

2023 National Preparedness Symposium

Enhancing Your Preparedness Toolbox

May 23, 2023

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Tree of Life Shooting Response and Lessons Learned

Protecting Faith Based Organizations

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Pittsburgh Emergency Management

& Homeland Security



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Overview

Houses of Worship (HOW) are potential targets for terrorist attacks:

- Inflict Casualties
- Instill Fear
- Political Impacts
- Monetary Loss

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Overview (Continued)

Specific terrorist threats of concern to HOW include the following:

- Explosives threats (e.g., suicide bombs, vehicle bombs)
- Arson threats (e.g., firebombs, accelerants)
- Automatic weapons attack (e.g., indiscriminate shooting of members)
- Other weapons attack (e.g., motors, rocket-propelled grenades, or small arms)
- Biological threats introduced into the synagogue (e.g., anthrax, botulism)
- Chemical threats (e.g., chemical warfare agents, toxic industrial chemicals)
- Hostage taking



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Tree of Life Shooting in Pittsburgh

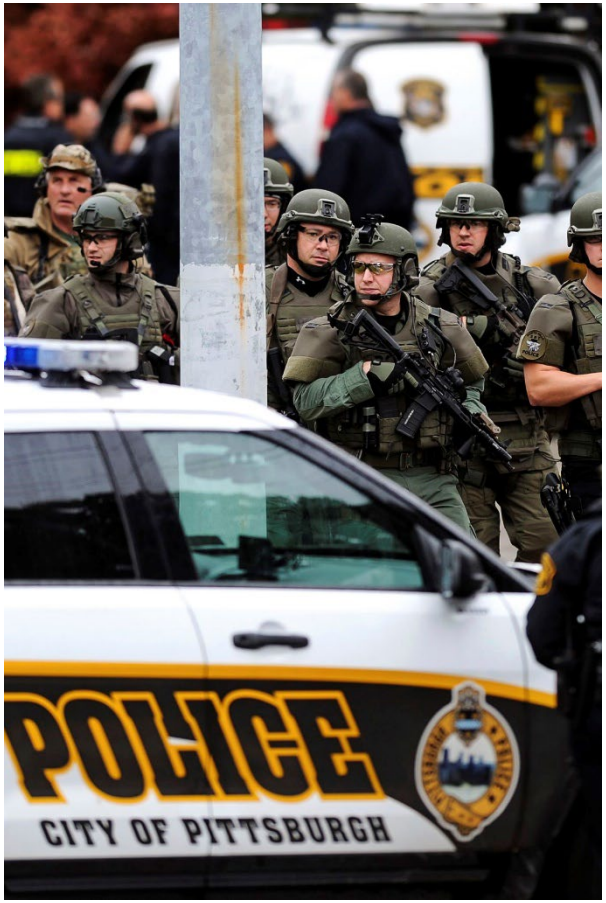
- On October 27, 2018, during Sabbath services, a threat actor entered the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania.
- The actor yelled anti-Semitic statements and indiscriminately began shooting at congregants. He was armed with a long gun and several handguns.
- His actions resulted in the death of eleven congregants and wounded six others, including four police officers.
- When surrendering to law enforcement, the threat actor told an officer that he “wanted all Jews to die” and that Jews “were committing genocide against his people.”

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POLICE
CITY OF PITTSBURGH

Pittsburgh Incidents (1 of 5)

