

PERFORMING A CONDOMINIUM SECURITY AUDIT HANDBOOK

BY: ARTEM KATSAGA

The logo features a large, stylized heart shape with a gold border. Inside the heart, the words "PURPLE HEARTS" are written in a bold, purple, sans-serif font with a white outline. Below the heart, a gold banner with a ribbon-like design contains the word "SECURITY" in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

**PURPLE
HEARTS**

SECURITY



MARK SEENARINE
PRESIDENT/OWNER



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VICE PRESIDENT

I was always amazed how many different hats property managers have to wear – lawyer, accountant, engineer, politician, psychologist, and, lately – of increased importance, security expert. When you award your condo’s security contract to a security company, you delegate all responsibility for hiring and training security personnel, providing a secure environment and various other services, i.e. parcels, amenity bookings, etc. Security is normally on site 24/7 and often act as an extension of Property management outside the normal business hours.

How do you audit your security company to make sure that they are doing the job properly and that you are getting value out of what is, very possibly, the largest contract of your corporation? How do you ensure that all required security systems and protocols are in place?

This handbook will assist you in learning what questions to ask and what to look for.

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DON'T FORGET TO ASK QUESTIONS...

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This starts before the contract is awarded. Check that the company can legally provide security services in the Province of Ontario. There are many unethical and unprofessional companies out there and there are cases where companies were taken to court for operating illegally.

As you may know, the security industry is governed by the Ministry of Community Safety and Correction Services (MCSCS) under the Private Security and Investigative Services Act (PSISA). Under that act, all security companies must meet 2 requirements: they must have an agency licence granted by the ministry and they must have a minimum \$2,000,000 liability insurance. Both requirements are not inexpensive but necessary to be legitimate. Ask to see the company's insurance certificate and check if the security company is, indeed, a licenced agency on the MCSCS website.



Check that the scope of the company's insurance reflects the needs of your building. For example, if your security guards are doing valet parking, does the company's insurance include valet parking? If your condo requires guards to have defensive equipment on them, i.e. batons or handcuffs, your security company must be insured for that.

Would you like your security guards to be able to issue police parking tickets? If so, your security company must be authorized by the municipality your condo is in. Ask to see the licence from the city. Note, all parking enforcement licences are municipal. A company would need the Toronto licence to issue police tickets in Toronto, Brampton licence for Brampton, etc.

Now you have hired a company and they are now sending their guards to your site. Are the guards licenced? Under PSISA, all guards must have a valid security guard licence and a valid first aid certification. Security licences expires every 2 years and first-aid expires every 3. You have the right to ask the security guards on duty for their licence and, by law, they are required to produce it on the spot. It must be on them at all times. Not in the bag, not in the winter jacket.

Are security guards properly trained? This is a big one. Companies often underinvest in training their personnel, as this is an added expense. Do security guards know what to do in

case of elevator entrapment, fire alarm, trespassing, black-out, etc.? Do they know how to handle normal day-to-day operations, i.e. parcel deliveries, amenity bookings?

Another very common flaw is the absence of site-specific **POST ORDERS OR STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOPS)**. Post orders are documentation that contain all information a security guard would need to conduct their work, including emergency procedures, desk duties, contractor information, and more.

MANY COMPANIES HAVE STANDARD POST ORDERS WITH LITTLE TO NO DIFFERENCE FROM SITE TO SITE. THIS IS NOT ACCEPTABLE. Having standardized standing orders does not account for site-specific rules, policies, locations, etc. I have often gone into a building and saw items in the standing orders that have no relevance to the site. For example, in standing orders for a large townhouse complex, I saw procedures for dealing with elevator emergencies, when there are no elevators there.

Sure, certain procedures are standard across-the-board and can be copy-pasted. Other procedures have to be edited to the site-specific needs and there would likely be entirely new procedures that have to be written for your condo. Is your security company doing that? Below, in point form, is a list of topics that have to be covered in the standing orders. This list is not comprehensive, but does cover the major points.

