



CHRISTMAS IS COMING IS YOUR BUSINESS PREPARED?



In the current climate of economic and financial uncertainty, and in the usual pre-Christmas rush to meet customer deadlines, security might not be top of your priority list.

However, taking stock of your security measures might save you money in the future, and ensure you and your employees can enjoy the Christmas break in peace. Protecting your premises can safeguard valuable stock and equipment; training your staff in security awareness reduces the risk of employee theft and fraud; and planning for incidents can reduce potential downtime and limit damage to infrastructure. You also want to be certain that your security provider is aware of the extra risks that Christmas brings and that they are planning ahead to deal with them. Don't be afraid to ask your security provider awkward questions about their Christmas plans, and to insist on detailed, documented answers.

A good security provider will ask for a meeting to cover all eventualities linked to Christmas; if they don't, we suggest you instigate one (or change your provider!)



ASSESSING THE CHRISTMAS RISK

All businesses have exposure to risk in different ways, and risk assessments should ideally be specific to your needs. However, there are general points about workplace safety and planning that we have covered in previous articles, and it's worth reviewing these to ensure that they have been integrated into your Christmas security plan.

SAFETY AT WORK - KEY EMPLOYEE MESSAGES

- 1 Don't leave valuables, such as shopping, mobiles and hand bags, on display in the car or office.
- 2 Ensure valuable equipment, such as laptops and cameras, are locked away over the holidays.
- 3 Ensure entry to the workplace is controlled, even during the Christmas party.
- 4 Stay safe when travelling: pre-book taxis, work out bus/train routes and times, travel in groups at night, park in well-lit areas.
- 5 Prevent fraud by routinely checking credit and debit cards in line with guidance from card issuers. Check bank notes for forgery.

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CONTINUITY PLANNING - KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- Who will need access to the building over the Christmas period? Do they need keys/passes?
- Will the building remain empty?
- What stock/equipment might be at risk? Will the building be thoroughly checked prior to a Christmas shutdown?
- Who will check the alarms and respond to them over Christmas?
- What building checks will the security provider be undertaking?
- How will breakages or damage be reported, and to whom?
- Do staff know how to contact each other if there is a problem over the holidays?
- Who would you need to return to work if there was an emergency – does your contingency plan cover the Christmas shutdown?

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EXTRA RISKS AT CHRISTMAS

In addition to reinforcing existing messages and checking existing plans as preparation for Christmas, businesses also need to be aware of the extra risks that arise during the festive season. Axa Insurance risk manager Doug Barnett stated in December 2007 that Christmas is one of the busiest periods for business crime.¹ He added that "With many people taking holidays and some businesses closing entirely, premises are empty or under-staffed... We are urging businesses to review security precautions so they don't give criminals a Christmas present." The Christmas effect is likely to be compounded by the recession. In a recent British Retail Consortium report², Director General Stephen Robertson warned that the credit crunch was causing an increase in retail crime, with a surge in shoplifting and fuel thefts. He stated that, 'Retailers are preparing for a rapid rise in offences and are adapting crime prevention methods, for example, placing electronic security tags on expensive cuts of meat.' So what other areas do you need to consider when formulating your Christmas security plan?



RISK AREAS

Burglary - Criminals know that many businesses take on extra stock for the festive season. Check stock security;

consider installing CCTV cameras to monitor remote and inaccessible areas, and additional alarm systems.

Staff Theft - The desire and opportunity for staff to steal from colleagues is more likely to increase during the run-up to Christmas.

Stock Accounting - Keep stock levels to a minimum if possible, and check that effective stock control procedures are maintained.

Cash on the Premises - The amount of cash held on-site in some businesses, such as retail, will increase during the Christmas period. Consider banking once a day and try not to leave cash on-site. Leave tills open and empty overnight. Vary your routine when going to the bank.

Checking Mail - The amount of mail increases over Christmas, therefore this is a good time for terrorists and activists to take advantage of an over-stretched postal system and slip letter bombs into the mail. Check that post room staff are aware of what to look for and that they have procedures in place to deal with an incident, and that they have practised these procedures.

IT Security - Like cards, many people now send e-mail greetings whilst at work, and this is well known by those who wish to abuse the web. As a precaution, a company policy should be in place advising against sending and receiving electronic greetings. At the very least now is the time to examine your firewall provision and ensure you have maximum protection.

Visitors and Reception Security - Your front of house security should be extra tight at Christmas as there is likely to be an increase of visitors at this time of year, many of whom could just be friends of employees. A clear policy on ID should

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be agreed, so that bona fide visitors can be easily recognised.

