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# Office Building Security

*By: Cst. Tom McKay*

The criminal opportunity associated with modern day office buildings is great. Depending on their size, criminals may be attracted day or night to cars parked in the parking lot, computer and electronic equipment or valuables left inside. In order to make your property safer, it is important to examine your property for obvious risk factors? Remember, the most secure property is a property that doesn't attract criminals.

## Basic Risk Assessment

- **Exterior**
  - Are views of your property obscured or are there any adult-sized hidings spots around your windows or doors?
  - Are there a large number of vehicles parked in your parking lot?
  - Are there any cars that are parked in poorly observed areas or are otherwise distant from the building?
  - Is your property regularly trespassed?
  - Are there "weapons of opportunity" such as loose river rock in parking lots or adjacent to windows and doors?
- **Interior**
  - Is your office equipped with computers?
  - Can strangers enter your building without talking to a receptionist or other employee?
  - Do employees routinely ignore unescorted strangers beyond the reception area and/or do you have a large number of employees?
- **Previous criminal activity**
  - Has a crime occurred on your property within the last six months?  
If you answered yes to any of these questions, you should take steps to reduce your risk. If a break-in has occurred within the last six months, consult the Repeat Burglaries fact sheet.

## What should I do?

- **Increase The Chances For Observation And Look For "Weapons Of Opportunity"**

Begin by standing across the street and looking at your property as if you were a criminal. Note the factors that limit or obstruct sightlines particularly around your building. Pay special attention to factors that can be easily changed, such as landscaping, and where it is a factor make plans to modify or reduce it. Next, take a look at the ease with which strangers can enter your property unobserved. Where this is occurring, direct the approach of visitors to observable areas using see-through fencing, gating or landscaping that doesn't affect views.

Now walk towards your parking lot and assess the sight lines from your building's interior. Where these are distant or limited try to think of ways to improve the lines of sight. Now walk towards your building and look for objects that can be used to attack the perimeter of your building such as loose river rock, standing ashtrays or garbage containers. Get rid of these "weapons of opportunity" by removing them in the case of the river rock or securely tethering them with chains and padlock in the case of standing objects.

Now walk into your building and assess the ease with which strangers can enter your office area without encountering a receptionist or other employee. Where this can be done easily consider the development of a reception space that restricts unmonitored or uncontrolled movement into your office area.

Finally, don't forget to evaluate your lighting. This is best done during the evening hours when you can readily assess the areas of contrast and shadow particularly as they relate to entry points. Where there is need for additional lighting, consider the installation of wire screened, motion activated lights.

# A CPTED Case Study

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- **Develop A Physical Security Strategy For Your Building**

While a normal response to the threat of burglary is to add security to the perimeter of the building, the sheer size of the building makes this an extremely difficult task to accomplish in a practical manner. In order to develop an effective physical security strategy, it is critical that the right combination and sequence of deter, detect and delay strategies be applied which may result in areas other than the perimeter of your building being selected for upgraded security.

Before you consider an alarm system or make any changes to the physical security of your building, we suggest you obtain a copy of the Securing Office Building Perimeters fact sheet and develop an effective security strategy.

- **Manage Visitors To Your Building And Improve Personal Safety Habits**

We generally assume that all visitors to the property have honest intentions but experience has shown that this is not the case. Purses, wallets and lap top computers are just some of the valuables that are stolen while people are away from their desks. In order to stem this flow, employees must be encouraged to lock up small valuables and never store unattended valuables in plain sight or predictable, unlocked locations.

Employers can further discourage internal trespassing by issuing visitor badges that change colour when expired and encouraging employees to take notice of strangers and challenge any stranger without a valid pass. Remember, the management of strangers or visitors to your property is ultimately only as good as the people who work there.

## **Need more help?**

If you would wish more information or would like professional crime prevention advice, call Peel Regional Police Crime Prevention Services for this free service.