporting hate crimes: <https://www.justice.gov/hatecrimes>

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION (FBI)

The Federal Bureau of Investigation is a national law enforcement agency. For more information, visit www.fbi.gov. They offer resources and training related to terrorism, cyber attacks, and crime prevention. The FBI also plays a [key role](#) in investigating hate crimes.

- Active Shooter Resources: Provides information on how to respond during an active shooter training situation: <https://www.fbi.gov/how-we-can-help-you/active-shooter-safety-resources>



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