

## Safety & Security Assessment Guide

**Instructions:** Utilize the following as a guide to assist in risk level assessment and mitigation/safety enhancements for your small business. Use the **Guide Form(s)** by filling in details about your business and tracking your assessment and safety enhancements. If you have multiple areas, use a separate form for each. Fill in all blanks with appropriate information. Circle, sign, and date as you complete your review or update. Review on a regular schedule to ensure the information is up to date. Keep copies of earlier documents noting your history and changes made to enhance safety. Make copies of forms to allow space for evaluation of separate areas in your facility.

**Disclaimer:** This guide is meant as an overview of safety and security assessing and management. This guide is not intended, nor is it able, to evaluate fully and thoroughly each and every business. Businesses come in all sizes, structures, locations, and purposes. Your particular business may have needs beyond the scope of this guide. Seek professional assessment options where necessary.

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### 1. Assessment Overview

- a. Complete the overview. Update the details whenever necessary.
- b. Evaluate the different work areas in your business and list. Make separate forms for separate assessment areas where applicable. Include a form for the exterior of the building, landscaping, and parking areas.
  - i. Example: You have an office area with cubicles or separate offices, but you also have a warehouse or storage area. In this case it would be beneficial to assess the offices on one form, and the storage space on another form.
- c. Have appropriate supervisors review and approve the Assessment Overview.

### 2. Assessment Areas

- a. Considering each assessment area, complete a walkthrough and fill in answers to questions.
- b. Consider the risk level you have for each particular area. Below is a basic graphic to assist you in your evaluation. Understand that this graphic is just a suggestion and the ultimate decision as to the risk level is yours to make. Your assessment team is responsible for assessing the safety and security of your workplace and the safety of your employees and customers.

|            |          | Consequences |          |          |
|------------|----------|--------------|----------|----------|
|            |          | Minor        | Moderate | Major    |
| Likelihood | Likely   | Moderate     | High     | High     |
|            | Possible | Low          | Moderate | High     |
|            | Unlikely | Low          | Low      | Moderate |

|          |                                            |
|----------|--------------------------------------------|
| Low      | Monitor and reduce risk where practical    |
| Moderate | Risk reduction strongly recommended        |
| High     | Immediate action for risk reduction needed |

- c.
3. Review risk and assessment findings for possible enhancements to safety.
    - a. Consider your findings and options for enhancements.
    - b. When considering whether to make enhancements, and which to make, consider the risk evaluation you also completed.
    - c. Heightened risk?
      - i. Is your particular business or organization at a particularly higher risk due to certain circumstances or other situations? Every business or organization has risk, but some may have additional risk due to certain circumstances.
      - ii. Examples:
        1. Legal counsel or Tax preparer
        2. Medical field
        3. Alcohol, marijuana, or gambling related establishments
        4. Public offices and public officials
        5. Public meetings
        6. Large gatherings
        7. Human resources (personnel reviews, reprimands, terminations, etc.)
  4. You may find that your assessment of the risk level varies depending on the area or what is going on at a particular time. Your goal is to secure your business areas based on the highest risk level you have assessed. For example, you may have large amounts of cash on hand at the end of the month. Consider securing your business, or at minimum that area, with the thought that this was the situation daily. Following these steps will provide greater safety and security on a daily basis.
  5. Exterior (landscaping, parking, visibility, etc.)
    - a. A clearly marked business with visible walkways, fencing, doors, windows, parking, and clear signage helps to portray control and confidence. Just like walking with confidence

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includes eyes forward and attention to things around you, attention to the exterior can enhance your business' safety and minimize victimization.