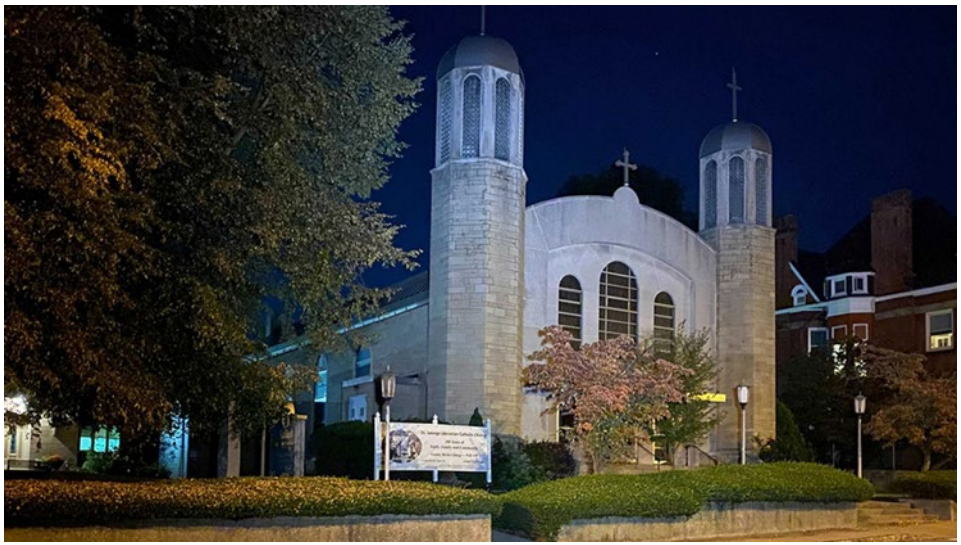
- On September 12, 2021, St. Johns Church in the Greenfield neighborhood of Pittsburgh Pennsylvania received a threat from an actor. The threat was directed towards the church congregants and the actor threatened self-harm. Statements allegedly made by the actor included indication that they possessed multiple firearms. Police responded and evacuated the church congregants. Nothing was found during the sweep.



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Pittsburgh Incidents (2 of 5)

- On September 12, 2021, congregants reported a suspicious unknown visitor to the St. George's Ukrainian Catholic Church in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania. An unidentified male entered the church and participated in worship carrying a firearm. Police responded to the reports from congregants and spoke with the male and confiscated the firearm until they could confirm he had a valid permit to conceal carry.



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Pittsburgh Incidents (3 of 5)

- Threat continues to exist. We have to remain vigilant, we must continue supporting our HOW and FBO. We must train them and connect with them now.
- April 2022, Squirrel Hill (City of Pittsburgh)
- An individual was accused of yelling obscenities outside of a Jewish elementary school. He threatened a Jewish couple and yelled, “I’m gonna kill all Jews.” These incidents happened on two separate occasions. Police were able to track down the suspect.

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Pittsburgh Incidents (4 of 5)

