

Risk Manager

Answers, resources and information to help assess and reduce risk

The Basics of Exterior/Perimeter Security By Dennis Kane

In the recent past increasing school security has been a trend at many schools, and rightfully so, the duty to provide a safe learning environment is job one. The increased spotlight on school security has forced district's to step back and evaluate where they are and where they'd like to be. Many schools have focused most of their attention on the interiors of the building. However, part of a thorough security plan includes keeping unauthorized persons out of the building. A desirable side effect of some of these procedures and systems is they also reduce the risk of property damage and theft (i.e. property conservation).

From a student safety, and property conservation, standpoint basic security principles are observe, identify, deter, detect and delay. These principals can rely on technology based security systems and/or on people/staff and there may be some basic things you can do to help your staff to better serve the security function. When evaluating your exterior security, administration should walk the exterior and think like an intruder, where would you hide? Where would you attempt to gain entry? Could a vehicle contact the building? Could a vehicle contact a vital piece of equipment? There are many other questions you can ask yourself, but you get the idea, think outside the box. After completing the exterior tour of the grounds and building, administration should be able to rank action areas based on the need for security upgrades and the amount of risk perceived. The next step would be to assess what, if anything, can be easily completed, or

completed with a small investment? The following are some examples of basic exterior security procedures and systems:

- Provide curbing, or in high risk areas, barriers;
- Remove shrubs and trees for increased visibility;
- Remove trees or fences that may provide access to the roof;
- Provide parking barriers;
- Provide gates on roads;
- Provide, or increase, dusk to dawn lighting;
- Provide fence enclosures or sections;
- Limiting the number of open doors;
- Provide/update/revise current policies;
- Enforce current rules/policies; and
- Posting staff in high traffic exterior areas during high traffic times.

All the above, as compared to the installation of additional technology based security systems (i.e. security camera or motion detection systems), are low cost exterior security upgrades. If employees are not instructed to contact the front office when they see a stranger on the playground, or wherever, we are losing valuable human intelligence. Another common example, most especially in warmer months, is propped open doors. If there is no enforcement of the security policy there can be no expectation of security. Drawing from the examples given above, if a bus is kept parked in front of the building between runs it may block the sight of a suspicious activity occurring in the parking lot.

Sometimes, something as simple as a parking rule/restriction, during certain, hours can help staff identify a potential threat.

From a property conservation standpoint providing parking barriers, gates, fences and/or dummy posts to keep persons and vehicles where you want them, when you want them there, can be a basic exterior security approach. A vehicle, day or night, that can drive to the rear of the school and remain undetected for extended periods of time, could lead to a laundry list of security issues (i.e. burglary, vandalism, reconnaissance for a future violent act, etc.). A gate or additional dusk to dawn lighting may be enough to deter those activities. A security camera in the area would record the act for future action, but, the damage may have already occurred.

There is no one size fits all program and security camera's, motion and door sensors, visitor buzzer/intercom/camera systems, and the like, all need to be on the table when reviewing exterior security. At the same time, sometimes we can provide an additional security measures by thinking and viewing things from a different perspective, one might call it the old school, or low tech perspective. Barriers, fencing, curbs, exterior lighting, increased sight lines and adequate policy and enforcement of that policy are security measures that should not be overlooked.

For additional information or training on best practices and safety management within your school entity, please contact Director of Risk Management Sharon Orr at (866) 401-6600, ext. 7152 or sorr@cmregent.com.