- b. Signage: Ensure signs are in place, clearly denote entry/exit, hours of operation, and any other pertinent information. If the premises are under surveillance, ensure signage provides notice. Use "Reserved" or numbered signs if certain parking spaces are held for certain individuals. Avoid labeling parking spaces with names or titles. Clearly mark visitor/guest parking. Clearly mark entrances and exits.
- c. Consider signage regarding any firearm policy, masking, or other important information.
- d. Door numbering: If there are multiple doors, place a visible number on each. In the case of emergency, numbers door helps in many ways including: 1. Law enforcement can be instructed to either enter at a certain door, or 2. a certain door is near the area of the aggressor, for example.
- e. Lighting: Having a well-lit exterior helps to deter criminal activity. Motion detectors and tripped lighting can save on electric costs as well as minimize environmental effects.
- f. Parking: Do not park directly adjacent to the building entrances. Set up orange cones or use planters or other things to keep cars from parking in these areas. This both avoids a hiding space near the building and allows for faster emergency evacuations or law enforcement access.
- g. Hiding spots: Assess all exterior areas for places where an aggressor could hide. Aggressors may hide near doors to tag behind other employees when entering, view entry access codes as employees use the keypad, or wait for someone to victimize, for example. Keep shrubs shorter (under 3 feet), well-trimmed, and away from doors, windows, and walkways so it is difficult to hide behind. Keep shrubs or other plants 3 or more feet from the building, walkways, corners, and fencing.
- h. Climbing options: Review the vegetation or other items (e.g., trash cans, fencing, or boxes) located near the building for opportunities to climb atop the building or to an upper window permitting access to the interior.
- i. Patrol the grounds at opening and closing times, as well as throughout the day if possible. Notice suspicious people, vehicles, or other things out of the ordinary. Call authorities if warranted.
- j. Fire hydrants: Ensure all fire hydrants are visible and easily accessible. Do not permit vehicles or other items to block fire hydrants.

## 6. Structural Layout

- a. Entry and exit points: Access restriction
  - i. Wherever possible, secure all doors with functional locking mechanisms that are quick to lock and unlock. Ensure emergency exit points are not locked from the inside. Train all employees in how to lock and unlock doors, and when each is appropriate. Provide routine maintenance of all doors and locks. Consider what times your business needs to be locked. Ensure doors cannot be opened from the outside unless you purposefully permit such access.
  - ii. For doors not lockable, inspect the door and flooring for options to barricade or other wise stop the door from opening. Door stops frequently slide across the

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floor when the door is pushed, so if you intend to use a door stop to keep the door closed, be sure to test rigorously to ensure the stopper you provide actually keeps the door from opening. Door stopper bars or other devices can be provided as alternatives to installed locks. As with door stops, rigorously test the device to ensure it functions and ensure staff have been trained in use. Some door closers can be wrapped tightly with cording, wire or rope. Check your door close to see if stopping the hinge from movement also keeps the door from being opened. Train staff where appropriate.

