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Securing the Unoccupied Building

By Erin J. Wolford, Managing Editor

The economic downturn is forcing many companies to shut their doors. But building owners are feeling the pain, too. Once companies that lease a building shut down, many building owners are unable to fill those commercial realty spaces, and those properties can be left empty for months on end.

Empty buildings can become enticing to vandals, too, so protecting the property

Employing a company that remotely monitors your property 24 hours a day can provide the proper support your closed facility needs.



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should be considered. Securing a closed facility may require a few additional products that can help safeguard your unoccupied building or property. And often, installing or utilizing security services can actually lower property insurance rates, which saves money.

REMOTELY MONITORING FACILITIES

Utilizing a remote monitoring company is ideal when trying to protect an asset like a vacant commercial property. Command centers are able to monitor your facility 24/7, and will notify the proper contacts, should a situation arise.

The largest remote monitoring center in the U.S. has recently opened: Viewpoint CRM's command center serves as a hub for agents who are specially trained to manage security for a myriad of properties throughout the country via the company's voice-enabled camera technologies. The center houses 50 monitoring stations equipped with the company's multi-channel audio, sophisticated analytics systems and 360-degree video for detailed property surveillance.

Viewpoint's security agents employ tools such as security video, video analytics and alarm systems to patrol and monitor properties remotely. The company's patented bi-directional, multi-channel audio device allows these agents to speak from any camera position on the property site and perform live announcements.

SecureWatch 24 (SW24) is another company that provides 24-hour remote access to a DVR database of Web footage from properties through a secure Web site. The firm's proprietary video compression algorithms offer crisp, clear images – some of the highest-resolution video images in the industry.

SW24 has identified and helped resolve thousands of incidents – ranging from illegal narcotics activities to arson, vandalism and even homicide – in the properties it monitors. Clients that utilize a SW24 system can expect to see a dramatic reduction in criminal activity during the first year the system is in use.

Through its extensive network of high-end digital color cameras, SW24 is able to produce uninterrupted data that can be transmitted directly to a property's broadband Internet service 24 hours a day. You have the option to view several locations simultaneously, and record from multiple cameras per location. Off-site notifications via e-mail, pager, phone or direct connection are also available.

Using a service that offers 24 hour-a-day remote monitoring can help you determine

what needs to be done, who needs to be called and what reports need to be filed.

CAMERAS PERMIT REMOTE ACCESS

Installing a camera or series of cameras that allow for remote access can also create an awareness of your unoccupied building. Because images can be viewed via the Internet, you can check on your building anytime without actually going to the facility.

If you plan to go the IP route, consider a weatherproof camera with an IP66-rated housing to protect from the elements such as rain, dust, and extreme heat or cold.

Analog cameras can also be used, but many will require a weatherproof housing, which can be easily installed by your integrator.

SMASHING IN WINDOWS

Smashing out windows is not only fun for



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vandals, but it's also a quick and easy means of egress into a vacant building. Installing a protective film on ground level and easily accessible window panes can help deter this from happening.

Thanks to advances in technology, security window film can not only withstand a smash-in, but also explosions, acids, severe weather, solar heat and the sun's damaging

ultraviolet rays. CHB Industries provides window film solutions to some of the country's most prominent names: The United Nations, U.S. Justice Department, New York Public Library, SIAC (computer facilities at NY Stock Exchange), DEA, IBM, numerous retailers, banks and financial institutions and other corporate headquarters.

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also resist scratches, acid, paint and other abuses. A clear laminate applied to the inside of the window slows down smash-and-grab thieves. Fortified by an anchoring system and an even stronger laminate, windows can withstand blasts, severe weather and forced entry. This will save you money in the long run, as replacing large window panes can be costly.

FEEDBACK ON COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES

For those prospective business tenants or those interested in purchasing your property, commercial real estate agents and realtors turn to a product that keeps their keys and information safe. The Sentrilock is a locking mechanism that uses a smart card for access, and also has a keypad for entering in an access code. It also features a small containment area for keys to the facility. This mechanism clamps onto the door, and is virtually vandal proof.

As well as keeping the unoccupied building's keys secure, the special lock also gives realtors instant electronic feedback on properties. The lock's two components – the lock and the smartcard – can be programmed with the realtor's information. Once that is set up, alerts are sent back to a database, where the realtor can pluck out valuable information.

Jeavon Shegal, a realtor with Re/Max Central, Inc., knows how important immediate feedback can be when a prospective buyer looks at a house. "They want feedback, and the sooner I can compile a list of information for them, the better. The electronic feedback also helps me keep better notes, so I can sell that property better. And we know who has been at the property, in case any incidents occur."

VACANT, NOT TARGET

Vacant doesn't have to equal "vandalism target" anymore. With a few additions to the property, you can rest assured that your assets, though vacant for now, will not require a lot of repairs once the new business tenants move in. **SECURITY**

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