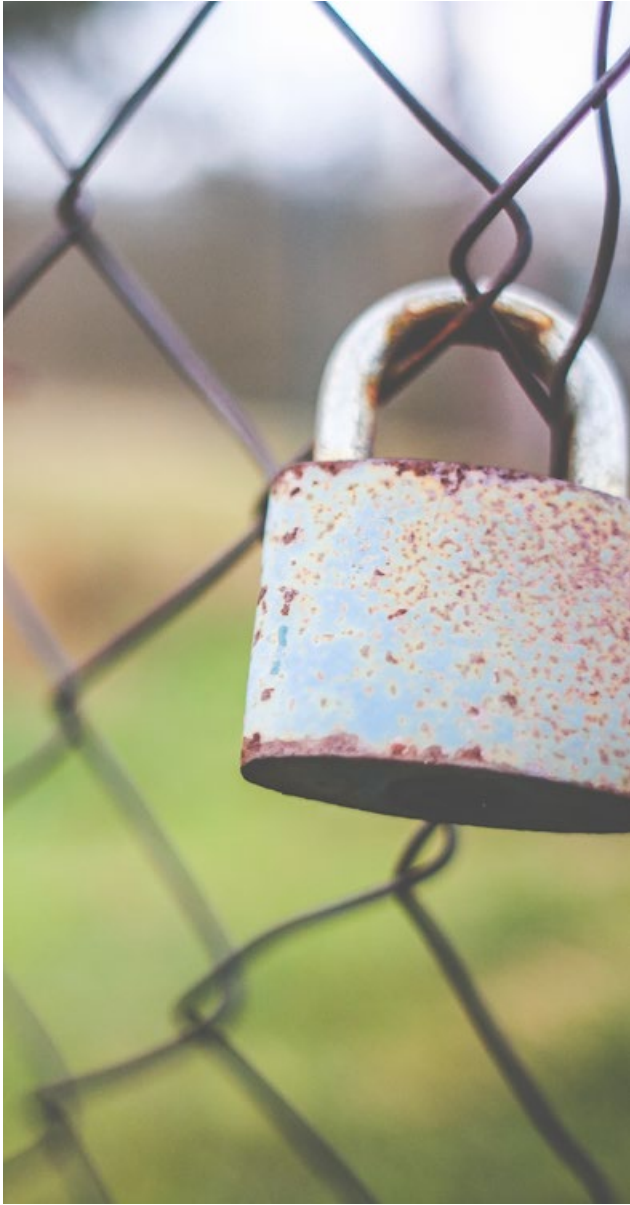


SITE-SPECIFIC TOPICS TO BE INCLUDED IN THE POST ORDERS

- **DETAILED SITE-SPECIFIC TRAINING CHECKLIST**
- **LIST OF ALL EMERGENCY CONTACTS**, i.e. companies looking after the elevators, garage doors, electricity, HVAC system, emergency generator; property Vmanagement emergency line, etc.
- Contact information for the fire alarm monitoring company, including the site ID and password, if applicable
- **EXACT LOCATIONS OF MECHANICAL ROOMS AND EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT.** Just the floor number of garage level will not suffice. Normally, when the mechanical room is on a floor, location is referred to by the number of the closest unit. When the room is in the underground parking, best way to describe the location would be the closest parking spot. A guard must be able to find the location within minutes, should there be a need. Of particular importance are generator room, fire panel room, annunciator panel, gas and hydro shut-off, main telephone room, sprinkler room, fire safety plan, elevator machine room, compactor room/s
- **LOCATIONS OF ALL AMENITIES AND DETAILED RULES FOR BOOKING THEM.** I.E. is there a deposit required for elevator reservations. If so, how much? Does it have to be a certified cheque or just a regular cheque will suffice? Who should the cheque be made out to? Is there a fee for the booking? What times

- are bookings allowed?
- **ARE THERE ANY COMMERCIAL FACILITIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE BUILDING?** I.e. convenience store, barber shop, offices on the ground level? If so, what are the rules for associating with them? What time do they close? Is the place armed after-hours and who arms it?
 - **VISITOR PARKING POLICY.** What is the site parking policy? For example, are parking permits required at all times? Or only of the visitor parks after 2 am? Is there a monthly per unit or per vehicle limit for the parking permits? If a car is parked illegally, what are the instructions? Issue a ticket? Call parking enforcement to issue a ticket? Parking warning? Towing?
 - **SITE PARCEL POLICY.** Are security guards allowed to accept packages? Is there a waiver that must be signed? Where are they stored? How are they logged? How is the resident notified of a parcel (i.e. mailbox notification, phone call)?
 - **REAL ESTATE POLICY.** Do they have to sign in? Are key boxes allowed anywhere on the premises? Are open houses allowed? Is any signage allowed on the property?
 - **CONTRACTOR POLICY.** What keys can security issue to the contractors? What is the process of making security aware that certain contractors are coming in, so that security knows they are authorized? Is there a pre-authorized contractor list?
 - **BICYCLE POLICY.** Are bicycles allowed through the lobby or in the corridors? Are