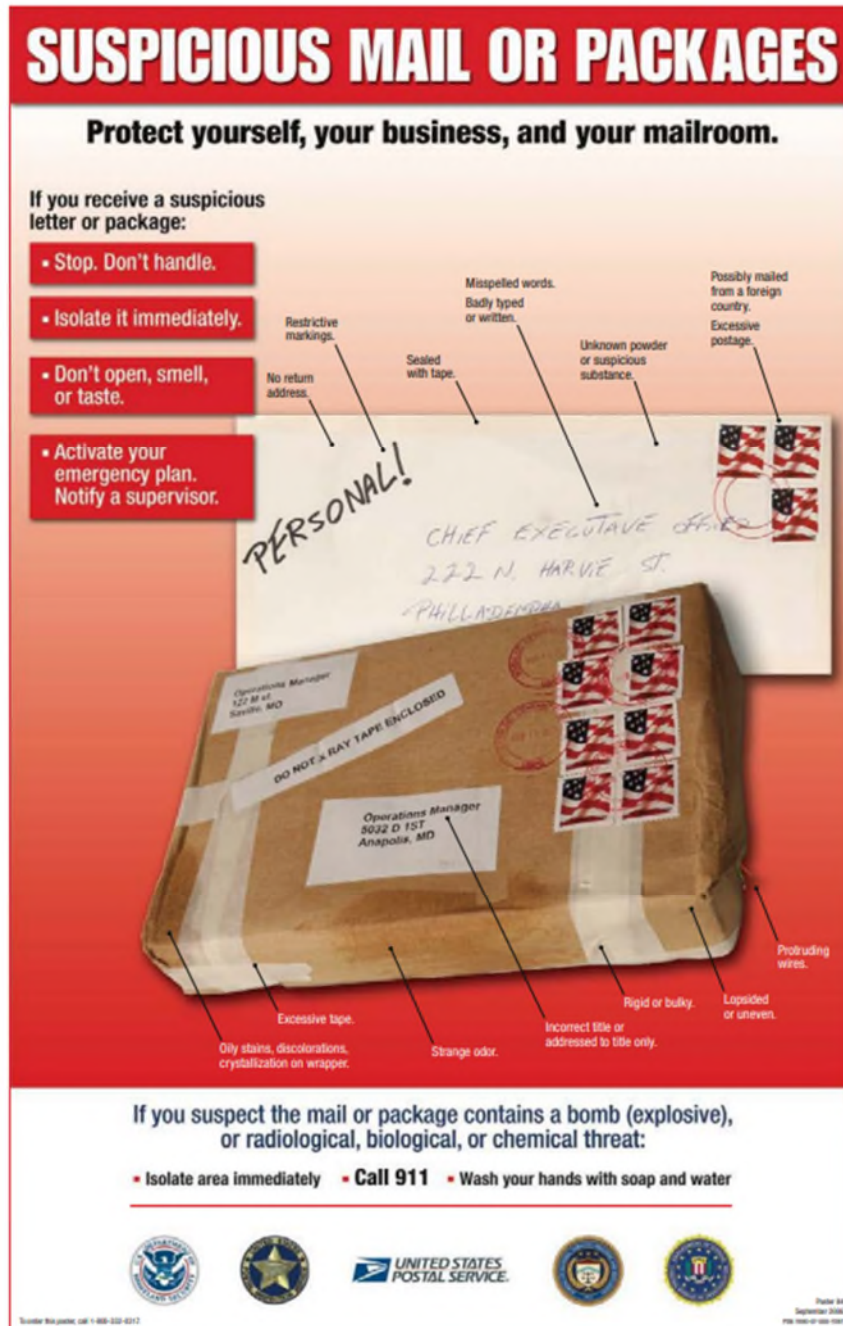
- iii. Secure all windows with functional locking mechanisms that are quick to lock and unlock. If a window can open, ensure proper function. Train all employees how to unlock, open, close and relock windows, and when each is appropriate. Provide routine maintenance of all windows and locks. Where applicable, consider providing other emergency equipment such as an escape ladder, either portable or fixed, for emergency evacuations. If appropriate, install ballistic glass windows for additional security.
- iv. Consider installation of lockdown button at front desk which would allow staff to immediately prevent access in the event an incident is occurring outside or if there is a threat of someone coming into the building to cause harm to persons or property.
- v. Ensure employees do not allow “piggy-backing” where one badged employee is followed through a secure door by others without badges. Require employees to not permit access by another. Piggy-backing is an easy way for strangers or former employees to gain access.
- vi. Safety enhancements include installation of locks or other barricading equipment, for use on doors that do not have locks. Also available are automatic locking mechanisms where the doors can be locked and unlocked remotely. Employee entry access can be controlled by electronic keycards or stationed security personnel. Limiting access to your business increases safety and security, but it is not always feasible. Limit open access as much as possible. A single-entry point and multiple exit points is ideal.
- vii. Restrict access to certain areas to as “as-needed” basis where particularly sensitive or attractive items are located. For example, limit access to cash or other valuables to only those who need access.
- viii. Consider positioning a security guard, bag inspection, metal detectors, and/or security screening technology when appropriate.
- ix. Consider having visitors be escorted by an employee when on site. Require photo identification, name registry log of all visitor arrival and departures, provide visitors with “visitor” badges, are just examples of how you can control access.

## 7. Physical Setup

- a. Reception areas are generally the first line of defense against any aggressor who enters the building. Securing this area and training staff is crucial to maintaining safety and security.
  - b. Secure the areas by restricting access if possible.
  - c. Enhancements: Provide a secure barrier between reception staff and the public, including ballistic glass for increased security.
  - d. Camera surveillance, either live or recorded, and signage indicating surveillance enhances security. Knowing an area is under surveillance can discourage a potential aggressor. In addition, the recordings are helpful in identifying an aggressor if a situation were to occur.
  - e. Exterior camera surveillance can assist authorities in locating suspects who enter your property, or even who those who offend an adjoining property as your cameras may record and provide evidence in other situations.
  - f. Dead spots
    - i. A “dead-spot” is a space where someone could become trapped if blocked by an aggressor, or other dangerous situation (e.g., fire, or violent situation). If possible, organize the area such that an escape route is more readily available. Consider installing a door or window to permit access where appropriate. This is important in areas where meeting one-on-one with clients or employees.
    - ii. Assess and map out the escape route for every area.
    - iii. Know where all exits lead and ensure employees know their escape route.
  - g. Vacant offices or other areas should be cleaned up to prevent potential hazards. Remove or tidy clutter so it does not impede evacuation. Remove any fire hazards.
  - h. Areas would ideally include quick escape routes or areas where employees can barricade themselves until the threat is over. A solid barricade includes lockable doors, bulky or heavy items placed in front of doors, or other items for securing the entrance to the area. Solid wood or metal provides improved security over hollow doors or drywall.
  - i. Stairways provide access to different levels and are frequently part of an exit route. Stairways should be well lit, well-marked, free of tripping hazards, and include a secure handrail.
  - j. Fencing should be appropriate height for business (meets any legal or ordinance requirements). Tall fencing should be avoided if possible as it provides areas where an aggressor could hide. Fencing should be in proper and safe condition without damage or holes.
8. Other Access: Mail or other deliveries; Phone calls
- a. Ensure appropriate employees know when deliveries are expected, from which carrier, and from what sender. Deliveries should be from properly identified carriers (e.g., recognizable uniforms, identification badges, properly marked vehicles, and at shipping company estimated times).
  - b. Sign up your company with accounts from the various carriers in your area. Through these accounts you can set up notifications for when packages are shipped to or from