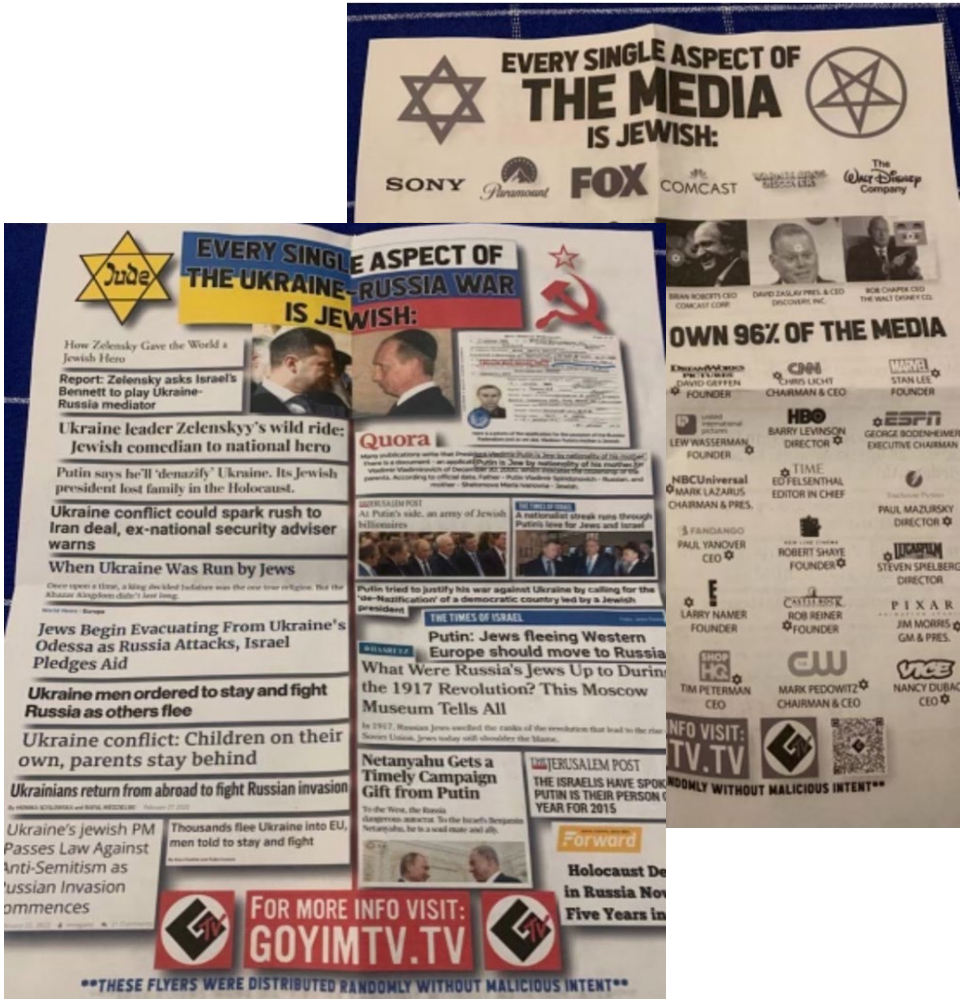
- April 2022, Mt. Lebanon neighborhood in Allegheny County
- Mt. Lebanon has a large Jewish population
- Individuals left flyers on three Mt. Lebanon streets spouting antisemitic language. The group behind the flyers is well known to local law enforcement and the FBI.



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Pittsburgh Incidents (5 of 5)

- April 2022, Squirrel Hill
- 20 homes had flyers in Ziploc bags with rice placed on doorsteps or sidewalks. The flyers from the hate group GDL expressed antisemitic and white supremacist views.



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Securing Houses of Worship and Faith-Based Organization Initiatives

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Site Vulnerability Assessments

- Assessments are walk-throughs of a facility's interior and exterior that evaluates security posture, emergency preparedness, and physical infrastructure assets.
- These visits are coordinated by Emergency Mgt's and/or Fusion Centers and accompanied by local first responders as available.
- The assessments also include discussions regarding emergency plans and information sharing practices.
- A report is then created that details vulnerabilities and Options-for-Consideration to address those vulnerabilities. Options-for-Consideration attempt to focus on low cost/no cost options.

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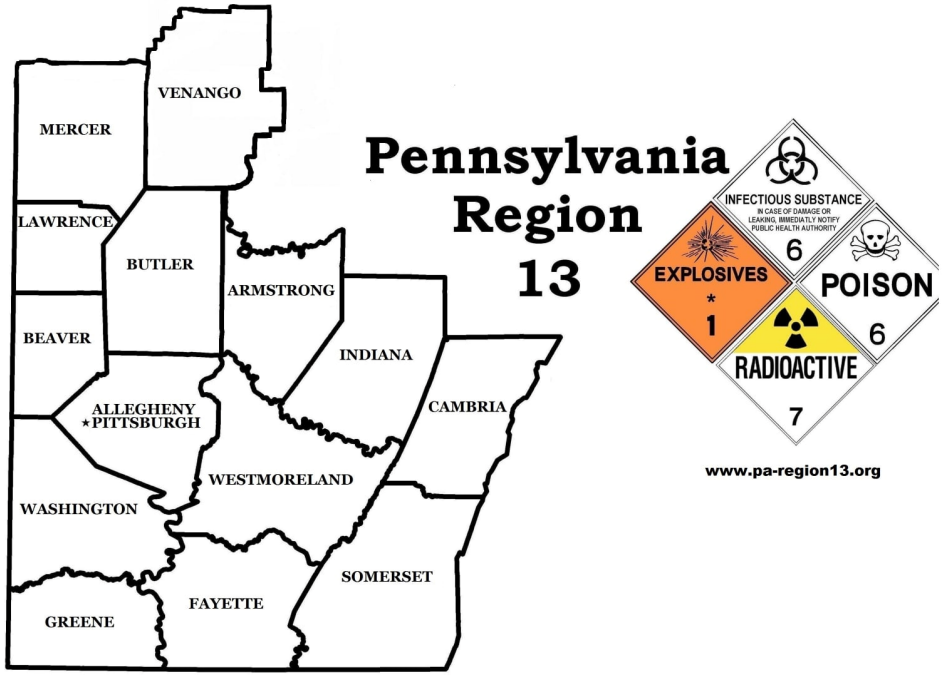
Site Assessment Requests