- there places on the property where bicycles can be tied to? If so, is a bicycle tag required from the management? What is security supposed to do if bicycles are tied without a tag or in an unauthorized area?
- **LIST OF ALL KEYS IN POSSESSION SECURITY.**
 - **SITE POLICY ON MASTER KEYS.** In what cases are master key allowed to be used? If a resident forgot/lost his key and asks the guard on duty to open their unit door using the site master key, what is the procedure? What paperwork is required? Is there a form for the resident to fill out authorizing security?
 - **LOST AND FOUND PROPERTY**
 - **FIRE ALARM PROCEDURES**
 - **WATER TESTING PROCEDURES** (if you have a pool)
 - **INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THE SECURITY EQUIPMENT.** Procedures for operating cameras, viewing playback and any other software/hardware security may be using, i.e. Front Desk, Concierge Plus, patrol tracking systems.
 - **DETAILED, SITE-SPECIFIC PROCEDURES (PREFERABLY WITH PICTURES) FOR OPERATING EQUIPMENT IN THE CACF (CENTRAL ALARM CONTROL FACILITY), ALSO KNOWN AS FIRE PANEL ROOM.** This equipment includes the fire panel, communication panel, mag-lock reset, elevator reset.
- As mentioned, the list above is not all-inclusive, as every site is different. The idea is, your security company must write detailed



site-specific procedures for your site. Certain procedures such as noise complaint procedures, elevator entrapment procedures, and dealing with trespassers are fairly standard and should be included in the standing orders as well. The list above mentions some items that are, generally, site-specific.

SECURITY GUARD TRAINING

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All security guards must receive site-specific training before they start working, even if the guard has years of security experience. Ask your company how do they make sure that their guards are properly trained? Do they have a site-specific, detailed training checklist, where a guard would have to initial every item as trained and understood? Who trained the guards? Were they trained by the site supervisor or a senior guard? Did the security manager follow-up to ensure every guard was trained properly?

Also, is your security company able to fill day-off requests, vacations and last minute call-ins with quality, trained personnel? Do they have a few back-ups trained for the site?

SECURITY SYSTEMS AND EQUIPMENT

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Depending on your contract arrangement, providing security systems and equipment may or may not be the responsibility of your security services contractor. Either way, it is a good idea to examine if the security systems presently used at your sites are sufficient and operating in good order. As security systems are often costly, it will always be a dilemma between cost, benefit and necessity.

CAMERAS

Are there cameras in all critical areas of the building? An absolute must is to have cameras covering all entry/exit points, including the loading dock/moving area. Other areas that are good to cover include: lobbies, including lobbies in the underground, mailboxes, recreational facilities, underground parking and garage ramps.

Cameras should be infra-red, to get decent image quality in minimal lighting conditions; tamper-proof, as cameras are often victims of vandalisms; and weather-proof, as your cameras have to function in all conditions.

Are the Digital Video Recorders (DVRs) stored securely? DVRs are some of the most significant items to protect. Aside from being expensive pieces of hardware, DVRs store very important video footage. You'd hope that this doesn't happen, but if a serious crime is committed

on the property, the criminal may attempt to destroy the DVRs to get rid of the video footage of the crime. DVRs should be stored in a well-secured room where nobody but security and property management have access to and that is difficult to break into. While DVRs are stored in a secure place, the monitors showing footage and playback can be placed at the concierge desk. With modern technology, many CCTV systems even allow remote viewing through your phone or through an internet browser.

Another important question to ask is how long the footage is stored for? Many modern systems are now recording only when camera detects motion, allowing them to save the storage space and to store video footage covering a larger period of time.