your business. You can receive updates on shipping and when to expect packages. Notify employees of what shipments are expected and train employees on what to do when receiving an unexpected package.

- c. Ensure those responsible for opening mail or other packages have training in recognizing suspicious packages:
  - i. Keep up to date with governmental recommendations and your mailroom staff handling procedures.
  - ii. See <https://www.uspis.gov/tips-prevention/suspicious-mail>
  - iii. See <https://faq.usps.com/s/article/Suspicious-Mail>
  - iv. See *Publication 166, Guide to Mail Center Security*  
<https://about.usps.com/publications/pub166.pdf>
  - v. Publication 166 includes information on assessing your risk level in regard to mail and packages, how to enhance security of your mail center, how to train your mailroom staff, and how to manage suspicious mail, substances, bombs, and other threats.
  - vi. Review recommendations from the U.S. Postal Service and enhance your mail room and employee training as described. See instructor resources for copy at time of this course.
  - vii. See below for suspicious mail indicators per the U.S. Postal Service:
    1. No return address.
    2. Restrictive markings (e.g., "Personal")
    3. Sealed with tape. Excessive tape.
    4. Misspelled word(s), badly typed or written.
    5. Incorrect or inaccurate title or position.
    6. Unknown powder or suspicious substance observed or felt. Oily stains, discolorations or crystallization on wrapping.
    7. Excessive postage.
    8. Possibly mailed from outside the United States.
    9. Uneven or misshapen, rigid or bulky, protruding wires.
  - viii. Train staff on how to handle suspicious mail or packages:
    1. Stop. Do not handle.
    2. Isolate immediately.
    3. Do not open, smell, or taste.
    4. Activate your emergency plan. Notify a supervisor.
    5. If you suspect the mail or package contains a bomb (explosive), or radiological, biological, or chemical threat:
      - a. Isolate area immediately.
      - b. Call 911 or local emergency services.
      - c. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.



- d. Staff answering phones and providing information to callers require training in what to offer and what to not offer to callers. Identifying information about employees, their whereabouts, personal information, personal contact details, and so on, should not be provided to callers. Confidential information, policies and procedures of the company should not be shared outside the company without pre-authorization of management.

## 9. Ways to Call for Help or Alert Other Staff

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- a. Alarm systems: Provide a way for employees to quickly notify others in case of an aggressive or potentially aggressive situation. Train staff in proper use. Alarms systems should include both doors and windows.
- b. Cost: Wireless alarm systems are available and can be relatively inexpensive, including monitoring by the security system company. Airhorns, bullhorns, etc. are cost effective ways to quickly let others know of an emergency situation. If these horns are used for emergency situations, ensure that their use and the sounds they make are part of your staff training so everyone is clear on what the sound indicates. Provide instructions near the horns as a reminder to staff.
- c. Panic alarms can be wired buttons at desks or on walls, can be wireless alarms at desks or wearable units.
- d. Create an internal procedure for staff to notify managers, supervisors, or emergency personnel in the event of an escalating or violent situation.
- e. Create an emergency plan and train staff in when and how to call 911 or local emergency number. Provide emergency numbers and call instructions at each phone.
- f. Keep an updated list detailing potential or previously violent customers or former employees and inform staff on when and how to alert authorities regarding these individuals. Provide a photo of these individuals for quick identification. Work with local law enforcement regarding any situation where you feel a threat exists.