Houses of Worship

- City of Pittsburgh: 52
- Allegheny County: 64
- Western Pennsylvania: 41

Other Critical Infrastructure

- City of Pittsburgh: 98
- Allegheny County: 39
- Western Pennsylvania: 85



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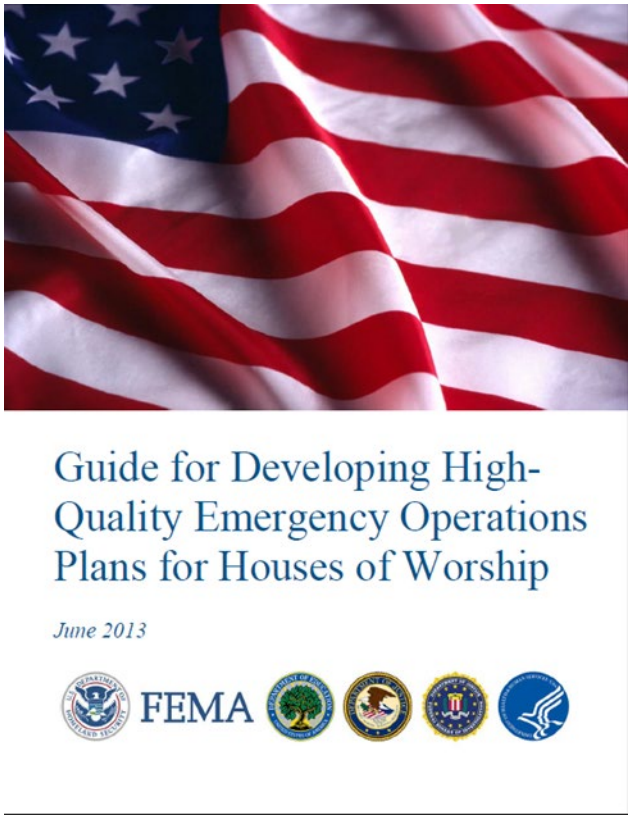
Common Vulnerabilities (1 of 5)

No existing emergency plan.

"No one becomes a genius at the time of crisis".

Guide for Developing High Quality Emergency Operations Plans for Houses of Worship

- Planning resource from FEMA
- Base Plan
- Annexes
- Threat and Hazard-Specific Annexes
- Specific Active Shooter Information



