

Guidelines for Courthouse Security in Iowa

I. Rationale

These guidelines apply to the security of all structures that contain court-related facilities. In court security, the emphasis is on prevention, containment, and control - all directed towards the protection of life and property and the preservation of the judicial process. The guidelines provide the principal elements of court security planning. They point to key security and safety issues that should be addressed by court administrators, law enforcement officials, and Boards of Supervisors. In general, the guidelines provide a flexible and workable approach for ensuring safe and secure court facilities.

II. Direction and Oversight of Courthouse Security

Each county shall establish a Courthouse Security Committee. The chairperson of the County Board of Supervisors and the chief judge of the judicial district shall appoint the committee members, who shall include a representative of the sheriff, court administration, clerk of court, Board of Supervisors, and other key offices of the courthouse. The committee should meet quarterly to discuss safety and security issues, and meet more often when necessary.

Directives concerning courthouse security shall be written as directed by the Courthouse Security Committee. Each directive shall be reviewed by the committee and approved by the chief judge of the judicial district, the county sheriff, and the Board of Supervisors.

III. Guidelines

Ia-CHS-01 A directive establishes a written *Court Facilities Security Plan*, which should include at least the following sections:

- ▶ Physical security plan
- ▶ Security operations
- ▶ Hostage situation response plan
- ▶ High-risk trial plan
- ▶ Emergency procedures for: fire, bomb threat, tornado warning, or other disaster

Fire drills must be practiced on an annual basis, and other drills should be practiced as often as necessary. All employees shall participate in emergency drills when scheduled. New employees of the courthouse shall receive initial training on emergency procedures and updated when changed.

Ia-CHS-02 The physical security plan includes adequate provisions in at least the following areas:

- Exterior lighting
- Interior lighting
- Evacuation routes
- Communications
- Doors and windows
- Courtroom bench security
- Alarms (duress and intrusion)
- Parking lot lighting and security
- Fire detection, smoke detectors
- Hydrants, hoses, extinguishers

A monthly inspection of these items will be made to ensure serviceability.

Ia-CHS-03 A written directive establishing or modifying the court facilities security plan is immediately available to all persons with court security responsibilities.

The written directive governing security is immediately available to persons assigned to the function. Employees will sign off indicating that they have reviewed and understand these plans.

Ia-CHS-04 A written directive establishes liaison among persons sharing responsibility for court facilities security.

When security issues are shared with a court administrator, chief judge, sheriff, security committee, or others, there should be clearly understood responsibilities and channels of communications to ensure adequate security for the facility.

Ia-CHS-05 A written directive governs weapons in the courthouse.

This directive or policy should be uniform throughout the judicial district.

Ia-CHS-06 When directives prohibit weapons in parts of the courthouse, lock-boxes are available and are located in a controlled area having limited access to the public.

Ia-CHS-07 When dangerous substances, including weapons, flammable materials, and other substances are maintained in the courthouse, they are stored in a secure area.

A secure area with dangerous substances will include the following security characteristics:

1. Access is limited to those specifically identified to have access.
2. The door is locked by a deadbolt lock or padlock, when not occupied.
3. Doors with exposed hinges have hinge pins welded or turned to preclude removal.
4. Windows are covered with permanently affixed bars or expanded steel mesh.
5. The area is ventilated and not subjected to extremes of hot or cold within limits shown on containers.

Ia-CHS-08 The secure area used for storage of dangerous substances in the courthouse is equipped with fire-fighting equipment and an intrusion alarm.

The fire-fighting equipment can be as sophisticated as a sprinkler system or as simple as a fire extinguisher.

Ia-CHS-09 A local professionally trained fire inspector or the Iowa Fire Marshall's Office shall conduct an annual fire safety inspection to ensure compliance with fire safety regulations for buildings open to the public.

Ia-CHS-10 A written directive designates circulation patterns governing movement of people in the courthouse.

Patterns may include those for the public, employees, prisoners, and judges.

Ia-CHS-11 There are secure or controlled entrances to bring prisoners into the courthouse.

These could be in the form of a sallyport or an entrance from which the public is restricted, at least at the time of prisoner movement.

Ia-CHS-12 Prisoners brought into court should be accompanied by a trained peace officer.

Trained peace officers, rather than civilian guards, should accompany prisoners in court to adequately deter and manage incidences involving unruly defendants.

Ia-CHS-13 A written directive governs required searches of the courtroom for contraband.

At a minimum, someone should conduct a visual examination of the courtroom for contraband immediately prior to the beginning of a court session.

Ia-CHS-14 A written directive governs use of restraints on defendants in custody while in the courthouse.

The use of all restraining devices should be clearly set forth as applicable to all defendants in custody, whether they are male, female, juvenile, or handicapped persons. Application of policy should be uniform and consistent. Restraints should be used at all times except during jury trials. During long trials restraints shall be used in the discretion of the trial judge.

Ia-CHS-15 A written directive governs key control for the court facility.

Keys, particularly masters and grand masters, should be under close supervision at all times. Their issuance should be strictly controlled. The loss of keys for sensitive areas requires rekeying of affected locks without delay.

Ia-CHS-16 The sheriff or a qualified designee shall conduct an annual security survey for the court facility.

The person conducting the survey should identify himself/herself and the person's name should be shown on the title page of the survey. A copy of the survey should be delivered to the chief judge of the judicial district and the clerk of court in the county where the facility is located. In addition, whenever there is structural change in the court facility, the sheriff (or designee) should update the survey.

Ia-CHS-17 Equipment used for courthouse security is specifically identified and its availability recorded in an appropriate document.

It is important that personnel know the types, qualities, condition, and location of such equipment. The county sheriff (or designee) should maintain a list that identifies dates of acquisition and shelf life for such material as electronic gear, alarms, communications equipment, fire detection and fire fighting items, restraints, and first aid equipment.

Ia-CHS-18 Court facilities are equipped with duress alarms in courtrooms and other appropriate locations.

Switches at the judge's bench usually operate duress alarms, but the judge's chambers, clerk's office or juvenile court services' office might also require at least one duress alarm. The alarms shall terminate in an area from which a rapid response shall be made to the call for assistance, such as the sheriff's office or county communications center.

Ia-CHS-19 All duress alarms are tested once per month and the results are recorded.

Confidence in the performance of these alarm systems is essential. Law enforcement or court administration staff should conduct these tests and be responsible for maintaining a record of the test results.

Ia-CHS-20 An armed peace officer trained in courthouse security should be designated for immediate response to any duress alarm or call for assistance from court personnel.

Ia-CHS-21 A judge's courtroom bench should include some type of bulletproof barrier to provide the judge some protection from attack with a gun.

Ia-CHS-22 During times a courtroom is not occupied it will be kept locked with restricted key access.

Ia-CHS-23 Court facilities are equipped with an adequate emergency light source. The emergency light source shall be tested monthly and test results should be documented.

Ia-CHS-24 Courtrooms and court facilities are equipped with at least one means of external verbal communications, such as a telephone.

Ia-CHS-25 A written directive requires an emergency medical plan for the courthouse.

This plan should include the medical resources available to the courthouse and the procedures required to put the plan in effect.

Ia-CHS-26 The courthouse security officer has access to a magnetometer.

A hand-held magnetometer will satisfy this requirement.

Ia-CHS-27 There is a procedure for securing all admitted evidence when the court is not in session.

To preserve the integrity of the legal process, courts require a method for securing evidence that has been admitted to prevent tampering or theft when the court is recessed or is not in session.