

With security, many wait until it's too late

By Tara Marion

Vulnerable to destruction and theft, warehouse owners rely on security systems to guard their boundaries from the threat of burglars, internal pilferers and vandals.

Ninety-nine percent of all warehouses have some type of security system, because insurance companies require them to do so, said James Gray, control manager at **Securitas Security Services USA Inc.** in Grand Rapids.

For some, however, measures are taken only after a crime has taken place.

"A lot of the calls we get, quite naturally, are after-the-fact calls," said Steve Lachniet, contract manager at **Integrated Detection Systems** in Grand Rapids. "We install a lot of systems right after somebody has their first problem."

Small sites use traditional burglar alarms, whereas medium to large facilities utilize more sophisticated security measures.

"Smaller facilities usually don't have card-key access or closed-circuit television, because they just don't have the money in their budget to do it," Gray said.

Burglar alarms, card-key access, closed-circuit television, or CCTV, and patrolled services are all options when it comes to security systems for warehouses.

"Any and all of these should be used depending on the level of security and owner might like to have in his facility," Lachniet said.

Burglar alarms can deter or detect most intruders. Some alarm systems are for perimeter protection, while others are for interior protection.

Exterior burglar alarms activate a siren or illuminate an area to scare off intruders. They also alert the alarm company and/or police and fire departments.

Laser beams are an example of interior burglar alarms. Unobtrusive sensors are installed in hallways, large rooms, stairwells and other similar areas. Any interruption of a beam, for example, a person walking through it, sounds an alarm.

Card-key access provides employees with access to the building's main entrance and select interior areas. Security designates if they are granted unrestricted entry and exit or restricted entry and exit by certain hours.

CCTV is useful for monitoring points of entry, fence perimeters or other secure areas. Footage is monitored live by security personnel or recorded on a VHS tape or DVD.

Patrolled services are means to catch criminals in the act after business hours through random, drive-through patrolling. Security vehicles are well marked with distinctive decals and equipped with a light bar on the roof. The security officers are uniformed.

"We have what we call a hard look or military-style look, which is generally a deterrent to would-be criminals when they see us," Gray explained.

Companies often think warehouse security means burglary or vandalism. While protection against these crimes is a good starting point, fire and internal pilferage are the biggest threats to warehouses, he said.

"Unless somebody knows what the company's making or knows what's in the warehouse, there generally aren't any attempts on the warehouse," Gray explained.

Internal pilferage costs companies billions of dollars each year, through what Lachniet described as inventory shrinkage.

"Individuals within the company take things that should not be taken," he explained. "That's where video is a good thing to have or even card-key access if it's being used to limit the areas in a building that specific employees ... have access to."

Warehouses are especially susceptible to inventory shrinkage because of their layout. They have a number of entrances and exits for personnel and trucks to pick up and deliver product.

Because warehouses stock large volumes of product, fire becomes a serious hazard. Stacking above certain heights can block fire-extinguishing systems. The risk of fire also depends upon what is being stored, Lachniet said.

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