Property Maintenance - As buildings will often be empty, or only have skeleton manning over the Christmas shutdown, this is an ideal time to test maintenance systems such as back-up generators. You should also check that your maintenance suppliers are operating over the period, in case of property emergencies such as burst pipes.

The Christmas Party - Love it or loathe it, the Christmas party is an inevitable fixture on the corporate calendar.

There are several points to consider when arranging the event:

- Choose the venue with care - can staff arrive and leave safely?
- Has transport been arranged to reduce the risks of drink-driving?
- Who (if anyone) is staying back at the office? Will they lock up?
- Are any other organisations sharing the venue?

¹ Dec 14 2007 www.business7.co.uk

² 20 October 2008 www.professionalsecurity.co.uk



A remotely monitored CCTV system will be connected to a monitoring station by a broadband / ADSL connection. When an external detection device is activated the unit connects to a monitoring station and displays alarmed and live images to the operator. They then have full control of the CCTV system from their centre allowing the operator to view the site. Monitoring stations are there 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; they will check your site, identify problems or intruders and take action.

With a remotely monitored system, a PA system will usually be fitted, where from the remote monitoring centre they can speak to intruders on site and warn them off. This is an extremely effective deterrent to intruders with the intent to commit a crime.

The monitoring station not only supports the alarms received from the system, most will offer other services; operation of gates and barriers, planned tours, check calls, as well as providing management information, such as, activation reports etc. The monitoring station acts on specific instructions given by the client, so you have control over what is checked and how these are implemented.

ADVANTAGES OF REMOTE CCTV MONITORING

Remote CCTV monitoring has 2 key advantages:

Cost Effectiveness

It has the potential to save a site a significant amount of money on the cost of having a manned guard out of hours. It also provides an affordable option for managers to achieve a higher, deeper level of security cover.

Prevention

It has the potential to prevent criminal activity, rather than react to it. A monitored intruder alarm system will get a police and/or Keyholder response and an on-site CCTV system will provide evidence for prosecution. However, the crime will have been committed and business continuity plans will need to be implemented and the insurance process begun. Both can have serious time and money implications.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

All public buildings and businesses have a duty of care to staff and the general public whilst on their premises or in their charge. The cameras can be used to monitor the movements and activities of people, vehicles etc. Functional cameras can be set on certain areas to monitor

THE ROLE OF CCTV

In many of the risk areas listed there is a definite requirement for checks and surveillance to be undertaken. Implementing these measures can be a dilemma for businesses, particularly when considering the installation of CCTV cameras. Cameras can be considered intrusive, with Big Brother overtones, and not everyone is aware of what is available and how it works. However, there are significant advantages to using CCTV.

SECURITY

Security is the major reason clients invest in CCTV. The cameras not only monitor the movement of people around the buildings in the daytime, they keep a watch on the building over night, at weekends and during holidays; times that many building managers dread.

Many organisations require their system to be monitored when the building has closed down for the night; at weekends, and during public holidays.



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Dangerous machinery and expensive processes can also be monitored: internal static cameras normally view these, and CCTV signs need to be displayed in the area notifying staff of the cameras, in line with employment law.

specifics. If an incident occurs and the functional camera covers the area, an operator can zoom the camera into the incident. This allows the situation to be reviewed at a later date, to improve any working procedures that have been implemented to reduce the risk of a reoccurrence. Dangerous machinery and expensive processes can also be monitored: internal static cameras normally view these, and CCTV signs need to be displayed in the area notifying staff of the cameras, in line with employment law. The cameras monitor the processes and actions of staff whilst working.

MANAGEMENT

The ability to manage any building or business is enhanced with CCTV. The systems connect to tills and integrate with access control and intruder alarms; they can count people in and out of the building, watch cars within the car park areas, and view trucks being loaded. On larger sites the cameras can be partitioned so that managers can view the cameras fitted within their particular area of work.

There are endless tasks that the cameras can do, but before upgrading or installing any CCTV system consideration should be given to what management information would suit you. If in doubt please contact GBSG.



A successfully shared Christmas security plan will help you and your employees relax during the holidays and enable you to return to work without any lasting commercial hangover.

Christmas should be enjoyed, and should be... with good planning... safe.

CHRISTMAS IS A TIME FOR SHARING...

When your Christmas risk assessment is complete you can produce an action plan to cover the festive period. This should be shared throughout the company so all employees are aware of their responsibilities. You should also discuss your plans and potential equipment requirements with your current security provider. If they are unable to guarantee the safety of your business during the Christmas holidays, or if they are unable to advise you on the installation of new cost-effective technologies, it might be worth considering a switch to another provider. Ideally, your security company should be licensed by the Security Industry Authority under their Approved Contractor Scheme.

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