

## Can You Count On Your Security Partner?

### Security's Role in Emergency Preparedness in Commercial Real Estate

Emergency preparation and planning is important in any facility. However, the need is heightened in commercial real estate because of the potential for large numbers of people to be involved. Fortunately, many commercial properties employ a security team. Whether that team is comprised of internal resources or contracted externally, security professionals should play a vital role in emergency preparedness, response and recovery. Your security team's knowledge of the building, your safety and security procedures, and familiarity with your tenants, positions them as a key player.

If you have an emergency preparedness plan or are preparing one, you are moving in the right direction. Being prepared can help minimize the loss of property and life and also allow the building and security staff to provide the best service to tenants and visitors. Here are some best practices to consider including in your preparations:

- ◆ **Planning** – The unexpected, the unheard of, the “it could never happen here” – all should be considered in the development of emergency preparedness plans.
- ◆ **Training** – Both classroom and situational training are important to help those responsible for executing the plan become knowledgeable, confident and prepared.
- ◆ **Physical Drills** – Bring plans to life with physical drills involving all service providers: security, janitorial, engineering, fire wardens and tenant representatives. A well-trained security team can help facilitate these drills.
- ◆ **Education** – The integrators who install emergency systems need to actively participate in educating security and management on the accurate and efficient use of those systems. We have found that initial and refresher training on utilization of systems has been a key challenge when considering “preparedness.”
- ◆ **Technology** – Technology can play an integral role in your emergency planning. One example is developing a training CD or app for tenants and employees that reviews floor plans, evacuation routes and other factors such as fire extinguisher locations. This will help consistently communicate emergency plans to employees and tenants. These tools can be customized to your property.
- ◆ **Coordination** – Building managers need to recognize that tenants might have their own emergency plans. Those tenants should be applauded for their efforts but everyone needs to coordinate plans to ensure safety and eliminate confusion during an emergency. A key element is to assure that an individual tenant plan does not conflict or interfere with the building's.
- ◆ **Communication** – Emergency plans should not only be communicated to tenants but also to local authorities. Sharing those plans now will mean better execution in an emergency situation. Your security team should already have relationships with local emergency services and can serve as a liaison.

Emergency preparedness must be a living and evolving process. Regular reviews and updates account for changing tenants, situations and threats. Utilize existing resources available through organizations such as BOMA, ASIS, FEMA or your own security provider to develop comprehensive plans.

Recovery efforts are equally important. Getting tenants back into buildings safely, communicating restrictions and bringing in qualified vendors to make repairs will all need to happen quickly. Consider them part of your preparedness plans and ask your security team for their expertise as they will often coordinate the recovery efforts and answer tenant questions. Turn to the resources you already have to help with and support your efforts. Your security team is there to ensure safety and security and emergency preparedness is an extension of that.