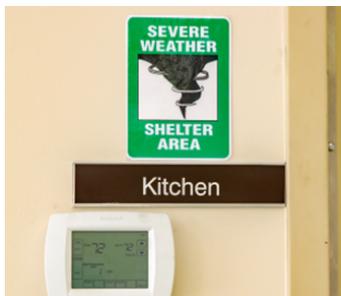


What to Do and Where to Go



When I walked out of church Sunday, snow was coming down heavily. Ironic, I thought, as I had just completed a tour of the church which emphasized the lurking dangers of the upcoming spring. I found the timing funny, and the subject a bit scary, but the things I learned were comforting.

Our Safety and Security team is busy at work making sure all contingencies of possible emergencies are covered and the congregation is knowledgeable about what to do if something unwanted does happen. I wrote a Spotlight about this several years ago, but much has been done since then so I thought I'd take the tour

with Ward Ransdell, the chair of the group.

Our first conversation was about weather and possibilities of a tornado or other damaging storm. Ward laughed, saying "Finding out about a warning wouldn't be hard – there would be dozens of private phone alerts going off during service." But what if we were told there was a tornado sighting? Would you know what to do or where to go?

The first thing to do is start paying attention to the multitude of signs all over the church. I pass by them each week but pay no attention to them. They cover every situation. Let's say we are in the sanctuary when we learn of a tornado coming our way. That is NOT a safe place to be – windows and skylights everywhere. Do you know where the designated shelter areas are? There are two small windowless spaces behind the chancel that would hold the choir and people near the front of the sanctuary. All the restrooms in the church are designated "shelter areas". There are two off the narthex. In the children's wing, the small hall towards the children's restroom and kitchen are shelter places as is the hall running to the administration wing. But if you see windows - STOP!

My temptation would be to head to the gym that would hold more people, but Ward flatly declared that would be the worst place to be because of the unsupported roof. The inside wall beside it where the vending machines and restroom are would be OK, but get out of the gym! Remember, there are "Severe Weather Shelter Area" signs everywhere – look for them next time you are at Crestwood.

Then there is fire danger – or threat of fire or gas– that takes a different set of self-help skills. The key is not to shelter in place, but to get out of there! If you look around, I bet you will find many doors to the outside you never knew were there. There are two at the front of the sanctuary. There are two others on the sides just as you enter the side doors to the sanctuary. There are back doors out of the Mission Center, one being down a strange little hallway I've never noticed before. Again, there are signs everywhere. Big EXIT signs are easily visible and if the alarm is going off, lights will be blinking at the exits. We look for exit signs on airplanes, why not locate them in church?

There are red alarm boxes that anyone can access throughout the church that will notify the fire department if someone sees a real danger, and of course, call 911. Fire extinguishers are everywhere and are checked by the fire department every year. Do you know where they are?

Once the ear-splitting alarms start, only the fire department can turn them off. And the obvious action is to clear the facility when the alarm starts. That means basketball games, groups meeting, etc. Enough said.

It's the changes recently made when the fire alarm goes off that interests me. The fire doors leading down the main halls automatically close, while outside doors unlock. Parents will automatically head towards their children, but that's a mistake. The kiddos will already be outside – teachers know well what to do. Go around the church to get to them – not through.

If an alarm comes at night or during the week day, the Children's Wing entrance doors unlock so the first responders can get in immediately and see the FACP sign near the entrance (look for it – you pass it all the time). There is a screen there that can immediately tell them where the difficulty is within the facility.

And, the committee asks that people not park under the portico at the North Entrance or along the driveways. There are no parking signs posted but... Cars there could greatly impede the fire department's ability to help us.

Lastly, there unfortunately can be medical emergencies. There are three AEDs in the facility – at the far entrance to the Mission Center, near the central entrance to the sanctuary, and in the children’s wing. Supposedly when the packet is removed and unsnapped, it will immediately start talking and telling the user what to do. We didn’t try it out, but hopefully some of our medical-related members will be on hand rather than relying on me. It’s comforting to know the contraptions are there. Look for them.

Many thanks to the Security and Safety team. There is much more, but I’m out of room. I am both amazed and appreciative at the intricacy of thought that has gone into their attention to detail. Now, if the rest of us will just pay attention to the signs and follow the directions if needed!!.

Let’s explore Crestwood together. If you have an idea or suggestion for a Spotlight, contact Gaye Holman at gdholman@bellsouth.net.



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