

# risk alert

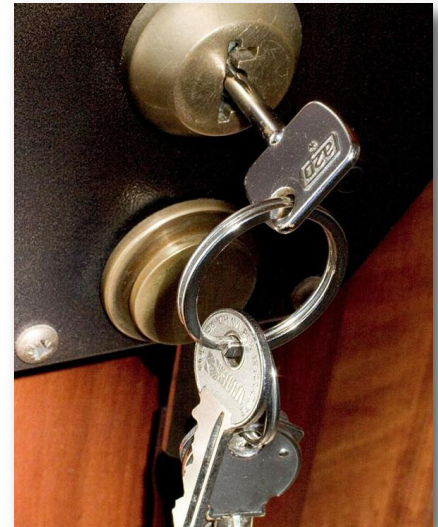


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## One burglary occurs every 14 seconds

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, an average of 2.1 million burglaries occurs every year. Moreover, the total value of the items that were stolen has added up to almost \$15 billion in recent years. Thieves who target religious organizations typically look for cash, electronics (such as computer equipment or sound systems), musical instruments or other items they can easily sell. Rest assured, though—there is an easy way to help prevent a burglary from happening at your organization.

To effectively safeguard your facility, the first step of protective action (denying entrance to criminals) needs to be in force and rock solid. The most common and simple way of doing this is by examining your facility's lock-and-key policy.



## Lock crime out of your facility

Many religious organizations have poor key policies. Keys are issued to many people, and records are not kept. Most locksmiths recommend that you change your locks every five years as part of your security process. You can choose to change your locks completely or to rekey your current locks. If keys are lost or if an individual entrusted with the facility keys leaves without turning the keys in, you should rekey or change your locks immediately.

Always keep all doors locked when your facility is not in use. During low traffic periods, such as weekday business hours, restrict entry access to one main door to reduce the chance of a burglar slipping into the building. If the entryway is not in an area easily visible from other parts of the building, install a motion sensor or buzzer system to alert the office when someone enters.

## Have a fall-back to rely upon

If a criminal gets past your exterior locks, you are still capable of protecting your valuables. Install locks on the interior doors that guard important items, such as confidential documents, tithes and offerings, religious artifacts and other valuables. The locks on these interior doors should be replaced each time you replace the exterior locks. Only individuals whose duties absolutely necessitate it should have keys to access these areas. All interior doors should be closed and locked when not in use.

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## **Keep track of who comes in**

Today's religious institutions are constantly busy with congregational activities, which means that a number of people need a key to the building. Every time you give a key to someone, there is the possibility of that key being lost, stolen or duplicated.

Avoid putting your facility at an increased risk for burglary by establishing a procedure for the use, distribution and collection of keys. The procedure should include keeping a list of who has been given a key for what activity and for how long of a time. Any keys you distribute should not be tagged or labeled, but they should be stamped with an identification number and the words "Do Not Duplicate."

## **A little effort goes a long way**

A small effort will go along with the installation or rekeying of your facility's locks, but it will definitely outweigh the cost of precious valuables being stolen. Keep the exterior of your building and the susceptible areas inside secure with quality locks and protect the hard work that your congregation puts into its ministry.

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and look in the Safety Resources section.**