



Jewish Camps: Assessments and Security

This document provides assessment guidance to security directors who support Jewish camps and equips camp leadership with the necessary tools and knowledge to enhance camp safety and security. While this document is primarily focused on overnight camps with dedicated property, the practices discussed may apply to day camps as well. Security directors are routinely tasked with conducting camp Threat, Vulnerability, and Risk Assessments (TVRAs) and advising camp leadership on how to best mitigate observed vulnerabilities. This document discusses the challenges of conducting a camp TVRA, areas in which to improve camp security, and security tips for camp directors.

Threat, Vulnerability, and Risk Assessments (TVRAs)

Jewish camps present unique challenges when conducting a TVRA. Most camps are located in isolated rural areas and often encompass significant wooded terrain. Rural areas may have limited cellular or internet access, thus affecting means of communication, especially for emergency notification and monitoring of electronic physical security measures. In addition, rural areas may experience increased law enforcement response times due to distance and limited police department staffing. Additionally, many camps close after the summer sessions, thus leaving the camps unoccupied for extended periods. These factors provide the foundational steps toward examining camp security.

To provide an effective assessment, one must understand the unique challenges of securing a Jewish camp located in an isolated and rural area. The TVRA serves as a means to effectively develop customized strategies to mitigate potential risks by identifying vulnerabilities specific to Jewish camps. The assessment must examine various factors such as access control, mass alert/communications, lockdown and shelter-in-place procedures, staff training, liaison with area first responders, and potential threats.

The focus for assessing and securing a Jewish camp includes but is not limited to a detailed review and examination of the following areas:

1. **Perimeter Security** — consideration of whether fences are a practical mitigation due to camp acreage.
2. **Main Entrance** — security personnel, access control, and viability of video coverage.
3. **Lighting** — throughout camp and specifically in housing and frequently used areas.
4. **Mass Communications** — radio systems, panic alerts, and PA systems.
5. **Video Surveillance Systems (VSS)** — monitoring, gaps in coverage, and use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) such as weapons detection, motion detection, etc.
6. **Intrusion Detection Systems (IDS)** — office and maintenance/equipment storage, primarily an off-season priority.
7. **Building Lockdowns** — the ability to shelter in place.
8. **Building Access Control** — usage and access to areas where groups congregate (cafeteria, sanctuary, sports field, etc.).
9. **Security Guards** — presence and training.
10. **Camp Staff** — security training and awareness, as well as familiarization with security procedures.
11. **Visitor Management** — family and vendor procedures in addition to drop-off and pick-up of day

Additional questions and thoughts when conducting a TVRA for a Jewish camp:

- What is internet access and the off-season power situation? Will electronic physical security measures be active in the off-season?
- Are recommended mitigations such as perimeter fencing, video surveillance systems, electronic access control, etc., viable and attainable due to remote and/or isolated areas? It is important to balance the ability to make physical security enhancements with the challenges the environment presents.
- Gauge the difficulty of securing large areas. At a minimum, to establish clear boundaries and property lines, security signage along the property perimeter should be considered. Work with the camp staff to develop inner security zones where camp activities are prevalent (lodging, dining, administration areas, etc.) and can be defined, secured, and monitored.



Areas to Consider for Improving Jewish Camp Security

Training And Preparedness

Ongoing training for camp staff members is imperative to ensure their readiness to handle diverse security challenges in remote locations. Properly trained camp staff members are ideally positioned to respond effectively to a critical incident, as they have developed relationships with the campers and are viewed as trusted resources. Training programs should encompass a range of skills, including conflict resolution, emergency response, first aid, and familiarity with security technologies. Preparedness drills for various emergency scenarios play a crucial role in maintaining a high level of readiness among camp staff. Conducting simulated exercises enables teams to practice response protocols, evaluate their effectiveness, and identify areas for improvement.

Camp staff is key to camp security for the following reasons:

- There is a high probability camp staff members will be around campers and guests during a crisis.
- They spend more time with campers and guests.
- Campers and guests will seek guidance from camp staff.
- Staff members are trained to use a variety of communication methods.

Utilizing Professional Camp Security Guards

Trained camp security guards can serve as the cornerstone of security measures for Jewish camps. Their role should extend beyond mere surveillance: the camp security guards should have the expertise and skills to handle the unique challenges of isolated camps. One of the primary reasons for the importance of professional guards lies in their ability to proactively assess, deter, and respond to potential threats. Security guards should have the training that allows them to identify vulnerabilities specific to remote settings and take preventive actions to mitigate risks before they escalate. Moreover, hiring professional camp security guards enhances safety by instilling confidence and assurance among camp staff, campers, and parents. The use of a properly vetted professional camp security force can deter unauthorized access and provide a reassuring presence for those working and attending Jewish camps in remote locations.

The use of unarmed versus armed camp security guards is a complex decision for camp leadership that encompasses physical security and other factors.

Additional information on determining the use of unarmed versus armed security guards can be found in the [SCN white paper](#):

Private Security: Window Dressing or Real Protection? A Roadmap for Securing Sacred Spaces



Given the remote locations of many camps and the potential for lengthy response times from law enforcement, professionally trained armed security guards may be a reasonable consideration. Armed security can offer an immediate response to an active situation. Guards should have the required certifications and be properly trained in the use of firearms. In addition, local law enforcement agencies should be advised when armed camp security guards are employed to deconflict the potential of a “friendly fire” situation.

