



Ecclesiastical Insurance Office plc

Box 2004, Suite 2200, 20 Eglinton Avenue West, Toronto, Ontario M4R 1K8 Telephone (416) 484-4555 Facsimile (416) 484-6352

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

- 21 April, 2008

SACRILEGIOUS THIEVES TARGET HOUSES OF WORSHIP

DATELINE SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO – With over 100 break-ins over the past several months, congregants in many Southwestern Ontario faith communities feel helpless and violated. Buildings that were considered sanctuaries, no longer feel safe. Thieves have discovered that houses of worship, especially in rural locations, are easy targets: often vacant, unlocked, and with minimal or no security in place. Stolen items have included small amounts of cash, non-perishable items collected for food banks, laptops and audio equipment. These minor thefts are often the start of an escalating pattern of crime that can end in a tragedy -- such as the destruction of a faith community through arson. Fortunately, there are measures faith communities can implement not only to protect themselves, but also to change the perception that they are meek targets for unscrupulous thieves. In addition to the checklist provided below, visit our website, www.ecclesiastical.ca (Press Release area) to hear Chris Eden, one of Ecclesiastical's Risk Control Specialists, being interviewed by Bryan Allen, host of *The Talk Show*, on CKNX AM radio station (out of Wingham, Ontario) regarding the rash of church thefts in Southern Ontario.

1. Establish a church security policy defining who is responsible for facility security. Conduct a risk assessment and produce a written policy outlining procedures and how risks will be managed. The local police department can assist in this regard.
2. Protect the premises with a centrally monitored intrusion alarm.
3. Implement a "Churchwatch" or similar program. Buildings that are empty for significant periods during the week are attractive targets for vandalism, break and enter, and potentially, arson. A Churchwatch program utilizes volunteers to pass by and monitor the building(s) on a regular schedule. A congregant living near the facility acts as the designated contact for the program and would liaise with the local police department, advising them of the program and its purpose. It is important that congregants do not confront suspicious people on the premises. The Churchwatch leader or police should be contacted instead. Ideally, the police would assist with program protocols, and advise how incidents should be handled.
4. Keep only a minimal amount of cash on the premises and lock away securely. Post signs stating "**No Cash on Premises**". All valuables, including audio equipment, should be securely locked away and kept out of sight.
5. Lock the vestry and church office when not in use.
6. Computer Hard Drives should be encrypted and password protected.
7. Monitor and restrict entry - the fewer access points into the building, the safer it is. Preferably, only one door should be used during the week. Keep all doors and windows in good repair and securely locked when the building is not in use. If a door is left open, there should be someone on the premises. Never hide keys or leave them on the premises. Restrict the number of keys printed.

8. Protect accessible windows with bars, screens or a film such as 3M's Scotchshield, which makes a window almost unbreakable. Doors should be equipped with hardened deadbolts with at least a 1 inch throw. Multiple locking points and hardened doorframes are best.
9. The area surrounding the building(s) should be well lit. Exterior flood and/or motion sensor lighting can be an effective deterrent, as is keeping interior lights on timers.
10. Good housekeeping sends a strong message that the building is not an easy target. Clean up graffiti, empty beer bottles, cigarette butts, garbage, etc., and discourage loitering around the premises.
11. Ensure that sheds and other outbuildings are locked. In addition to items that might be attractive to thieves, sheds hold tools that thieves can use to break into the main building.
12. Create an "End of Day" checklist to confirm that no unauthorized person is left in the building; that windows and doors are locked; that interior and exterior lights are turned on as necessary; and alarms are engaged.

Other Risk Management Issues

For more information on risk management issues, visit www.ecclesiastical.ca. Click on the Risk Management tab, then "Click here to sign up now". Complete the new user registration form and you will receive a return email confirming your password. Use your password and email address to access our risk management White Papers.

About Ecclesiastical Insurance

Ecclesiastical Insurance is the insurer of choice for Canada's places of worship. The company was established in the United Kingdom in 1887 and opened in Canada in 1972. Ecclesiastical is owned by a charitable trust and is committed to serving the needs of its customers and the larger community. Group profits (other than funds required for business operations) are redistributed for the benefit of faith and charitable initiatives. Ecclesiastical is rated "A" by A.M. Best, and "A-" by Standard and Poor's.

- 30 -

For more information about risk control or Ecclesiastical Insurance, please contact:

Stuart Rowley
Underwriting and Operations Manager for Canada
(416) 484-4918
srowley@eccles-ins.com

Jacinta Whyte
General Manager & Chief Agent for Canada
(416) 484-4900

jwhyte@eccles-ins.com