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Managing Crime & Loss

By: Cst. Tom McKay

Crime and loss are facts of life when managing a business. Yet managers rarely know of one of the best ways to fundamentally improve their business while resolving these types of problems. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a proactive set of procedural and design principles that fundamentally helps various disciplines do a better job of achieving their primary objective with the added byproduct of improved security and loss prevention. This has been demonstrated in the convenience food industry where the application of CPTED (pronounced sep-ted) techniques has resulted in new store configurations that have increased sales as much as 33% and decreased security problems by 50%.

These results are not surprising. CPTED techniques have also been used to reduce break-ins at a commercial plaza in the City of Mississauga by 92% over a five year period and eliminate auto theft and theft from autos at problem plagued head office parking lot.

CPTED is based upon the belief that the proper design and effective use of the built environment can reduce the fear and incidence of crime as well as improve the quality of life. CPTED differs from traditional target hardening techniques in that it tends to exploit lost opportunities for natural surveillance, access control and territoriality. A common example will illustrate this point.

Reception areas can represent a critical transition between public and private space. A properly designed and managed reception area is capable of control and influencing the movement of people so that they react in ways that are intended. This includes presenting themselves to the receptionist, remaining within the observable reception area and limiting their abilities to access private spaces or unobservable areas without proper authorization, documentation and/or accompaniment.

The result will be better client service and an office environment that is not conducive to theft of personal belongings or valuables such as lap top computers by criminals who are known to take advantage of more porous office environments. CPTED benefits can be achieved at virtually no extra cost if done at the design stage. They will most certainly limit the need for costly retrofits or the introduction of sometimes cumbersome security measures such as closed circuit television.

For further information on Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design contact the Peel Regional Police web-site at www.peelpolice.on.ca or Crime Prevention Services at 905-453-2121, ext. 4025.