

# Ten ways to increase security, for under \$10

If system staff members have ever attended classes on Vulnerability Assessment, they know some basic ways security can be increased, and as a result, increase the integrity of the system's drinking water. For the benefit of those who have not attended a class like this, I thought I'd go over some of the security measures usually discussed. And best of all, these are all effective ways to increase security without spending much, if any, money at all.

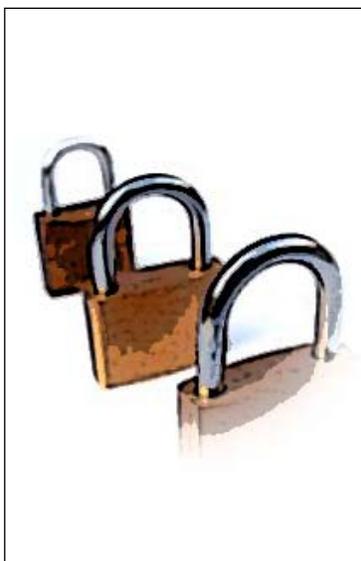
## Lock doors

Probably the single most effective way to increase security is to lock building and vehicle doors and fence gates when no one's around. Remember, many of these vehicles and buildings are equipped with maps of the facilities, chemicals, and/or tools used in daily activities. In the wrong hands these can cause a lot of problems.

## Utilize facility neighbors

Almost every community I know of has residents that know absolutely everything going on in the neighborhood. Some who can tell pretty much who was at their neighbor's house at any given time and what they were wearing. These people can be some of the best alarm systems and they won't cost a dime. All that is needed is to ask them for help. Let them know what normal facility activity is and what is not, and give them the appropriate phone numbers to call. Also, work with local law

enforcement to set up a neighborhood watch program in these areas. Remember, if something bad were to happen at these facilities, the residents nearby would be the first ones affected. I doubt if you'll find many not willing to work with you to help protect them.



## Signage

The issue of facility signage generally has six people in favor and half-a-dozen against. I think it's up to each utility to make the decision on what's best in their community. Here are some of the arguments on both sides of the issue.

*Pro sign* — We have sold hundreds of signs to utilities that state, "**WARNING, TAMPERING WITH THIS FACILITY IS A FEDERAL OFFENSE.**" These signs only cost a dollar or two and are probably very effective at protecting facilities from spur-of-the-moment acts of vandalism. And in reality,

most utilities are much more likely to experience these types of threats than the other ones such as disgruntled customers or terrorists.

*Anti-sign* — The main argument against signs is they can identify and draw attention to facilities. Many utilities are removing signs and making efforts to make buildings, typically wells, look more like normal houses and to make them less conspicuous. While the function of these buildings is usually fairly well known to residents in smaller communities, it probably isn't to someone coming into a community with intentions of causing problems.

Regardless of the side taken, it's fairly inexpensive to either install tampering signs or to remove any existing identification signs.

## Clear vegetation

One thing communities generally like to do is make facility properties look nice. In many cases this means installing plants and shrubs as part of the landscaping on the property. When first installed they usually are smaller and look very nice. But as time goes by and they grow, they can provide excellent concealment to someone trying to break in. This is especially true if they are right next to buildings. For only the cost of gas for the chainsaw and truck to haul them away, security can be improved quite a bit by clearing plants and shrubs away from buildings and fences. Don't forget to clear

tall vegetation from fire hydrants in remote areas. It increases hydrant security, and makes it much easier for firemen should they need to use them.

### **Pick up objects that can be used as tools**

In my travels to the various utilities, I am always surprised by was the number of facilities with cement blocks, stones, or steel posts right outside the front door, used to prop the door open for chemical deliveries or to help dry it out during the summer. Security can be increased, at no cost, by simply putting these inside the door where they can't be used as a tool for breaking in.

### **Install lighting**

Lighting can be a great deterrent at any facility. People doing something bad generally don't want to get caught, and the best way to catch them is to see them. Exterior floodlights and motion detector lights can be purchased and installed in place of existing fixtures for under \$10.00. Nothing stops a vandal, especially in well-populated areas, better than some floodlights coming on in or around the building when they get nearby.

### **Control the keys**

The easiest way for someone to get into a facility is to use a key. I know it's more convenient to give delivery people and well and control system repairmen keys so they don't have to be accompanied all the time. But any time a key is given out, control over it is lost. I'm not saying you can't trust your contractors, but it means more vehicles and building doors you need to worry about being kept locked (the ones where they're keeping your key).

### **Change locks**

It never hurts to change locks periodically, especially if there's been employee turnover or lax

key controls in the past. Locks can be fairly inexpensive to replace, and new ones guarantee knowing where the keys are. At the same time, simple lock guards made in-house can be installed that make it much more difficult for someone to break in.

### **Do employee background checks**

For little or no expense, most law enforcement agencies can do basic background checks on employees considered for hire. Granted, basic checks won't reveal if a brother-in-law has a methamphetamine lab in the garage. But it will tell you if the person you are considering has been busted for having one in his.

### **Talk to local law enforcement**

I think most would be surprised at the level of criminal activity that exists in our communities. It's just not our job to know about that sort of thing.

But it is local law enforcement's job to know about it, and while they aren't going to go into any great detail, they can give an idea of things that may make a facility a target. Also ask for ideas on ways to improve security. At the same time, give them a facilities tour and ask for periodic patrols in the area during non-working hours. Let's face it, if the team from *Mission Impossible* decides to break into one's facility, there's not much to be done to stop them. But realistically, the odds of them wanting to are probably pretty slim. It is more likely to have to deal with the common everyday vandal or disgruntled customer who's had a few too many. And while they can't be stopped if they have their minds made up, at least make them think twice before they do any damage.



## **COOPER MALONE McCLAIN, INC.**

Kansas' Municipal Specialist

*(Principals with over 75 Years Experience)*

### **Fiscal Advisory and Underwriting Services**

701 E. Kellogg Dr. Wichita, KS 67207

**316-685-5777**

**800-657-5730**