

Boise Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
Preparedness Plan
2015

The Boise Unitarian Universalist Fellowship (BUUF) is a community that cares deeply about the health and safety of everyone who enters its property.

This Preparedness Plan (Plan) was approved as policy by the Board of Directors in February 2015. It was developed by the BUUF Safety Team in 2013-2014 and reviewed and revised by the BUUF Program Ministry Council (PMC) November 2014 - January 2015. Much work lies ahead to make this plan a reality. That said, some recommendations are already in place. We are more prepared every day.

The summer and fall of 2012 were repeatedly interrupted by mass shootings in public places. After the school shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, the Board wondered about our own security and preparedness for evacuation. As a co-chair for the PMC at the time, Paul Schlobohm agreed in November 2012 to reinstate regular fire drills and to bring back to the Board recommendations for addressing our overall preparedness. This Plan consists of those recommendations.

The first fire drill in 4 years was conducted in August 2013. Interest in this work grew and in October 2013, the BUUF Safety Team was convened to examine our preparedness and develop recommendations to meet the Board's request. The Safety Team is Arlene Baldwin, Dan Bacon, Bill Smithey, Allie Gooding, Warren Bean, Nancy Riley, and Paul Schlobohm. New members are welcome.

In December 2013, a visit from the Boise Fire Department resulted in significant changes to storage throughout the building in order for us to come into compliance with the Fire Code. In May 2014, Dan, Paul, and our Minister, Dana, and DRE, Emmie, attended a Church Safety Seminar. This seminar and the UUA website are the source for many of these recommendations.

How big a problem is violence at church? *Christianity Today* quotes Carl Chinn, author of "*Evil Invades Sanctuary*," who says that from 1999 through 2012 there were 638 "deadly force incidents" on church properties in the United States. Motives ranged from robbery (22 per cent of incidents) to domestic relationship violence (16%) to conflicts with specific individuals (15%) to mental illness (9%) to religious bias (7%). Most involved guns or knives. A third of the incidents occurred inside buildings and two-thirds were outside or at off-site church activities. In 2008 two people were killed during a service at Tennessee Valley UU Church in Knoxville, TN. Whether 638 incidents over 13 years and the entire church-going population of the United States is significant or not is up to each of us to judge. Given that the possibility exists, the UUA encourages churches to develop security plans so they can effectively respond to a variety of situations.

Not all church intrusions are violent. Would we know what to do if our Sunday morning service was disrupted? On July 20, 2014, intruders interrupted Sunday service at First UU Church of New Orleans. The congregation responded appropriately: the minister invited the protesters to stay if they were respectful. When they continued to disrupt they were escorted out and the police were called. This church had a plan.

The Rev. Scott Taylor, director of UUA's Congregational Life, says creating a plan is "part of our commitment to beloved community. We are here to care for one another. That includes keeping each other safe. Being prepared to respond protects not only our bodies but our sense of home. Intentionality and proactive plans ensure responses that reflect our values, not just our fears."

The Rev. Aaron Payson, minister of the UU Church in Worcester, MA, recommends congregations think about the threats they are most likely to face. "It most likely is not violence. What congregations are most likely to have to deal with is medical and fire emergencies, break-ins, and natural disasters."

The Safety Team has wrestled with the many possible steps that can be taken to achieve an appropriate level of preparedness. The recommendations described here reflect our sense of what is appropriate for BUUF at this time, given our collective innocence with this endeavor. Maintenance and revision of this Plan is the responsibility of the Safety Team.

Recommendations

1. Monitor the building for compliance with fire codes

The BUUF facility was evaluated by the Boise Fire Department in December 2013. Emergency lights, exit lights, and storage areas were out of compliance and have since been resolved. The BFD is expected to follow-up again during Winter 2015. Monitoring our compliance for appliances, lighting, and storage should be an expectation of the Building and Grounds Coordinator function at BUUF.

Timeframe: Initiated December 2013. On-going.

Responsible Party: B&G Coordinator, with support from the Building Maintenance Committee

Cost: No cost for monitoring. Exit lighting and other maintenance costs are in the budget for the Building Maintenance Committee

2. Conduct regular fire drills

BUUF conducted a facility-wide fire drill in August 2013 for the first time in many years. In May 2014, we conducted an RE-only fire drill. A facility-wide fire drill was conducted Sunday, October 12, 2014, to coincide with Fire Prevention Week.