#### 10. Staff Experience and Training

- a. Staff should be trained initially and receive regularly scheduled review training in how to respond to workplace violence. Train all new staff upon hire. Keep record of trainings, attendance, and review training.
- b. Meeting place(s): Identify and inform employees of the meeting place where everyone should meet in case of fire or other building evacuation. In the event of an active shooter, staff should **not** meet in a single area. Staff should be trained in what to do in the event of aggression or an active shooter, and how to contact authorities after the situation is managed in order to let everyone know they are alright.
- c. Provide signs with emergency information including evacuation and exit routes, storm shelter, etc.
- d. Review with staff previous situations with escalating or aggressive situations, how these were handled, and improvements if applicable.
- e. Safe words, code words, or other procedures can be in place to provide staff options to notify others without notifying the individual or causing further escalation. These are words that staff are trained to understand have additional meaning when used. Training is crucial for all staff to know and practice how to use the safe/code words, and for how to respond when hearing these words.
  - i. For example: A staff member in their office is meeting with a client. The topic is contentious, and client becomes agitated. The staff member may be concerned that certain actions could further escalate the client but wants to alert other staff members to the situation and get assistance in deescalating. The staff member states they need to *ask for a file* to help with the concern. Using the safe word, they call another staffer and say "Hey, this is Sam in 201. Would you

please bring me the Jeopa file? Thanks.” Now the staffer knows that the Jeopa file is short for *jeopardy* – as in “*I am in jeopardy and need help*”. They also know that it means they need to call security and intervene right away but in a non-escalatory manner. How the staffer will assist is something that is discussed ahead of time and reviewed regularly during their workplace violence training.

ii.

#### 11. Weapons

- a. Assess the area for items that could potentially be used as a weapon either by an aggressor or by an employee for self-defense. For example, remove scissors or other sharp or puncturing items from a desk where they could be easily taken by an aggressor and used as a weapon.
- b. Relocate items out of reach or sight of potential aggressors. Provide training for employees for easy access in locating items which could be used in self-defense.

#### 12. Assets or Attractive Items

- a. Assets or other attractive items can be a target for criminal activity. Assess each area for attractive items and ensure each is properly secured to decrease risk to employees and the community. Attractive items include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - i. Drugs/medications
  - ii. Prescription pads
  - iii. Money
  - iv. Jewelry
  - v. Firearms or other weapons
  - vi. Company trade secrets, confidential information
  - vii. Company intellectual property
  - viii. Network/infrastructure (computer servers, communications, software platforms, restricted or confidential information, etc.)
  - ix. Artwork
  - x. Collectibles
- b. Attractive items should be properly secured at all times. Allow access to employees only on an as-needed basis. Post signage as appropriate to provide notice to everyone that these items are not readily accessible. For example, you often see signs indicating that the safe is on a timed delay or otherwise inaccessible by staff on site. These types of signs are used to deter criminal activity.

#### 13. Public knowledge of business security or plans

- a. Consider what security is helpful or potentially harmful for the public to know. For example, if your safe is timed access or inaccessible by employees, some businesses post this information so a potential criminal will know ahead of time that they can't force an employee to access the safe.
- b. Limit the amount of information you share regarding your security measures including on your website, or other online posts. Know that details provided to the public may offer sufficient information for an aggressor to detect ways to get past your security.

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14. Relationship building

- a. Most businesses do not have security on site. Community relationships are a great way to improve the safety and security of your workplace environment.
- b. Improve your safety and security by working on building relationships with those around you. Your community provides some sort of emergency services for fire or other rescue situations. Law enforcement may be a local police department, county sheriff, or state police.
- c. Invite local law enforcement to tour your facility and provide safety and security recommendations. Ask questions regarding this assessment to help you in making decisions about safety enhancements. Include an officer on your safety and security committee.
- d. Offer services to local law enforcement if appropriate. Discounted memberships for first responders, complimentary snacks, water or coffee, a place to cool off in the summer or warm up in the winter, or just stop by to say hello is a great way to build this relationship in addition to having more frequent law enforcement presence on site.
- e. Nearby business owners also provide support and increase safety as you are each able to help watch out for each other's employees and buildings. Reach out to each of these and introduce yourself if you haven't already. Get to know each other and discuss what you each have to offer.