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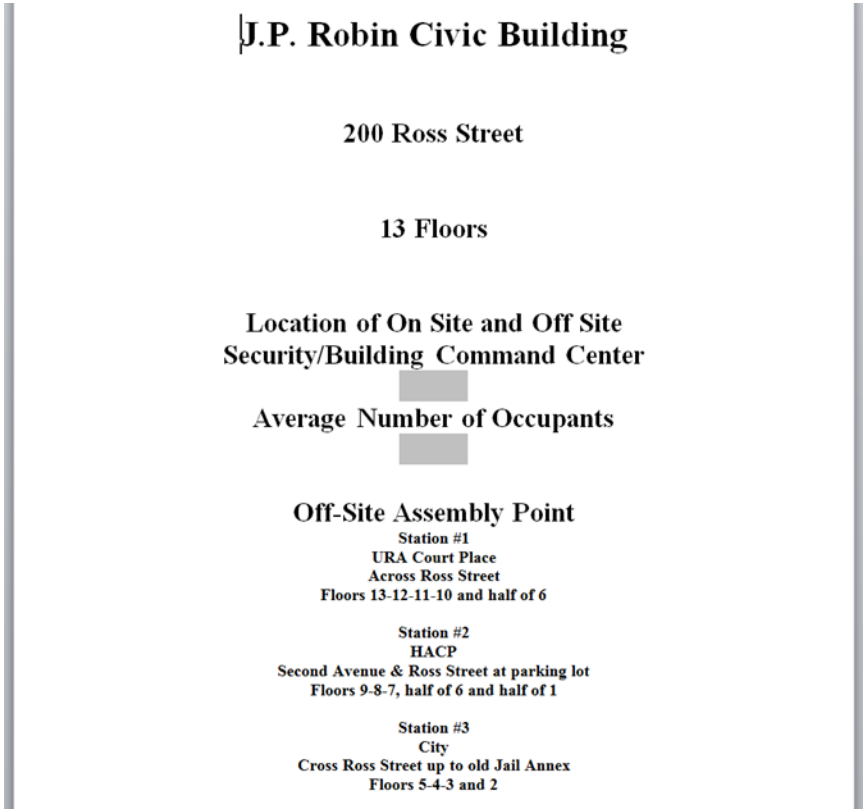
Common Vulnerabilities (2 of 5)

No existing emergency plan.

"No one becomes a genius at the time of crisis".

Local Planning Template

- Site Owners Emergency Planning
- Responder Awareness
- Floor Plan Sharing
- Critical Contact Information



J.P. Robin Civic Building

200 Ross Street

13 Floors

Location of On Site and Off Site Security/Building Command Center

Average Number of Occupants

Off-Site Assembly Point

Station #1
URA Court Place
Across Ross Street
Floors 13-12-11-10 and half of 6

Station #2
HACP
Second Avenue & Ross Street at parking lot
Floors 9-8-7, half of 6 and half of 1

Station #3
City
Cross Ross Street up to old Jail Annex
Floors 5-4-3 and 2

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Common Vulnerabilities (3 of 5)

Facility receives limited threat or situational awareness information in order to be proactive against potential hazardous situations or threats.

Pittsburgh Regional Intelligence Brief

- International and local intelligence and trending statistics in Southwest PA

Pennsylvania State Police Intelligence Bulletins

- Intelligence on emerging threats to Critical Infrastructure

Police Zone Crime Report

- Statistical analysis of local crime trends



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JOINT INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

20 June 2019

(U//FOUO) **FBI Arrests Pittsburgh-Based Individual for Attempting to Provide Material Support to ISIS and Distribution of Information Relating to Explosives, Destructive Devices, and Weapons of Mass Destruction**

(U) **Scope**

(U//FOUO) This *Joint Intelligence Bulletin (JIB)* is intended to provide information on the 19 June 2019 arrest of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania-based Syrian refugee, Mustafa Alowemer. The FBI Pittsburgh Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) executed an arrest of Alowemer based on a complaint of attempting to provide material support or resources to a foreign terrorist organization (FTO) and the distribution of information relating to explosives, destructive devices, and weapons of mass destruction on behalf of an FTO, specifically the Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham (ISIS). This *JIB* is provided by the FBI and DHS to support their respective activities and to assist federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial government counterterrorism and law enforcement officials and private sector security partners in deterring, preventing, or disrupting terrorist attacks against the United States. All events described in this *JIB* are taken from the complaint. The charges contained in the complaint are mere allegations; as in any criminal case, the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

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Common Vulnerabilities (4 of 5)

Greeters are often less than vigilant and are not given basic security training to potentially identify a suspicious person and act on that information



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Common Vulnerabilities (5 of 5)

Greeters are often less than vigilant and are not given basic security training to potentially identify a suspicious person and act on that information