Implementing Advanced Surveillance Systems

Integrating cutting-edge surveillance technology is critical to ensuring adequate Jewish camp security in remote areas. Video monitoring systems and sophisticated alarm systems offer real-time surveillance capabilities that enhance the vigilance and responsiveness of security measures. These systems can provide comprehensive coverage of camp perimeters, access points, and critical areas, allowing security personnel to monitor activities remotely. Advanced technologies, such as motion sensors, infrared cameras, and AI-powered analytics, enable early detection of potential threats, triggering immediate responses.



Security Tips for Jewish Camp Directors



Entrance Gates: Gates should be closed at night and, if possible, at all times unless required for access. Whether or not a gate is locked will depend on the location and situation. Ensure access for emergency vehicles.



Camp Security Guards: Options for consideration are a professional security service, camp staff patrols, and law enforcement patrol. Off-season security should be based on needs and use of property.



Visitors: If visitors are permitted, require them to check in and wear visible visitor identification while on the site. Be sure that they check out and return their ID pass. Develop and enforce procedures for authorized and unauthorized visitors.



Lighting: Consider different types of lighting and how extensive they are. Lighting may include lights at sanitary facilities; infirmary, living, or program areas; connecting walks or paths; and parking areas.



Signs: Camps and program sites become more vulnerable if they utilize highway directional and entrance signs. Consider hanging signs on arrival or departure days only or using maps for parents driving to the site. Also, consider the use of removable signs that can be utilized when camps are in session or as needed. Post “NO TRESPASSING” signs in strategic locations and ensure local requirements are met to make signs valid and enforceable.



Coordination with Local First Responders: Ensure local law enforcement and emergency services are familiar with the camp. Provide camp maps to first responders and invite them to visit the camp property for familiarization.



Boundary Barriers: Plant a dense growth of hedgerows or brambles or build structural barriers such as fences or other construction that serve as a deterrent to unauthorized entry. Contact your local forester for suggestions on natural barriers. Conduct routine perimeter inspections to identify any evidence of unauthorized entry to the site.



Paths: Consider paths leading out of camp, isolation of connecting paths, and brush near paths. Properly mark all paths.



Brush and Undergrowth Near Buildings: The area immediately around a building or tent should be free of brush, when possible, to eliminate any areas of concealment.



Keys and Locks: Keys should be distributed according to need instead of convenience. Keys should be collected or locks re-keyed when there is a staff position change. Develop schedules for the locking of buildings based on camp activities and building usage.

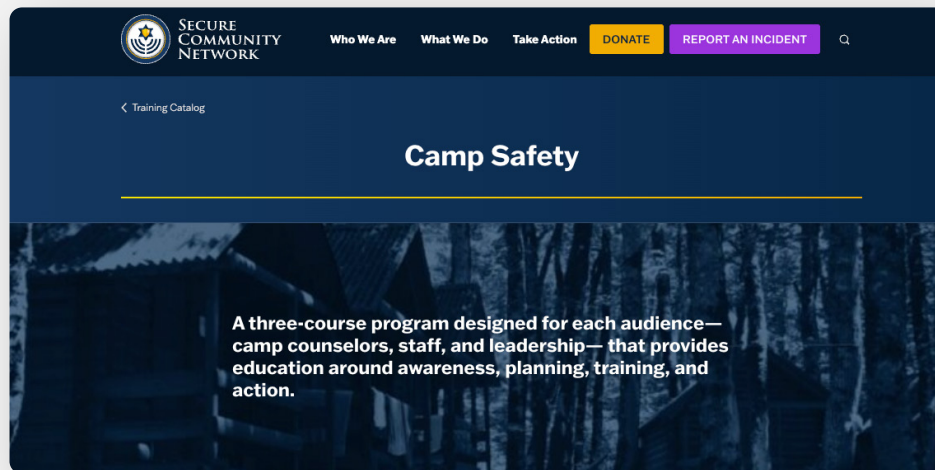


Alarms: Consider which alarms would be best to use for security reasons and which locations best provide for intrusion detection, especially in the off-season or when the camp is unoccupied.

The Camp Security Initiative, in conjunction with the Community Protection Program, has worked to provide this blueprint for Jewish camps to assess, enhance, and maintain the safety and security of camps across North America. Jewish camps provide a unique opportunity for youth to embrace their faith and community in a setting away from their daily life. Through collaboration between security directors and camp leadership, Jewish camps can provide a safe and secure environment for campers to enjoy a positive camp experience.

For more information on the Camp Security Initiative, please visit the website:

<https://www.securecommunitynetwork.org/protecting-centers-of-jewish-life/>



Reporting

Emergencies: 9-1-1

Security incidents:

Duty Desk: 844-SCN-DESK (844-726-3375)

Find your Security Professional

<https://www.securecommunitynetwork.org/regions/>

Email: camps@securecommunitynetwork.org

Disclaimer

These guidelines are for informational purposes only. The Secure Community Network (SCN) advises seeking professional security advice tailored to your situation. SCN makes no representation, guarantee, or warranty that adopting any recommendation presented here will ensure that your facility or users will be invulnerable to attack or crime. SCN shall not have any liability because of any decision by you to adopt or not adopt any part of these guidelines.

These guidelines are copyrighted property of SCN and may not be copied, reproduced, republished, posted, transmitted, distributed, or changed without the prior written permission of SCN.