15. Other areas or items or topics that are not included above.

- a. This guide is meant to assist your assessment team in evaluating the safety and security of your business. It is possible that there are additional topics applicable to your business that are not addressed above. Put additional time into your assessment to consider what might need to be added.
- b. All businesses are different, and you may have items that need to be addressed that are particular to your business. Complete the space on the forms for items you add to this assessment.

## Action Register: Implementing changes, enhancements, and updates

For all items where additional work, updates, enhancements, or other changes are needed, complete the *Action Register*, a spreadsheet provided to assist you in tracking and completing changes.

Using the information in this guide and considering the particular risk level for each area, work with your assessment team to discuss and decide on safety and security enhancements you have in place and what you would like to install or utilize. This can be a long process and decisions may be difficult, especially if the financial cost to install a particular enhancement is burdensome. While some enhancements can be cost prohibitive, there are many low-cost and no-cost safety measures you can implement with less financial burden.

## Low-cost and No-cost Safety Measures

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Often the expense of making changes is prohibitive despite the desires of a business owner. Many of these are discussed above, but this section is provided to point out specifically what types of things can be done at low or no cost. There are several low-cost and no-cost safety measures that could potentially be implemented at your business.<sup>ii</sup> Some examples include:

#### Keep landscaping neat

Neatly groomed landscaping helps deter criminal activity as well as protecting property in the event of severe weather. Keep bushes and trees trimmed to eliminate hiding spots, provide clear views of the entire area, and prevent easy access to your business.

- Bushes and shrubs should be short such that a person cannot hide behind.
- Branches on nearby trees should be high such that a person cannot easily climb the tree and access the building or hide.
- Remove dead branches to decrease risk to people and structures nearby.
- Avoid planting large trees and shrubs adjacent to doors and windows to increase the safety of those access points.
- Avoid placement of fencing or other decorative items that allow someone to hide, especially near doors, windows, walkways, parking or other areas with access to staff or the building.

#### Securing the building

Building security should not be overlooked when working to improve safety and security.

- Ensure all doors and windows are lockable and locked. Use deadbolts on exterior doors.
- Add, replace, or repair needed lock hardware.
- Do not store a spare key outside.
- Change the locks if there is potential that former employees or others have access.
- Mark property boundaries clearly.
- Install blinds or curtains on windows.
- Set lights on random timers and turn on a radio or TV to make it seem like someone is on site.
- Consider a security system. There are several systems available, both monitored and unmonitored, at varying price points. Research reliable providers.
- Regularly monitor the grounds and report any unknown vehicles or individuals without permission to be on site.
- Use proper signage to clearly define where visitors and staff may park. Use numbers or "reserved" for reserved spaces and avoid including names or titles.

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- Use orange pilons or other marking materials to block off access. The movement of these items can indicate unapproved access.

#### Exterior lighting

Lights can be a good deterrent against criminal activity.

- Ensure exterior lighting is functioning and illuminated from dusk to dawn.
- Install timers or light sensors to automatically turn on lights.
- Replace burned out light bulbs promptly.
- Install motion detectors to turn on lights or cameras when the area is approached.

#### Emergency plans and kits

Develop a plan in case of emergency. You may need to quickly notify law enforcement or other emergency services. You may also need to treat injured people. The topics in this course and the student course will assist in plan development but does not provide a plan as your plan is individualized to your business.

- Ensure access to a working cell or other phone.
- Post local emergency numbers near the phone.
- Ensure first aid kits are fully stocked. Check the kits regularly to ensure they are stocked, and items are not expired.
- Ensure all staff know where the above emergency items are located and how to use them.

#### Emergency preparedness training

Having kits and plans are most effective when those who use them are well trained.

- Ensure all employees are trained using the accompanying student course.
- Set up a regular schedule for review and retraining of employees, as well as training of new employees.
- Update all employees if plans change (i.e., when the AED/first aid kit location is changed, for example).
- Invest in CPR/AED and first aid training for staff from an authorized provider. Local fire stations often offer free or low-cost training courses.
- Invest in an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) for your workplace. Local governments or other organizations may offer low-cost purchase opportunities or grant funded units.

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<sup>i</sup> U.S. Government (n.d.). *Guide to Mail Center Security*. United States Postal Service.

<https://about.usps.com/publications/pub166.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> (2020, May 1). *Low-cost/No-cost Security Measures for Individuals and Families*. Secure Community Network.

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