ACCESS CONTROL SYSTEM

Does your condo have an electronic access control system (i.e. fobs and access cards), a key access control system, or a combination of both? Despite the significant start-up costs, there are numerous advantages to having an electronic access control system:

1. Ability to remove access. If a residents moves out or a fob is lost, access can be removed from their fob remotely, so that it will not be able to get anyone into the building. Keys can be duplicated and it is hard to confidently say now who has the access to the building.
2. Ability to track access. With this system, it will be possible to pull a report of who accessed a certain door and when.

- 3. This system could be integrated with the garage remotes
- 4. Fobs are cheaper to issue than keys.

PATROL TRACKING SYSTEM

Does your condo have a patrol tracking system? Patrol tracking system is a system that would allow you to ensure that the guards are actually doing the patrols they are supposed to and check the areas that have to be checked. Normally, these systems are fairly easy to set up and not too expensive (you can get a decent one for under \$600). These systems consist of the following:

- Station tags to be placed around the property in key areas.
- Scanner/wand
- Patrol management software

Once everything is properly installed, every time a guard would go on a patrol, they would be required to scan every station tag. A report could then be pulled up, indicating exactly when and where the guard was during their patrol. This will help ensure that the guards cover all key areas during their patrols. Key areas would normally include mechanical rooms, side exits, lobbies, stairwell exits, a few tags in the underground parking, etc.

ALARM MONITORING

Does your site have a fire alarm system? If so, information about the monitoring has to be

readily available to security guards, property managers, and the superintendents. This information, on one sheet of paper, should include the following:

- Name and phone number of the monitoring company
- Building ID
- Building code
- Script to be used when calling the monitoring company

ELEVATOR INTERCOM MONITORING AND EMERGENCIES

What happens if somebody is stuck inside one of the elevators? Is there an intercom in the elevator? If so, where does the call go once the button is pressed? Does it go to the monitoring station or to the security desk? If it goes to the security desk, what happens if the security desk is not manned when a call comes in?

It is a good idea to have the elevator call go straight to the monitoring company, who would then be able to dispatch a technician and let the security know. Even if your condo has 24hr security coverage, there will be times when the guard is on patrol and may not be able to receive the call, especially if they are patrolling the underground parking.

Once the security guard becomes aware of an elevator entrapment, does he know what to do? What do they do if somebody inside the

elevator experiences a medical emergency? Does the guard know when to call the elevator mechanical company vs 911 (emergencies). Are the phone numbers readily available?

PANIC BUTTONS

Does your site require the use of panic buttons? Panic buttons allow for alerting the monitoring station by pressing a button when in distress. This is a quicker and more conspicuous way of letting somebody know you are in danger. When the monitoring station receives the phone call, they have the option of dispatching 911 to the site immediately or go through a contact escalation list (i.e. security desk, property manager). What exactly the monitoring station will do will depend on the established protocol. If the site is vulnerable to threats, I recommend having a protocol where police will be dispatched right away. A few other things you should know about panic buttons:

- Panic buttons could be remote or stationary.
- To activate a panic button, you would have to press and hold the button for a couple of seconds. Pressing it and immediately letting go will not activate the panic button, as this prevents accidental activations.
- Stationary panic buttons should be strategically located throughout the building and employees must be aware of their locations. Some of the locations may include the property manager’s office, security desk, recreational area, underground parking, etc.
- Certain people might have a panic button

on themselves as well. This should include security guards and the property managers/administrators.

- All panic buttons will be tested weekly.
- All employees would have to be properly trained on using and testing the panic buttons

SECURITY PHONE

Is there a phone at the security desk? If so, long distance calling should be monitored and not allowed unless it is necessary for the building operations. Disabling long distance may not be a good idea, because sometimes residents would have long-distance phone numbers in their emergency contact information.

When the security guard is on patrol, they should still be reachable. The security guards must have a company-issued cellphone and forward the desk phone to the cellphone every time they leave the security desk. A patrol cellphone serves 2 purposes: guard can phone somebody in case an emergency arises during patrol and the guard stays reachable by the residents at all times.



SECURITY REPORTS



Report writing is one of the most important parts of the job for the security guards. Good report writing, that is accompanied by photos, if need be, provides a clear picture of what happened in the building during a said time period. It offers the property manager information on items that must be followed up on, fixed, taken into account, etc. Security reports are also legal documents that can be used in a lawsuit. A properly written security report could mean the difference between winning and losing a lawsuit. So, how do you ensure that the reports are of sufficient quality? How do you ensure that the reports provide the information that the property management needs and that the reports cover the corporation's liability? A few guidelines are listed below.

