

# THE COMMUNITY BUILDER

## Safety and Security in Your Community and Home

Security, whether national or closer to home, tends to fade into the background as long as things are going smoothly. The word security is derived from the ancient Greek "Se-Cura" and literally translates to "without fear". "Security" is therefore the state of being secure, or the actions employed to achieve that state, i.e. to be secure is to be without fear of harm. It is very often true that people's perception of security is not directly related to actual security and if it is perceived there is security then there will be an increase in actual security, even if the perception of security is mistaken. Some of these perceptions may be the use of signs warning of video surveillance covering the area which may deter actions that could cause harm or property damage. Also, often there is actual security present in the area such as video surveillance, an alarm system in a home, or an anti-theft system in a car, signs advertising security will increase its effectiveness, protecting the value of the secured home or area itself.

Some Associations have perceived security. Those are gates into a community providing a type of vehicular or access control. Some may have warning signs; some may have surveillance cameras. These are all deterrents to elements that may threaten the safety of the residents or community property. However, mechanical devices alone will not be of any help if the residents are not aware of their neighborhood. Cameras may be able to take a photograph of an intruder however, unless the intruder is known to someone, a photograph can't identify a person or persons rendering damage or harm and so is of little value to Police, but does act as a deterrent.

Some communities may have manned gated entries creating yet another level of deterrence. It is important for all of the signs and physical representations advertising security not to give clues as to how to subvert that security. For example, in the case where a home burglar might be more likely to break into a certain home if he or she is able to learn beforehand which company makes its security system. There is a large body of literature on the analysis of security. Part of the reason for this is that in most security systems, the weakest link in the



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chain is the most important. It is an interesting situation since the defender must cover all of the points of intrusion, while the intruder need only identify a single weak point upon which to concentrate.

Security ensures safety and starts with being aware. Being aware of your surroundings, being aware of who is supposed to be in your community, being aware that personal safety is everyone's personal obligation.

When you're home, don't leave your garage door open; keep your windows and doors locked when not in use. Do not assume that because you live behind a wall, gate or gatehouse that you are secure. Activate your alarm system on a routine basis.

Take the time to know your neighbors, their normal activities. Take precautions when leaving home for a period of time by having timers on interior lights; notifying neighbors that you will be gone and having newspapers and mail removed daily. Make sure someone has been notified with an emergency contact that is local who can respond should there be a problem.

As an Association, any communications that are delivered door to door notifying neighbors about functions or activities that will affect them should be followed up on within a reasonable period of time and removed from the doors or other posted locations so as to not give the appearance that the home is not occupied.

Invite a representative of the local police department into the community to review the precautions that are being taken by the Association and members and invite their recommendations for improving them. Crime Watch is a valuable program, but it does require a high percentage of participation from the residents. Make them community events. Use your website to make residents aware of any activity that may have occurred in the community. If vandalism or other criminal activity is spotted, call 911 first.

It is important to realize that safety is relative. Eliminating all risk, if even possible, would be extremely difficult and very expensive. A safe situation is one where risks of injury or property damage are low and manageable.

