Security Action Plan for Apartment Buildings

The dilemma faced by the management of apartment buildings is how to keep the facility secure, while allowing ready access to tenants and visitors and exit during emergencies. The following provides an overview of general strategies that should be addressed in a security program for an apartment building. These strategies may also apply to condominiums and cooperatives.

General Considerations

- Develop written security policies and an emergency management plan, including evacuation procedures, and distribute them to all tenants.
- Analyze past incidents of crime and violence on the premises and the immediate surrounding neighborhood, on a regular basis, to assess the adequacy of the security program.
- Provide adequate illumination in all areas of the building, including parking facilities and entryways, according to requirements of the IESNA Lighting Handbook, published by the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America (IESNA).
- Keep plants and shrubs trimmed to provide for good visibility of the building and surrounding property.
- For buildings with central HVAC systems, control access to air intakes to prevent contamination.
- Advise building personnel of the need to be alert to the presence of suspicious packages or illegally parked or unidentified vehicles, and to bring them to the attention of management.
- Perform regular audits of all security procedures to ensure that programs are up to date and security procedures are being followed.
- Perform background checks, including criminal records checks, on all employees, especially those with access to tenant units.
- Perform background checks on building service providers and check credentials of personnel providing maintenance or repair services.
- Use security guards to patrol the building, parking and garage areas, and outside grounds.

Access Control

- Issue distinctive parking permits to tenants and employees for identifying automobiles authorized to park on the property, and provide an area, separate from employee and tenant parking, for visitor parking. Consider establishing setbacks between buildings and outside parking areas.
- Control access into the building by locking all exterior entrances, including accessible roof openings, doors to accessible balconies and terraces, and parking garage entrances. Provide automatic door closures, as needed.
- Store keys in a secure location and carefully control their distribution.
- Stress the need for tenants to know the identity of visitors, especially when tenants can remotely unlock the main entrance door.
- Install security bars or gates on accessible windows in compliance with building and life safety code requirements.
- Provide deadbolt locks, peepholes, and safety chains (night latches) on tenant doors.

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