Access control: the basics 
& High Holiday implications

HOW OPEN SHOULD YOUR CONGREGATION’S OPEN DOOR POLICY BE?
Scenario I

Sylvia was sitting at the reception desk of the East Cupcake Jewish Center and took a deep breath.

The morning minyanaires had come and gone and the rush of parents and caregivers wheeling their toddlers to preschool had passed. Steve Fox showed up for an appointment with the rabbi.

Finally, it was almost quiet.
A well-dressed man with a reporter’s notebook walked in the door. Sylvia politely asked the man, “Can I help you?”

Do you have a policy determining who enters your synagogue? Does Sylvia know what to do?
Year-round questions for your congregation and Sylvia

- Can you keep your synagogue warm, welcoming and secure?
- Will *halachic* constraints affect your security measures?
- Do your staff and your constituencies know to look for when something, "*Just Doesn’t Look Right?*" Who should they tell?
- What should your access policy be?
- How do you implement it?
- What should Sylvia be doing?
• You don’t have to be a highly-trained security expert to spot a problem.

• Trust your senses, ask yourself if something looks “wrong”

• Don’t keep it to yourself, “If you see something, say something.”

• Make sure that your constituencies understand that you want to know if they see something out of the ordinary.

• Call (888) NYC-SAFE or your local police immediately.

When it “Just Doesn’t Look Right”
Developing and implementing access control policy

- **Work from a basic premise.** Only *authorized people* should enter your premises.
- **Develop** clear, written guidelines and procedures.
- **Train** the people responsible for implementation and create a culture of security in your synagogue.
- **Give your staff the authority, symbols of authority and tools** to act on established policies.
Determining who is “authorized”

- **Expected visitors (year round)**
  - People with appointments
  - Known vendors

- **Known individuals with proper identification (year round & High Holidays)**
  - People with synagogue ID cards
  - People known to screeners
  - People on established lists (schools, clubs, etc.)
  - People on guest lists (e.g., bar/bat mitzvah guests)
  - People with High Holiday tickets
Why are your security and preparedness concerns different during the High Holidays?

- Your congregation extends beyond the “regulars”
  - Your building is filled to maximum capacity and beyond
  - You have to open additional entrances and exits to handle the crowds
  - Many of the attendees are “new faces,” not known to your staff and ushers
  - Many of the attendees don’t know their way around your building
Only authorized people enter... who is authorized on the High Holidays?

- People with tickets
- People known to your staff and ushers
- People on the list of congregants and ticket purchasers

What about everyone else? “Our rabbi taught us that no Jew should be denied an opportunity to pray”

- Determine if it “Just Doesn’t Look Right?”
- Use additional screening measures, e.g. bag searches, metal detectors
Use of tickets as a screening device

The key question is, “can you collect verifiable information?” If so, you can feel more secure.

People who buy High Holiday tickets usually pay by check or credit card. Either way, it’s easier to verify their name and address (you can even ask strangers for other ID). Absent other indicators, people contacting your office before the holidays and presenting verifiable ID’s should get tickets, and therefore considered “authorized.”

People insisting on paying cash (or can’t afford to pay for tickets require additional verification steps. Do they have other forms of ID? Do they have a listed phone? If not, they may fall into the “suspicious” category.
Who should be searched?

- People who are not otherwise “authorized”
- People who “Just Don’t Look Right” (Look for suspicious activity and indicators.)
- Your guards/staff/ushers won’t have time to search everyone. Focus on unknowns or known problems
Why search bags?

1. To detect if someone is bringing a potentially dangerous item into your synagogue.
2. To give your staff and ushers more time to judge whether someone is acting strangely (see JDLR).
3. As a signal that your congregation is serious about security.
Remember Sylvia

The well-dressed man announced that he was a reporter for the East Cupcake Gazette and was writing a feature on the pre-school. Sylvia called the school and was told that they didn’t know of any interview.

The reporter was quite insistent. “They really want this article and you’re going to ruin it,” he said.
• Signs of hostile surveillance
• How to turn people away
• How did he get info – what info is on your bulletin board, website?