



How to Lead a Community Safety Audit

A Community Safety Audit is a way to create safer cities and communities. A safety audit can be used as a tool to bring attention to violence against women in public spaces. In a safety audit, individuals come together to walk through a physical environment, evaluate how safe it feels to them, identify ways to make the space safer, and organize to bring about those changes. Here's how to lead a successful safety audit:

1. **Form a safety audit group.** A community safety audit is performed best by a group of community members and legislators who can help put effective policies into place. The makeup of the audit group should reflect the diversity of the community. Diverse ethnicities, physical abilities, sexual identities, ages, income levels, and languages should all be represented in the group.
2. **Choose the date, place and time.** The audit can be done on any date, but it is sometimes easier to form a group following a specific incident that affected people's safety in the community, such as a sexual assault, drug use in the park, or hate graffiti on the walls. Plan the route ahead of time so that people can get around easily. The safety audit can be done during the daytime or at nighttime, but sometimes it is best to do after dark in order to find lighting problems.
3. **Conduct outreach.** Contact community based organizations in the area and ask them to work with you on the audit. You can write a letter about how your Hollaback! site is interested in making public spaces safer for women. Ask them to commit to bringing a certain number of people. Make a Facebook group for the event, write a press release,

contact the media, and make sure that all organizations you are partnering with are publicizing the event.

4. **Make an agenda for the safety audit.** It usually takes about four hours to conduct a complete safety audit, but it might take more or less time depending on the size of the group and the size of the area. The four-hour time frame includes an introductory meeting (45 minutes), the safety audit survey (1 hour), and discussions and recommendations after the audit (1 hour). You will also need to allow extra time for everyone to travel from the meeting space to the audit location.

5. **Before the audit, create a checklist** of six factors or characteristics that make the assigned space feel unsafe. These factors might include: poor lighting, lack of signs, objects blocking the view ahead, closed-off areas where individuals could be taken or trapped, areas that need maintenance, and areas that lack telephones.

6. **During the safety audit,** make sure that the group stays together and encourage conversation among group members. Write down the comments that the groups makes during the walk. You should also select a member of the group to take pictures of the physical locations of the group's safety concerns.

7. **After the audit, identify the top three safety issues** that arose during the walk. Use the post-audit meeting time to allow the group to suggest recommendations for how to solve these problems. Write down the group's ideas and recommendations. Collect all materials from the group and thank everyone for participating. Let everyone know you will be writing a report and tell them when to expect it!

8. **Write a recommendation report** about the safety audit that shows your findings. Include the names of the organizations you worked with, your basic methodology for conducting the audit, and the safety issues that legislators and community members considered to be the most pressing in the area. This is a very important conclusion to the safety audit, as this report can be used later, when you, community

members, and and local government will work together to implement the changes needed to create safer spaces.

Hollaback! NYC held a safety audit in Queens with New York City Council Member Julissa Ferreras. Read about the safety audit here: <http://www.stopstreetharassment.org/2012/05/nycaudit/>