Surveillance Awareness: What You Can Do (IS-914) Awareness of actions to take in order to detect and report suspicious activities associated with adversarial surveillance. (https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-914&lang=en)

Workplace Security Awareness IS-906 Provides guidance on how to improve overall security in the workplace. (https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-906&lang=en)



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Allegheny County Houses of Worship Safety Seminars

- Approached by the DHS Protective Security Advisor to assist with coordinating presentations within Allegheny County.
- Presentations offer an opportunity for DHS to discuss latest safety considerations for HoW, along with local PD, the Western PA All-Hazards Fusion Center, and other safety agencies.



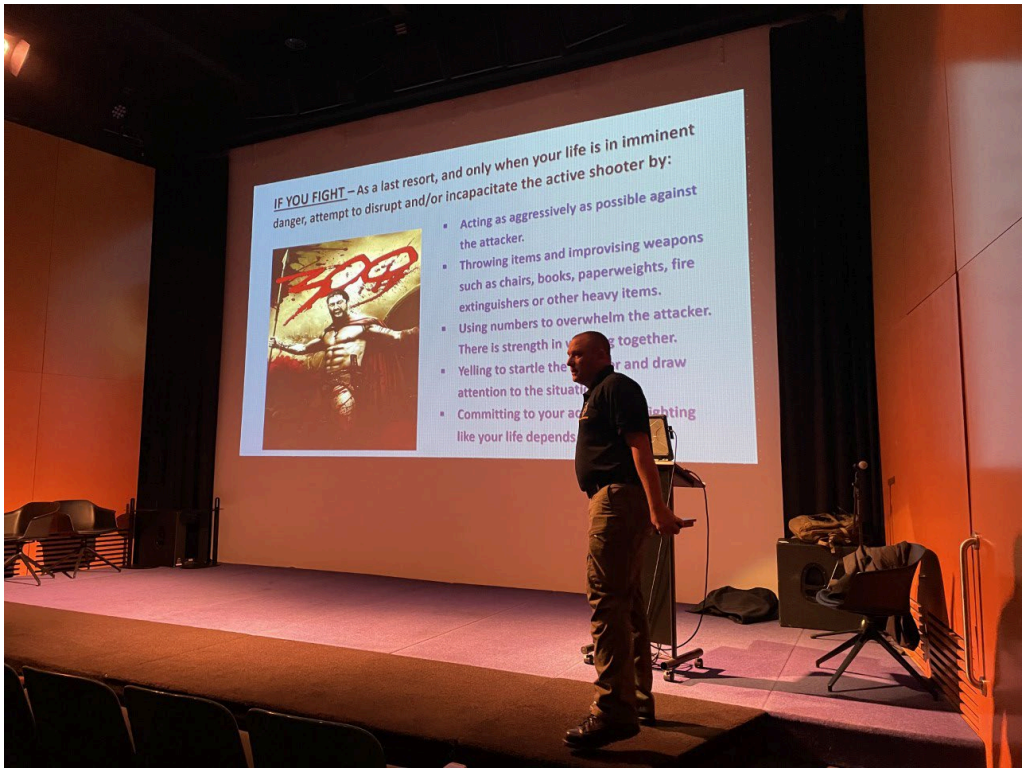
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Allegheny County Houses of Worship Safety Seminars (Continued)



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Locally Produced Training







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Houses of Worship Safety Seminars Accomplishments

North Way Christian Community (Wexford): May 9, 2019

- Presenters: DHS, Local PD
- Attendance: 95

Riverside Community Church (Tarentum): June 27, 2019

- Presenters: DHS, Local PD
- Attendance: 112

Bethany Presbyterian Church (Bridgeville): October 21, 2019

- Presenters: DHS, Allegheny County 911, Local PD, WPAHFC
- Attendance: 165

Riverside Community Church (Tarentum): March 22, 2022

- Presenters: DHS, Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh, WPAHFC, Local PD
- Attendance: 102

