

Loss Prevention Consultancy Ltd

General Notes on Security for Industrial and Commercial Buildings

Introduction

This brief overview is intended to assist property owners and their advisors to make sensible decisions at the beginning of a project. Note: It is relatively cost-effective to build -in security to new build or refurbishment projects, it is very expensive to add security measures to a working building.

This guide is not a substitute for professional advice and although it may assist in many simple cases, there is no better way to validate your approach to security than to employ a properly qualified and experienced consultant. Paying for a day of a consultant's time can (and has !) saved many companies a great deal of money.

Risk Assessment

Before any work is undertaken, funds committed or contracts placed, it is essential to undertake a proper risk assessment of the premises. The assessment process may sound daunting, but this need not be the case. In most instances there is certainly no need to hire an expensive consultant to undertake this task. The process should not be confused with the fire risk assessment (for life safety purposes) which is now a legal requirement for all places of work other than those used solely by the self employed. The security risk assessment seeks to identify and quantify the potential threats facing the premises and their contents. At its most basic, the assessment can be produced by asking some simple questions:

- What items are we seeking to protect?
- Who is likely to want to steal or damage them?
- When are the intruders likely to attack?
- How are the intruders most likely to try to gain access?

If these questions can be answered, the next steps should fall into place.

Risk assessment is a useful tool, but to be effective the process needs to be repeated whenever circumstances change. For example, if contractors are due to start work on an extension, then the risk will change, particularly if scaffolding is erected, making access much easier. It is also worth keeping a record of the assessments made so that if something went wrong, it would be possible to demonstrate to the insurers or the courts that appropriate steps had been taken to protect the property.

Security Surveys

The security survey should not be confused with the risk assessment. It is true that the two are connected, but the survey is a distinct tool to be used to determine precisely what security measures are in place, and the deficiencies which may exist. Furthermore, any reasonably competent manager can undertake a basic risk assessment (providing he or she understands the principles), but the security survey is a little more demanding and it is unlikely that a non-specialist will be able to produce a meaningful outcome.

The survey should begin with a review or analysis of the area in which the building is located. This can often have a significant impact on the risk of crime. Crime patterns vary tremendously. For example, buildings in rundown inner city areas where arson and vandalism are common obviously present widely different problems from remote rural locations.

It has been suggested that the arson risk can be predicted by using a simple scoring system which is available in a free leaflet published by the Arson Prevention Bureau.

Once the environmental threat has been determined, the basic principles of security can be considered. These are often known as the 'three Ds' – Deterrence, Delay and Detect:

- Deter the would-be intruder by presenting a difficult and discouraging site
- Delay the intruder by making entry as difficult as possible
- Detect the intruder before he has time to do any harm.

The survey should review all the various security features – including both positive and negative aspects – and then produce a list of considered recommendations to overcome any deficiencies detected.

The survey will normally be the starting point for any security improvements and may also provide the basis for contracts with suppliers of systems or services, so it is important to ensure that the individual or company undertaking the survey has no links with contractors. Some security service and equipment companies offer 'free surveys' as a sales tool, but it must be accepted that such advice is worth little and may be counter-productive. Security surveys may also be undertaken by an insurance surveyor. Many of these individuals are highly experienced and may be familiar with the locale and its crime problems. Others are not specialists in security or burglary prevention and produce standardised reports with boilerplate recommendations - these can usually be recognised by their frequent references to British standards.

Upgrading Security

Security can be upgraded in a wide range of ways and can absorb vast amounts of cash - often without realistic hope of a return on the investment. The military term is 'target hardening' and this is a good description of what needs to be achieved. The following measures are listed in order of cost-effectiveness, the most cost-effective first:

Starting at the outside:

Perimeter Protection:

All buildings or premises have a perimeter; this may be a fence, wall or simply the 'skin' of the building. It is at the perimeter that the security of the building and its contents begins. In the centre of a town or city it is unlikely that buildings will enjoy the luxury of a secure perimeter. A good wall or fence in either an urban or rural setting will prove a highly effective first line of defence. Fences in urban areas should be at least 2.2m high and preferably palisade rather than chain link. If chain link is mandatory or imposed by reason of cost then it should be topped with barbed tape (Razor Wire or Manbarrier) as local circumstances/legislation permits). Gates should be as high as fences or walls.

Bars, Bolts and Locks:

While it will not be popular with some in the security industry to say so, there is enormous merit in using 'low tech' devices as a first priority. Good locks and bolts on secure doors, bars of a high quality properly set into window frames or well-designed roller shutters are all likely to be far more cost effective than electronic devices - however intelligent the systems or however convincing the salesman might have been. Doors and door frames can be reinforced (and outward opening doors are much harder to force), hinge-bolts cost a few pounds and can add 50% resistance to attack to a door. A good security bar and close-shackle padlock set will cost a few pounds more than a cheap one but will provide two or three times the resistance to attack and last 20 years or more.

