

Securing Municipal Employees and Officials

Presented by John Hessel, City Attorney, Kirkwood, Missouri and Terry Sanders, Police Safety Consultant, AMIC/MWCF at the 2017 Alabama League of Municipalities Annual Convention in Birmingham, May 21, 2017

Security Enhancement Checklist

The employment of the following equipment and procedures will significantly enhance overall protection for municipal employees and officials.

- Employ a video monitoring system with high definition cameras. Maximize camera placement and have the system monitored by police communications. Make sure your system captures individuals as they enter your facility and traverse lobbies or hallways to enter your chamber. It is important to detect the threat before it enters the building.
- Consider the use of magnetometers for council meetings.
- Use of both uniformed and non-uniformed officers for security. Non-uniformed officers can't be as easily targeted.
- Develop a safety plan and procedure with your police department and conduct training at least annually.
- Have an escape door directly to the rear of the council bench to quickly exit in an emergency. This door should have a panic alarm that activates alerting police when opened.... run drills!
- Also, have a panic alarm under the chamber counter for easy access.
- Conduct "Active Shooter" training with your police department.
- Utilize crime control through environmental design. Slow or impede entry with attractive barricades, shrubs, plants; etc. Consider placing objects in front of the council bench to impede someone from scaling it. Consider placing tempered steel or other material behind the bench for ballistic protection.
- Report to police those individuals that have crossed the line from disgruntled to threatening! Know who you are dealing with. The police can background-check individuals for potential danger to include assistance from the Alabama Fusion Center. Part of this background should be social media postings.
- Have a system of alerting a co-worker if you encounter a threat while dealing with someone.... check on each other.
- Have a designated room where you interact with "problem" individuals. This room should be quickly accessible to other co-workers for assistance if needed. Always have two employees meet with these "problem/threatening" individuals. If possible this room should have a second door for escape if needed.
- Have a practical well written security plan. Winston Churchill said it best "He who fails to plan is planning to fail". You can't afford to fail here!

[See a list of Do's and Don'ts on the reverse side](#)

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Dealing with potentially violent persons that may be emotionally or mentally unstable

The first rule in dealing with someone who's getting angry or frightened is to keep your voice low in pitch. Higher pitches signal excitement, and will only fuel the person's growing emotions. Keeping at a low volume is good, too. Sometimes you can calm people down just by talking at a normal volume.

DO

- Be direct
- Listen
- Use soft words
- Speak calmly and with assurance
- Be truthful
- Show that you care
- Take the person seriously
- Allow the person to vent feelings
- Get help

- **Manage your behavior**
 - Remember your role
 - Be sensitive to alcohol/drug abuse
 - Control your body language and voice

- **Manage Other's Behavior**
 - Listen, listen, listen
 - Allow venting - consequences will come later
 - Maintain your distance
 - Control your movements/voice

- **Manage the situation**
 - Assess what you can do
 - Assess how much time you have
 - Involve others/get help
 - Consider suicidal people to be homicidal

DON'T

- Touch without explanation
- Side step an issue
- Make demands or be aggressive in any way
- Take whatever the person says personally
- Argue, judge, ridicule, preach, threaten
- Take away dignity/belittle them
- Tell them you know how they feel
- Confront

REMEMBER

Always remember the mentally unstable person usually will not act or react to situations as you would. Always remain **calm** with your **verbal and non-verbal** communication as you deal with this individual. Without alarming the individual get someone immediately to assist you. Discuss and pre-plan with co-workers how you are going to handle this type situation before it happens.

See the Security Enhancement Checklist on the reverse side