Fire drills should continue to be performed in the fall (facility-wide) and in the spring (RE-only). The Safety Team will take the lead for this activity, coordinating with Worship, RE, and other committees as needed.

Timeframe: Initiated August 2013. On-going

Responsible Party: Safety Team

Cost: None

3. Implement donated Automated Electronic Defibrillator (AED), offer training, and monitor equipment readiness.

As of July 2014, the AED has been received and installed in the South Entryway. Nine BUUFers have received training (cost included in the donation) from the American Red Cross (ARC) in its use. Trainees represented staff, BEC, and the worship committee's Sunday Service Coordinators.

Future training to maintain our collective skill with the AED is available from multiple sources. The ARC provides training for the specific device we have. They offer training on a frequent basis from their facility in Boise. If eight or more individuals are interested in receiving this training, and tuition is provided (\$90/person), this training could be hosted again at BUUF through Adult RE. Or individuals can sign up for the training through ARC throughout the year from their website.

Alternatively, Young Hearts Education offers First Aid/CPR/AED training regularly at its Boise location for \$39.50 per person (www.youngheartsed.com).

The Safety Team will take the lead for monitoring the use of the AED device to ensure it is always ready for use.

Timeframe: Initiated July 2014. On-going

Responsible Party: Safety Team

Cost: Future training is \$40-90/person. A cohort of staff, BEC and Service Coordinators should always be current with training. Funds to support training will be part of the Safety Team 2015-16 budget request. No cost for monitoring.

4. Take responsibility for First Aid Kits from DRE and maintain them

Goal: Print a sign and post on the outside of each DRE closet - First Aid Kit. Place the kit on the top shelf in each closet. The Safety team can assign inspectors and determine how often they inspect the supplies for refills of bandages, etc. The BUUF DRE may want to determine where the "extra supplies" are stored and notify the safety team.

Timeframe: Initiated August 2014. On-going

Responsible Party: Safety Team, coordinating with DRE

Cost: Absorbed by RE supplies budget, status quo. Two committees leveraging mutual interests and shared funding.

5. Take responsibility for Evacuation Route signage and maintain them

Goal: Print and place maps of the closest exits on the inside of the doors exiting the room posted at eye level for the age group. The teachers periodically can review the map and practice the route with their class. The safety inspectors need to periodically inspect the rooms to be sure no curtains are near electrical outlets or anywhere a short could happen. Maps of the Fire Alarms should be printed and posted near evacuation maps, or included on the evacuation map. Evacuation practice should be practiced and the amount of practices can be determined by the BUUF Safety Team.

Timeframe: Initiated August 2014. On-going

Responsible Party: Safety Team

Cost: None

6. Make emergency contact information readily accessible

The goal is to create ready access to important contact information for both emergency and non-emergency situations. The Safety Team will create a sticker that can be placed on the back of every existing nametag. Future nametags can be made to include this information. This information will also be posted with each Evacuation Route sign. The information for the back of the nametag is shown below. Both of the phone numbers go to Ada County Dispatch, which coordinates with ambulance, police and fire. The non-emergency number is for lift assist and other non-life-threatening situations.

Emergency Phone: 911

Non-emergency Phone: 208-377-6790

If possible, call from the land line in the office

Street Address: 6200 Garrett Street, Garden City

Timeframe: By May 2015

Responsible Party: Safety Team, in coordination with those responsible for creating new nametags

Cost: Cost of printable stickers (address labels). None

7. Make information concerning health and safety accessible

Safety team members have ready access to brochures and pamphlets about useful tips, reminders, procedures, etc. Provide this information in wall-mounted file holders, binders, and or other means in coordination with RE, for whom this is already routine. Maintain a frequent rotation of material. Coordinate also with Interiors (location) and Communications (strategy for electronic and printed materials).

Timeframe: Start by March 2015.

Responsible Party: Safety Team, with RE, Interiors and Communications

Cost: None

8. Prune shrubbery to maintain visibility of the facility and its approaches

Significant pruning around the building, especially along Garrett Street and around the vestibule entrances, took place in late winter 2014. More work is possible, especially along Garrett Street. The Safety Team will work collaboratively with the Landscape Committee to define, meet, and maintain objectives. Accomplishing work is a function of Landscape Committee capacity, measured by work parties and budget for gardeners.

