

# Time to Strengthen Your Security

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Eight out of ten businesses in the United States fall into the small- to medium-size category that seldom need high-tech security devices and services. You can boost security at these facilities by following ten simple guidelines:

**1) Institute a written lock program.** Writing and following a written lock program helps small facilities

lower their risk of loss. Written programs detail the level and type of security needed in various areas of the facility, and specify who, what, when, where, and how specific duties — like changing out locks — are to be performed.

**2) Select locks by area needs.** Locks come in styles ranging from simple hasp locks to very complex electronic systems. Choosing the correct locking system is important to security.

Perimeter doors can be fitted with removable core, pin tumbler, cylinder type locks. These cores are easily removed and switched with other doors in the facility without changing the complete locking mechanism. The cylinders are serialized, making them easy to track on the written program.

Install mechanical push-button or electronic digital keypad locks on interior doors to limited access rooms. Take time to investigate the level of security needed, the need for access, and the location of the room. Choose locking systems wisely.

**3) Violent behavior.** Develop a zero tolerance policy for bellicose behavior. Many companies have zero tolerance policies for drug abuse, but tolerating a bully in the workplace is just as detrimental. Workplace bullies lower production and increase absenteeism by creating an environment of fear. Deal with these employees swiftly and decisively. Refer them to professional counseling through your employee assistance program, or require them to enroll in an anger management class as a condition of continued employment. Not confronting the bully endangers the security of all employees.

**4) In-house security teams.** If you don't contract private security officers, consider forming an in-house security team to respond to incidences within the business. Many businesses have safety teams and hazmat

teams, but seldom consider the need to develop a security team. Remember that security is primarily proactive planning. Develop a team with a mix of both males and females, service-oriented employees, and natural negotiators. These employees may be responsible for checking unauthorized vehicles in the parking lot, escorting visitors and employees, or supervising deliveries.

**5) Professional night patrols.** If your facility is located in an industrial park, out of the main stream of traffic, or near a crime magnet — a popular nightclub, homeless facility, or property in a continuous state of disrepair — consider employing the patrol services of a professional security agency. Major security firms offer mobile patrols by uniformed officers in marked cars. Some offer K-9 patrols. The presence of uniformed patrols in marked cars deters burglary and vandalism at night when the facility is empty. These services are relatively inexpensive and the cost can be shared with other businesses in the area.

**6) Office layout.** Office layouts are not generally designed to maximize security. Most offices allow the visitor to have control over the exit door. Good office design allows the occupant to exit and close the door behind in the event that a visitor turns aggressor. Arrange offices so that an occupant can exit quickly, and so that the desk, chairs, and tables impede the movements of the visitor. Keep sharp and heavy objects like paperweights, curios, letter openers, etc., out of the reach of visitors. Minimize the number of objects in the office that can be used as weapons.

**7) Limit building access.** Consider limiting facility access to business guests only. Family, friends and spouses visiting the facility present unnecessary safety and security liabilities to the business. They also present confidentiality problems if sensitive conversations are overheard or proprietary information is left within view. Make it policy to have these people wait in the car or lobby. Keep them contained in a safe and secure area. Children should not run around the property as they wait. Do not allow pets on the property. For their safety and security, and yours, keep pets in the car.

**8) Landscaping.** Take a critical look at your landscaping. Landscaping can help establish a perimeter around the facility without making it look like an armed fortress. Talk to your landscaper about planting natural barriers such as cacti, rose bushes, or other thorn producing plants that grow in the area, especially around block walls and fence lines.

Trim the bushes and ground plants around windows and walkways to three-foot or lower height. Keep tree branches and foliage trimmed to create a seven-foot clearance from ground level. This provides better surveillance and minimizes hiding places.

Lighted signage and back-lighted berms can also help increase security while adding aesthetic value to the property. Work with a professional landscaper to develop a design that is both visually pleasing and security conscious.

**9) Hazardous materials & waste.** Sometimes even small or middle-sized companies store large quantities of hazardous waste materials. This could make them the target of terrorists, vandals, and disgruntled employees. Nothing endangers the reputation of a business faster than a hazardous waste spill or material release. A company of any size could conceivably be held responsible under Section 107 of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA), and under various provisions and rules of the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCCRA) for acts by saboteurs.

Develop and implement a material handling and waste storage plan that will allow you to show by a preponderance of evidence that all precautions against foreseeable acts were taken.

**10) Business scams.** Scams perpetrated against the public are quick to make the news, but few people realize that businesses are bilked out of millions of dollars a year. Scams include everything from advertisements in bogus business directories to invoices for services or products that were not ordered or received.

Don't pay for supplies or services not ordered. Many engineers and other trained technicians in smaller companies like to purchase their own parts because they can work with the vendor to problem-solve, but track all purchases with a numbered order, and designate a limited number of employees as buyers.

Report office supply and advertising scams to the FTC, state attorney general, local consumer protection office or the Better Business Bureau.

Remember — good security and safety training are business assets.

## **REFERENCES**

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