



SAFETY DIRECTOR BULLETIN



SAFE EXCHANGE ZONE BEST PRACTICES

In challenging economic times, citizens turn to alternative means than traditional brick-and-mortar stores to buy items. One source of commerce is the online marketplace, such as Craigslist and Facebook Marketplace. Without the security of brick-and-mortar stores, buyers and sellers must meet elsewhere to exchange goods for money. Recognizing the inherent hazard of two strangers, with their valuable goods in a cash transaction, meeting in some unsecured location, many communities are establishing Safe Exchange Zones.

Selecting a Location

Safe Exchange Zones are often set up in the parking lot outside of police headquarters. This offers the advantages of being highly visible, highly trafficked, and highly unpredictable when a law enforcement officer will be present. In addition, the parking lot is often under video surveillance that police representatives, just feet away, are monitoring.

Some law enforcement agencies have permitted access to the station's lobby, usually with restrictions such as by-arrangement-only, limited hours, and the number of persons allowed.

Provide signage at the selected location. Signs should warn that the site is under video surveillance. If there will be restrictions for the site, such as permitted hours, this should be clearly stated on the signs. Emergency and non-emergency phone numbers should be included.

A google search for 'safe exchange zone signs' will provide many examples that can be used to design your sign. Consult with your attorney for the final wording on your signs.

Risk Management Considerations

Advertise the Safe Exchange Zone on the community website to let residents know the site is available for their safety. Use the website to make it clear that:

- While the public agency will not provide personnel or staff to witness transactions, the building's video surveillance and proximity to police headquarters are meant to increase the public's peace of mind when they meet strangers to buy or sell an item.
- Establish an inspection and maintenance program for the Safe Exchange Zone signage and video surveillance systems to ensure that equipment is in good condition and operating correctly.
- The public agency makes no guarantees, assurances, or promises as to the safety or security of any in-person transactions that may take place at the Safe Exchange Zone.
- The public agency will not provide personnel or staff to witness any transaction in-person.
- Representatives of the public agency are not trained or authorized to validate the legitimacy of any transaction, the item for sale, or the integrity of any product. Representatives cannot settle disputes related to the transaction or the legality of a sale.
- The public agency maintains video surveillance of the Safe Exchange Zone for a set period.
- Consult your agency's attorney for review or questions about the initiative if needed.