Timeframe: Fall and Spring as needed

Responsible Party: Safety Team and Landscape Committee

Cost: No extra cost. Work within landscape budget and work party volunteers

9. Improve communication throughout the building

We have a need to communicate quickly to leadership and to every room in the building. This need is primarily to respond to the unlikely event of an intruder, but such a system can also be used in normal operations to inform RE teachers when service is ending, locating parents during a service, and coordinating parking during big events.

For example, at the UU Church of Worcester, MA, seven people carry walkie-talkies - the minister, service coordinator, DRE, nursery attendant, two ushers, and a person in the parking lot.

Based on consultation with two local security firms, the BUUF Safety Team knows there are several options at varying prices available to meet our needs, including walkie-talkies, two-way radios, phones, networked tablets and cameras in every room.

We recommend a Task Team is established under the PMC to clearly define our requirements (not our wishes) for communication throughout the facility. This Task Team should consist of representatives of the Safety Team, the Communications Task Force, the Worship and RE Committees, the BEC, and staff. These requirements should be reviewed and approved by the PMC. Once approved, the Safety Team can be charged with soliciting quotes, submitting budget requests, and acquiring the appropriate technology to meet our needs.

Timeframe: 3-6 months for Task Team to define requirements

Pricing, budget approval, and acquisition to follow as appropriate

Responsible Party: PMC Task Team, then Safety Team

Cost: TBD in future budget years

10. Coordinate with Garden City Police Department

Coordination with the Garden City PD is an essential part of whatever steps we take to improve our safety. We will want to inform them of all the steps we plan to take. We recommend the Safety Team and the minister meet with the GCPD once the Preparedness Plan has been approved by the Board. This should be done in coordination with the Landscape Committee because of their experience and frequency of interacting with people passing through the property and with the GCPD.

Timeframe: Upon approval by the Board of this Preparedness Plan

Responsible Party: Safety Team

Cost: None

11. Investigate history of flooding in this location and what can be done to be prepared

So far, what we think we know is that the last flooding in the area was in 1947, prompting the construction of Lucky Peak Dam for the purpose of flood control. This needs to be confirmed with research into the area's flooding history. According to information provided to the Finance Committee (regarding property insurance) the most recent floodplain assessment indicates BUUF is located just beyond the floodplain. (Therefore, we no longer pay flood insurance.) Resources for flood preparedness can be found on the internet. Recommend developing guidance in case of flood is a low priority action item for the Safety Team.

Timeframe: May 2015

Responsible Party: Safety Team

Cost: None

12. Implement a church observation log

A church log is a record of observations over time. Individually each observation may have little meaning. Single observations entered into the log by different people over time may suggest a pattern of interest. Observations are generally regarding people on the BUUF property who are not expected to be there. The log is accessible and maintained in the office by a limited number of BUUFers, such as staff, BEC, and committee leaders. The log will be reviewed monthly by the Safety Team.

Timeframe: Upon Plan approval

Responsible Party: Safety Team, coordination with office staff

Cost: None

13. Develop communication network with nearby churches

Reach out to nearby churches and establish a sense of shared church security through sharing information, such as public events, training, and church observation logs.

Timeframe: Begin in March 2015

Responsible Party: Safety Team, coordination with Minister

Cost: None

14. Cultivate relationships with the neighborhood to foster shared awareness of and respect for the property.

Activities include supporting neighborhood dinners at BUUF, meeting neighbors through BUUF members who live in the neighborhood [Philleys, Nicholsons, Ratcliffe, Daly and the Chelan property renters; Mary Schwartzman also knows the neighbors], and potentially participating in a Neighborhood Watch Program. This recommendation seeks ways for us to be welcoming, be familiar with people who pass through the property, and strengthen a sense of value with the neighbors towards the property, as proactive approaches to addressing litter and vandalism.

Timeframe: Begin March 2015

Responsible Party: Safety Team, coordination with Social Justice Coordinator and Minister

Cost: Unknown

15. Initiate “tail-gate” sessions.

A tail-gate session is a brief, stand-up discussion about one aspect of safety or preparedness before an activity begins. It is a routine reminder of important considerations for being safe and keeping others safe.

The phrase “tail-gate session” comes from the land management profession, during which teams or crews gather where their vehicles are parked for a quick safety briefing before venturing out to do field work for the day. Here at BUUF we may want to change the name to something that has meaning to our culture and processes.