Armstrong County: June 7, 2022

- Presenters: DHS, Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh, WPAHFC, Local PD
- Attendance: 223

Oxford Community Church (Pittsburgh): February 18, 2023

- Presenters: DHS, Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh, WPAHFC, Local PD
- Attendance: 223

Total HOW Partners Trained: 756

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Faith-Based Security & Resilience Outreach

- The WPAHFC collaborated with the Pennsylvania Governor's Office of Homeland Security, the Pennsylvania Criminal Intelligence Center (PaCIC), the Delaware Valley Intelligence Center, and the Faith-Based Information Sharing and Analysis Fusion Centers Pennsylvania Governor's Office of Homeland Security (GOHS) Faith-based Information Sharing and Analysis Organization (FB-ISAO) Organization to develop content and present three Pennsylvania regional faith-based virtual workshops throughout 2021.
- Western PA – March 2021: 64 attendees
- Central PA – April 2021: 65 attendees
- Eastern PA – June 2021: 107 attendees
- Total Attendees: 236

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Incorporating HOW into the Fusion Liaison Officer Program

- Shortly after the TOL incident, the Fusion Center recognized the need to include our HOW partners in our Fusion Liaison Officer (FLO) Program
- The FLO Program is a platform for local representatives to share information related to local and global terrorists, criminal threats, and potential serious incidents. The FLO program is for law enforcement, first responders, state, and local agencies, and private sector entities throughout Pennsylvania.
- The FLO program strengthens information sharing and provides and effective and viable two-way flow of information.
- A Fusion Liaison Officer (FLO) is a person acting as an intermediary between an agency, organization, private entity, or community who is properly certified by an appropriate agent from a fusion center. The mission of a FLO is to serve as a conduit of information between members of the public safety community, public/private sector, state and local agencies, and the fusion center in an effort to assist in protecting the citizens and critical infrastructures of Western Pennsylvania.

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Intelligence Products

- Special Event Threat Assessments (SETAs) are provided to Critical Infrastructure/Key Resources (CI/KR) owners and operators, event organizers and public safety officials to provide situational awareness
- Pittsburgh October 27 Remembrance
- Chanukah Festival
- Informational Briefs – Suspicious Activity Alerts are provided to inform CI/KR owners and operators on recent incidents involving suspicious activity and mitigation considerations.
- The WPAHFC disseminated numerous products, including pass throughs and situational awareness alerts to partners

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Success Stories (1 of 4)

- Conducted assessment at a HOW in 2018
- Returned for a follow up assessment
- The location received NSGP funds from 2018 application
- Implemented security recommendations | Equipment upgrades from the 2018 assessment

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Success Stories (2 of 4)

- Conducted assessment at a HOW in 2018
- Introduced them to the fusion center and what we do
- Got them signed up to receive our intelligence products
- In 2019, we received SAR from them regarding a former congregant and shared with our PBP partner/TFO with FBI
- Individual was espousing extremist radical religious ideology and exhibiting insider threat milestones

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Success Stories (3 of 4)

- Conducted an assessment at a HOW in 2022
- Signed up to receive our intelligence products
- Had an incident at their facility with an individual well known to the community
- Had past run ins with police and was known to LE for being disruptive to services
- Radical belief system and to some degree threatening to congregations
- Put that facility's security team representative in touch with a local asset that is a threat assessment team that handles mental illness/less than criminal incidents and actors



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Success Stories (4 of 4)



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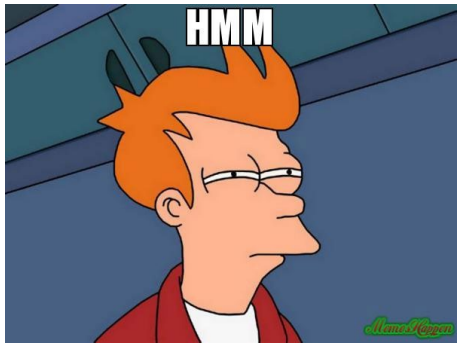
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