Safes and Vaults:

The selection of a safe should not be done on price or appearance - and while the insurer's surveyor should be listened to, neither should it slavishly follow their recommendation. The person selling the safe is probably one of the few salespeople to whom you should listen. Tell them what you want the safe for, describe the location into which it will have to be installed and outline in general terms the other security measures you are taking and then listen to their advice.

If your business requires that you build a high-security vault you should ensure that you have the best advice available - there are a few consultants who specialise in this area. You should also ensure that your insurer is consulted.

Security Lighting:

Properly designed and installed lighting can play a considerable part in deterring would-be intruders. Again, correct specifications are important. Lighting should not only eliminate shadows or areas where an intruder can hide but should also be directed outwards from the building to provide those within - especially security personnel - with an advantage, silhouetting any intruder against the background and by shining into the intruder's eyes. Lighting can be operated on time switches or by motion sensors. These last devices are now extremely cheap - good combined lights and sensors can be purchased from the major DIY chains for less than £20 each. If you are rewiring premises but can't afford to install all the lighting you would like, put the cabling in now and add the lighting units later.

Alarm Systems:

Too often the response to security threats in heritage properties has been an unthinking reflex response: "Fit an alarm system". Whilst intruder detection systems can play an important role as part of a coherent security strategy, specifications for such systems are often produced by the supplying company, so it is not surprising that there have been some well-publicised cases of alarm systems failing in their intended purpose. Modern technology is very reliable but can only be effective if the correct sensors are specified and if a reliable company which is properly certificated for this sort of work installs the system. No alarm supplier should be considered unless it is listed or approved by a reputable supervisory body

Insurers will insist that alarm systems are directly connected to a central alarm monitoring system using a proprietary communications link such as BT redCare. However, given that some 94 per cent of all intruder alarm activating events prove spurious, it is not surprising that the police in many parts of the country are now more likely to view such equipment as a distraction and nuisance than as a welcome ally. In some force areas three or more false alarms in a specified period can result in a withdrawal or downgrading of police response to such systems. If police response is withdrawn, insurers, whose conditions drive the installation of many alarm systems, may downgrade levels of cover or increase excess levels or 'deductibles' (the amount you have to pay of any claim).

The present British Standard, BS 4737 is not as well-defined a document as it might be and there is, at the time of writing, some dissent in the industry over new European standards.

Closed Circuit TV Surveillance:

Like alarm systems, closed circuit television (CCTV) has frequently been proposed as a panacea for all security problems. While CCTV is extremely useful for providing surveillance of general areas, it must be remembered that to be effective there has to be a managed response to security breaches picked up by camera. Always consider who is going to respond to any incidents spotted on a monitor.

Nevertheless, recorded images are useful to the police as they may help to identify an intruder later. To this end, tapes should be retained for at least 28 days. To get the best possible images, tapes should be retired after six months use. Specification of a CCTV system (including the type of camera and its location) should form part of an overall security design and should not be left to the supplier. If cameras are used to provide coverage of areas to which the general public have access warning signs in compliance with the Information Commissioner's guidelines must be prominently posted. At a minimum the signs should state:

1. Why surveillance is taking place;
2. Who is undertaking it;
3. How that person or organisation can be contacted.

Motion sensor technology has moved on rapidly and it is possible to configure systems to start recording only when someone moves into a preset camera frame. CCTV images can also be ported to the internet via a computer and monitored anywhere in the world in near real-time.

Security personnel:

If it is decided that the risk justifies the presence of security personnel, then the choice will be between employing the personnel directly or using a security contractor (or service company). Both approaches have advantages and disadvantages – it is certainly true that contracting may be cheaper and less time consuming for management. However, the in-house security officer, particularly in a small location, may well prove more flexible and will usually identify more closely with the organisation. Security officers are not cheap. It has been estimated that to maintain a single post 24 hours a day, 365 days a year will cost around £85,000 per annum, so it is essential to ensure that you receive best value for the money you spend.

This means that you are entitled to a security officer who is:

- Properly trained;
- Has had his or her background checked;
- Reports for duty on time, dressed in the prescribed manner;
- Complies with assignment instructions;
- Is honest and reliable.

Like alarm systems, security officers should be contracted only from companies which have been independently certificated

Both in-house and contracted security officers should be properly trained (and retrained) and assistance in this respect can be obtained from the Government-recognised industry training organisation, SITO which is part of the main security trade-association, the British Security Industry Association.

From a date to be announced (probably late 2005 or early 2006) the Security Industry Authority will be licensing all security personnel provided by contractors. It will be an offence for an unlicensed guard to be provided by a contractor.

The Loss Prevention Consultancy Ltd offers independent advice on security, fire protection and disaster planning.

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