**Building Safety and Security**

**In a world of increasing crime and random acts of violence it can be a challenging task to make your facility safe and secure.**

Building safety and security are typically associated with each other. When building professionals discuss this topic both issues are more often than not combined. However, as in so many things in life it can become a little more complicated than this. In order to start to grasp the basics of this subject matter we must first separate and define safety from security.

**Safety:** Being protected from harm, usually **unintentional** in nature.

**Security:** Protection from threats, danger and other forms of **intentional** harm.

As the lines of both issues do blend together at times, it is a wise approach to separate the issues first, prioritize and then identify the common ground of both safety and security.

**Building Safety Tips:**

* Means of egress exit signs checked that they are lit; must be tested monthly for battery backup operation. If signs have arrows, be sure they are pointed in the right direction.
* Emergency exit doors are properly marked.
* Doors from egress side readily open when building is occupied.
* Emergency lighting- working as designed, sufficient number of light packs for your facility. Lighting must be tested monthly for battery backup operation.
* Directional signage throughout the building.
* Doorways that are not exits should be clearly marked NOT AN EXIT.
* Street address clearly visible on the exterior of the building, as well as directional signage if applicable.
* Interior air registers are clean and free of dirt.
* HVAC filter should be changed frequently and logged when completed.
* Water Fountains are cleaned and disinfected, however since COVID they are not to be used.
* Ceiling tiles no water stains should be present. No tiles should be missing.
* Pest control plan in place.
* Comfortable temperature should be maintained in occupied spaces.
* Door labels should be used to mark electrical, mechanical and housekeeping areas.
* Janitor closets, electrical, mechanical or storage room should have locking doors.
* Emergency evacuation maps should be posted throughout the facility and accurate.
* Have an evacuation plan that is manageable, as well as multiple evacuation routes available for staff.
* First aid stations should be available throughout the facility.
* If the facility has an AED (Automated External Defibrillator) Be sure it is charged, available for use and personnel are trained in its use.
* All office furniture is in good, safe and operable condition.
* Stairs and handrails where provided, should be in good repair and in stable condition.
* Walls, baseboards, and windows are clean, free of marks or damage.
* Know how to shut off your utility services in an emergency.

**Building Security Tips:**

* Access control plan in place. If using swipe cards be able to quickly identify what card or cards need to be deactivated and be able to perform this function rapidly. If using a traditional key system, maintain a key log of all personnel that have keys.
* All door locks at your location are operable and functioning as designed.
* All exterior door locks are LOCKED during business hours.
* All employees should be trained and instructed on what to do in various emergency security situations. For example, a security beach by unauthorized persons, active shooter scenarios, lockdown procedures etc.
* Adequate exterior security lighting.
* Security alarm system. If one is not installed, strongly consider installing one. If you do have one already installed, be sure it is tested frequently and inspected by a licensed and properly insured security company. Be sure to use the system EVERY time when the building is unoccupied.
* Video surveillance system. Although they can be costly, it is highly recommended to have one at your facility. External surveillance cameras should cover the facility with no blind spots. System should be of high video quality in the attempt to identify subjects. System should have the ability to record for several days before erasing data. The system should be installed by a licensed and properly insured security company.
* Local law enforcement. Start a dialogue with your local precinct. A working relationship with the local agency is greatly beneficial for both your facility and local community.
* Security guards. In times of severe crime in your area, it may be necessary to consider the hiring of security guards on a temporary basis if there are times of frequent break ins or vandalism either at your location or in the near area.
* Situational awareness training for staff members. This is an option that takes a proactive approach to have staff members take responsibility for their individual safety. Situational awareness is the ability to identify, process, and understand what is happening around you, to form good habits and determine your best response to potential threats.
* Conflict training for staff members. Offering the opportunity for staff members to be trained in the art of verbal de-escalation. One great program is Verbal Judo.