



# PROTECTING PATRONS IN OUTDOOR EATING VENUES



DEFEND TODAY,  
SECURE TOMORROW

## OVERVIEW

An increasing number of restaurants and other eateries are using sidewalks, parking lots, and streets to expand outdoor seating to accommodate social distancing guidelines following the COVID-19 outbreak. Terrorists and other violent extremist actors may target these venues with vehicle-ramming attacks. A vehicle-ramming attack occurs when “a perpetrator deliberately rams a motor vehicle into a building, crowd of people, or another vehicle.”<sup>1</sup> Additionally, negligent drivers could impact an outdoor venue, causing unintended harm. For example, on August 24, 2020 a car crashed into an outdoor dining area in New York City, injuring three people.<sup>2</sup>

Although there are no credible or imminent threats, city officials, law enforcement, and restaurants should consider implementing protective measures in order to reduce the risk of harm. Below are recommended actions and resources.

## CONDUCT A VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT

To mitigate the impacts of a potential attack, consider conducting a vulnerability assessment. This serves as an important first step in understanding overarching risk and improving security. The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) maintains the Protective Security Advisor (PSA) Program, which can provide access to resources in support of a vulnerability assessment. These protection and vulnerability mitigation experts who facilitate local activities can also provide access to other risk-mitigation tools, products, and services.

## COST-EFFECTIVE PROTECTIVE MEASURES

Local law enforcement should coordinate with restaurant owners/operators to inspect venues for security gaps, coordinate the supply of barriers, and help managers develop an effective Emergency Action Plan (EAP). Maintaining constant two-way communication between law enforcement and facilities is also critical. If restaurants use streets to expand outdoor seating, local law enforcement should ensure the road is closed to traffic and that clear alternative routes are established for traffic flow. Restaurant employees should be trained to recognize and report suspicious behavior to their managers and to local law enforcement. DHS’ “If You See Something, Say Something<sup>®</sup>” campaign provides additional information on how to recognize and report the indicators of terrorism-related suspicious activity.<sup>3</sup>

It is essential for public safety that the interface between pedestrian and vehicle traffic be physically separated. Using barriers along footpaths or integrating walkways into new developments that limit vehicle access can help reduce collisions between pedestrians and cars.

Cost-effective mitigation methods to protect outdoor venues include:



Using commercial barriers to block roads and promenades



Implementing a layered approach to security, in which concentric circles of barriers surround the venue



Setting up temporary bollards and speedbumps



Increasing law enforcement presence during peak pedestrian hours



Reducing seating capacity to limit crowd size



Securing sidewalks as well as streets



Using natural barriers, like trees and planters

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, *First Responder*, Accessed September 8, 2020, [cisa.gov/first-responder](https://www.cisa.gov/first-responder)

<sup>2</sup> “3 Injured When Car Crashes into Manhattan Outdoor Dining Area.” Eyewitness News. August 25, 2020. Accessed September 8, 2020 [abc7ny.com/upper-east-side-outdoor-dining-crash-new-york-city/6387121/](https://abc7ny.com/upper-east-side-outdoor-dining-crash-new-york-city/6387121/)

<sup>3</sup> [dhs.gov/see-something-say-something](https://www.dhs.gov/see-something-say-something)



## SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOR INDICATORS

Restaurant employees and management can reduce the chances of a successful attack by remaining vigilant and reporting suspicious behavior that may include:



Individuals loitering in an unauthorized area where vehicles are parked or serviced



Individuals attempting to gain information about the operations and security of areas where large crowds gather



Individuals loitering, parking, or standing in the same area over multiple days with no reasonable explanation



Vehicles with altered or fraudulent tags lingering near or among crowds

## REVIEW AVAILABLE TRAINING RESOURCES

To support local law enforcement and restaurants in enhancing security, CISA provides access to a wide range of training, exercises, tools, and other materials focused on a variety of attack methods, including vehicle ramming and the detection of behavioral indicators. Law enforcement and other local government agencies should encourage restaurant owners and operators to leverage these resources to enhance security.

### Securing Soft Targets and Crowded Places ([cisa.gov/securing-soft-targets-and-crowded-places](https://cisa.gov/securing-soft-targets-and-crowded-places))

Provides access to information regarding the types of threats posed to publicly accessible areas and resources with options for consideration to support risk mitigation activities.

### Protective Security Advisors (PSA) ([cisa.gov/protective-security-advisors](https://cisa.gov/protective-security-advisors) or email [central@cisa.dhs.gov](mailto:central@cisa.dhs.gov))

Provides access to a cadre of more than 100 subject matter experts located across the country who conduct infrastructure security and vulnerability mitigation activities at the local level.

### DHS Office for State and Local Law Enforcement ([dhs.gov/LEP-resources](https://dhs.gov/LEP-resources))

Provides a multitude of resources and tools designed to assist state, local, tribal, and territorial law enforcement in their efforts to keep our communities safe, secure, and resilient.