All security reports must be written in 3rd person. There is no "I" or "we". If the security guard talks about himself in the report, he should identify himself as "the writer" or "security guard John Smith". For example: "S/G John Smith started patrol of the underground parking" or "The writer issued parking tickets to the following vehicles".

All reports must be done using 24hr clock and all times must be mentioned without rounding-off to the nearest 5 minutes, which I often see. When something happens and the reports go to court, there could be a huge difference between 02:32 and 02:35.

Security reports should only contain objective/



factual information. There is no room for judgement and opinions in a security report. For example, if there is no heat in the hallways, the guard should report exactly that. Security guard should not speculate on the reasons for that, as the security guard is not qualified to make that judgement (even if he has an engineering background).

Below is a brief overview of the major types of the security reports.

DAILY OCCURRENCE REPORTS

Daily Occurrence Reports (DORs) are the most comprehensive security reports. A DOR is to be updated throughout the shift. A separate DOR is to be generated for every shift. DOR is an account of everything that happened during the shift that could be of any importance. A DOR would normally have two columns: time and event. Some of the events that would make it into the DOR are:

- Time security guard arrives on duty.
- Time every patrol is started and time every patrol has ended.
- Other times when security guard leaves the desk and times when he returns. Note it is important to include both the times security guard leaves and comes back. If anything happens, one of the first questions would be about the location of the security guard at the time of the event.
- Parcels dropped off/picked up
- Contractors on site
- Amenity bookings made
- Maintenance/security issues discovered
- Any other items that are of any importance to the building operations

INCIDENT REPORTS

Incident reports are to be written for out-of-ordinary events that need special attention. Do not be mistaken by the word "incident". Incident

reports do not necessarily have to be for something very bad and doesn't have to be very long. It can be 4-5 sentences describing a noise complaint and what was done about it.

Attention to detail is very important here and will be more important for more significant incidents. If the report has potential to end up in court – it must be written well, with all available information included. It is very important to identify people mentioned in the report. First and Last name is preferred, but is not always known. Police officers, paramedics, fire fighters, can be identified by their badge numbers. When describing a suspect, if name is not known, description should include gender, approximate age, approximate height, eye and hair colour, approximate weight, race, attire, anything else that could help identify the suspect, i.e. scar on the left cheek, mole under the right eye.

Should an emergency occur, it is very important that all events are described in as much detail as possible, most significantly, the exact time they occurred. I.e. what time the fire alarm was activated, what exactly was the message on the fire panel, what time the fire fighters arrived, what time did the firefighters gave permission to re-set the fire panel, what time the elevators and mag-locks were reset, etc.

EXTRA GUARDS FOR AMENITY BOOKINGS



It is often a good idea to get an extra guard for certain amenity bookings. Particularly, party room bookings and move-ins/move-outs. Both of these events often bring about a security breach. When somebody is moving in or out of their unit, they would be leaving outside doors open for long periods of time. If in your condo a moving room that is outside of the main lobby is used for elevator reservations, this could mean that anybody will be able to come into the building from the outside without the security guard noticing them.

During party room reservations with guests from outside the building, it could be beneficial to hire a security guard to look after the party. The extra guard will ensure that the guests are not wondering around the building, escorting guests from the lobby to the party room, making sure all rules are being followed, i.e. no drinking, no smoking.

UPDATED CONTACT INFORMATION

Does security have the most up-to-date contact information for the Security Company, property management company emergency line, and emergency contractor information? It is also very important to have accurate and updated resident information. The resident information sheet for every unit should include the names of all the residents, information about pets, and information about people with disabilities.

Contact numbers and emails for both owners and tenants (if applicable) must be included as well. I often see resident information lists with no tenant information. Updated, complete and accurate resident information is needed for the following reasons:

- Access control. When visitors, contractors, deliveries arrive, security guard would at times have to contact the resident to ensure that the visitor is legitimate.
- Emergencies. Should there be a flood, security may need to contact residents who may either be affected by the flood or who may have caused the flood.

So stay informed, inspect what you expect, and don't forget to ask questions...





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