

A Collective Effort

BY YASMEEN NURMOHAMED, RCM

IT IS FRIDAY night and you receive a call from the concierge advising that six vehicles were broken into in the underground garage. Now you are inundated with telephone calls and emails from the affected residents and the board asking what happened, how did it happen and how can it be prevented from happening again. You are now in reactive and damage control mode. We, as managers and residents, have to move away from this and become proactive. Every community should complete an initial assessment of security. However, it should not end there. We should regularly review security for opportunities to improve as buildings are dynamic, technology changes and legislation changes.

I asked several colleagues what comes to mind when they think of security. I received a myriad of responses including installation of CCTV and hiring security guards. I think we have to look at security holistically. Not only will changing one component impact another component, security is a collective effort. There are two main elements of security – people and equipment.

Residents

Because a resident has moved into a condominium does not mean he/she is no longer responsible for his/her safety and security. Residents are an integral part, and managers should regularly remind them through notices and newsletters of their role in the overall security of their community. For example, do not let strangers into the building and report anything suspicious immediately even though it may seem simple and obvious.

Staff

For those communities that have a concierge and/or security guards, they should have standing orders that clearly outlines their role in security. However, security should not just be left to the concierge and/or security guards. The entire team including the superintendent and cleaners also are an integral part, and managers should also regularly remind the team through team meetings and training of their role in the overall security of the community. For example, report broken and malfunctioning items promptly, which should be repaired and/or replaced also promptly.



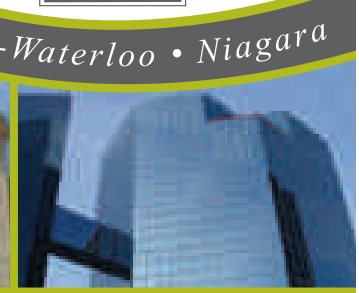
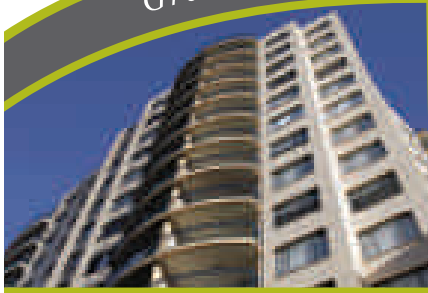
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When it comes to protecting our investment in our homes, security should be looked at holistically. Security is more than equipment, it is all our responsibility.





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Policies and Procedures

You do not want to wait for an incident to occur. Develop policies and procedures for both residents and staff so everyone knows how to prevent security breaches and respond to a security breach. For example, ensuring service providers working onsite are wearing uniforms so that they are easily identifiable; signing in and out so you know who is onsite; and, informing residents about the work that will be carried out in advance when possible, so they would be aware of service providers working onsite.

Equipment and Technology

Cameras and access control systems are two examples of equipment and technology. New buildings would have an access control system; older buildings are retrofitting their hard key system to access control. If managed well, the access control system will ensure that only authorized people have access to the building or parts of the building. It also allows you the ability to investigate should there have been an incident. Like many things, the access control system is only as effective as the users. For example, residents should report lost or stolen access cards or fobs immediately so that they can be deactivated or it defeats the purpose.

Work with your service providers to determine the appropriate cameras are located in strategic areas as it is costly to have cameras installed everywhere. For example, a camera that captures vehicles entering and exiting the garage. When you go to review footage, you cannot see anything as the sun was shining or the camera was not working because an interior camera was used for an exterior application.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

Research has shown that the proper design and effective use of the built environment can lead to a reduction in both the opportunity for crime and fear of crime. There are a number of things that you as a manager can do post-construction such as ensuring your building is clean, is well-lit, is well-maintained, is graffiti-free, uses tamper-resistant materials, has unobstructed views, avoids landscaping

that may conceal offenders, has proper signage such as “under video surveillance” or “private property”.

As you can see, there are a number of contributing factors in creating and maintaining a safe and secure community. I briefly addressed only a few. There are countless resources and companies that specialize in security and can assist. When reviewing equipment and policies and procedures, we have to balance the needs of the residents – a safe and secure community versus a fortress. We also have to consider the budget

and value; some options can be costly with little security benefit versus others that are modest but offer more security benefit. Most importantly, engage the entire community. ♦

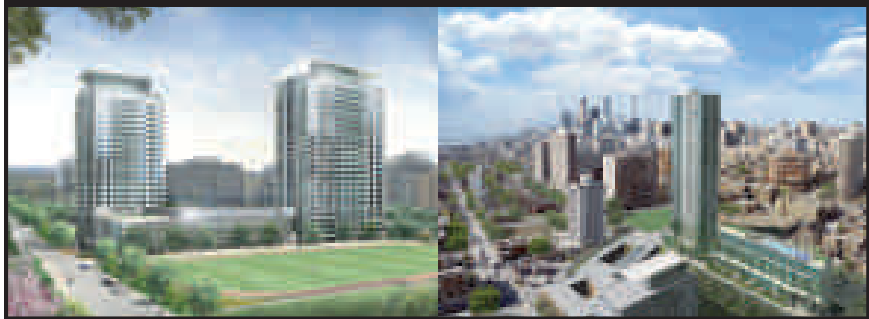


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