We propose that people at BUUF who are routinely in a position to positively influence the safety of others should regularly take a few moments prior to a planned event (such as Sunday morning services) and conduct a tail-gate session. These functions include Celebrants (and Minister), Service Coordinators, Beacons (see item 16), and RE teachers on Sundays, and staff and BEC during the week. The safety team can help these groups develop a collection of briefings for the group to deliver to itself according to its circumstances.

One example of a briefing topic for those involved in conducting the service comes from the recent disruption at the First UU Church in New Orleans. Once the (non-violent) disruption started, some congregants quickly began to sing a uniquely UU hymn and encouraged members to form a circle. It soon became apparent who the protesters were.

RE teachers can, among many other rotating topics, review procedures for a lock-down or an evacuation.

The compliment of a Sunday morning's Service Coordinator, Celebrant, and Beacons can briefly review roles and actions for a disruption during the service.

Staff or BEC coordinators can review our preferred response to people from the neighborhood using the property during the day or during a wedding.

The Safety Team received resources for other topics during the May 2014 Church Safety Seminar and will work with these groups to create a series of briefings.

Timeframe: Begin session development in March 2015. Sessions developed by August 2015, initiated in new church year starting September 2015. New sessions can be developed continuously.

Responsible Party: Safety Team, working with various groups

Cost: None. Session materials can be created and maintained in Google Docs or a similar sharable platform.

16. Recruit and support a group of acutely observant congregants we propose to call Beacons.

The goal is to increase vigilance during large gatherings (such as Sunday Services) but do so in a manner that does not influence the experience of those gathered during a typical event in which no threat exists. The idea is that a small number of regular attendees are trained and entrusted to observe those gathered, notice threatening behavior before it manifests into a confrontation, and act to diffuse the situation. This is a complex idea that we believe will require a great deal of work and expertise to be implemented by those involved in a welcoming manner with respect, dignity, safety, and clear expectations.

This concept is promoted in recent UUA guidance and implemented at other UU churches. Since the 2008 shooting in Knoxville, the Tennessee Valley UU Church has employed four part-time, unarmed, Sextons as overt observers of everyone on the property. Given their experience, this approach appears to be the right amount of security, helps them feel "observant, but not paranoid." We have requested a copy of the Sexton Manual from the TVUU Church for ideas applicable to our situation. We are not proposing this Sexton approach, rather, a less obvious form of vigilance.

Before the disruption in New Orleans this July, a church member remembers "noticing before the service there were a number of well-dressed people in the congregation - more than normal. I thought that was a little unusual." Payson of Worcester says the first principle in guarding against intruders is to "know each other. Know who the people are in your congregation. Be aware of people who are new and keep an eye

out for behaviors that are outside the norm.” This is the intention of our recommendation.

Timeframe: Begin recruitment and training of Beacons March 2015. Implementation as appropriate (when ready).

Responsible Party: Safety Team

Cost: None

17. Set up security cameras

Security cameras are apparently most effective at learning who did something after the event takes place. They are not as effective at prevention or deterrence as one might think. They produce a great deal of data that needs to be dealt with. Still, we have experienced theft in the office area and a camera may have helped the Garden City Police with their investigation. More cameras throughout the building and the ability to see what the cameras are seeing from any room in the building could be part of a long-term strategy to secure the building, in the unlikely event that is necessary. The Safety Team has met with two vendors who can set us up with a variety of options. Due to cost, the high impact on infrastructure, limited improvement on security, and privacy concerns, developing this capacity at BUUF is a low priority.

During the New Orleans UU Church disruption, the sanctuary video camera operator began recording the event. For us, this idea may take the form of capturing an event with the video function on a smart phone. Reviewing this option is another example of a tail-gate session topic for Service Coordinators, Beacons, or BEC staff, for example.

This is a low priority recommendation due to its low return on investment. It remains on the list because we may be more ready and able to implement cameras in the future.

Timeframe: (for installing security cameras) When our discretionary budget situation is stronger. Prepare a budget request for the 2016-2017 program year at the earliest.

Responsible Party: Safety Team

Cost: TBD

References

May 2014 Code4 Church Safety Seminar and materials

“How to Respond to Intruders in Worship” August 12, 2014, UUA Interconnections, uua.org

“Planning for Emergencies and the Unthinkable” April 8, 2013, uua.org

UUA Safe Congregations website: <http://www.uua.org/safe/117545.shtml>