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Assessing the Program's Overall Effectiveness

When assessing the overall effectiveness of a security program at a client site, many factors must be taken into consideration. Security is continually changing because of the influence of many variables, as well as, routine activities. The professional security manager must perform a periodic assessment to ensure the program is providing the level of security needed to protect the people and assets at the property. Although security for each property can differ significantly, some basic security factors can be highlighted to assist in developing a security plan.

One such factor to consider is the patrol techniques of security personnel. Security officers may be instructed to perform random/unscheduled patrols or stand post at a specific location for a designated period of time. Random patrols may be more effective in areas where access is less restricted, such as parking structures and common areas. The purpose of random patrols is to increase visibility and lessen the likelihood of criminal activities during a time when the probability of security being present is low. Random patrols prevent predictable patrol patterns from forming.

Time/location specific patrols or posts are best utilized to increase visibility of security operations to tenants and would-be criminals, and to provide added protection to sensitive areas. An example of an effective post patrol would be stationing an officer at the main entrance of a building to check credentials of those accessing the structure to ensure they are authorized to enter.

Another important aspect of site security is building or property access. According to the client's needs and the level of sensitivity of their business, the access control measures will need to be adjusted. For example, a building housing a pharmaceuticals manufacturing company, which stocks many potent chemicals and drugs, may wish to install card readers on all exterior doors and on all interior doors accessing stock or production areas. In contrast, a retail facility may only wish to have manual locks on exterior doors, which are secured by security personnel after business hours. The client and the contract security company should work closely to determine the level of access control needed for their particular needs.

Along with access control, the need for a closed circuit television (CCTV) surveillance system should be considered. CCTV is quickly becoming an integral part of crime and social control procedures. When assessing the level of security at a client's property, consider the locations of CCTV cameras. Are they in areas where crimes or accidents are most likely to occur? Also, discuss the pros and cons of cameras that are visible to the public and those that are hidden. Visible cameras are more likely to deter crime, whereas hidden cameras are more likely to record wrongdoing as it occurs. Who will monitor the cameras is also a

concern for security and civil liability reasons and should be outlined in the security program.

Another facet of security that is often overlooked during a security assessment, but is essential to the safety of the client's tenants and visitors is emergency systems and procedures. The security assessor should inspect the property, looking for properly maintained fire suppression and alarm systems, emergency lighting systems, etc., ensuring those systems are tested often. The security professionals at the site should be trained and well informed in shutting down electrical power, fire sprinkler risers, natural gas, etc., in case of an emergency.

The site's evacuation and integrated emergency plans should be discussed with the client to discover their level of preparedness and knowledge of emergency procedures. Make contact with local law enforcement and emergency response agencies to inquire about the services they provide, and what types of calls to which they will respond. For example, ask if they have a local bomb squad unit and if they will respond to unlock vehicles with keys inside.

Finally, the reporting process of the security officers should be evaluated to ensure a uniform procedure is followed when documenting incidents. Officers should be consistent and thorough when recording the progression of events in an incident, and understand their reports are legal documents, which may be used in a civil or criminal investigation.

As with any area where knowledge and expertise is critical in assessing current security needs and determining a security plan to address these needs, it is critical to call upon experts to obtain an unbiased and accurate assessment. Chesley Brown Associates can provide the professional assistance in assessing current security and developing a cost-effective and comprehensive security plan.