

Media Article



Vocational Guidance Services

SECURITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Does it amaze you how we are so security conscious at home, building little fortresses, and yet tend to overlook security at the office, leaving doors open and offices unattended?

This article is not designed to alarm, but to propose we all become a little more pro-active on workplace security rather than reactive; waiting for a theft or attack to occur before we think about it.

Let us start with the little things – mobile and other opportunistic theft. Don't think you should guard your bag only on the street. Visitors come into offices every day, pretending to have some appointments or seek information, but the last thing you should do is leave the office unattended. If you need to pop out, put mobiles, bags, jackets, and briefcases into drawers and ensure your laptop has a security lock attached to your desk. Keep in mind one large company had nearly 10 laptops stolen in a month recently.

Certain workplaces, such as banks, are at higher risk, so employees ought to campaign for CCTVs. I find it surprising that local banks have not installed the double door entry system common in other countries, not just for staff but also client security – given the obscene profits that most banks post surely they can afford to protect us properly?

One often overlooked aspect of security at work is the risk of fire. Believe me, you had better not expect the fire brigade to come to your rescue! So ask yourself – do you know where your nearest fire escape is? Well, it is most likely locked (for security reasons of course!) – so do you know where the key is? Or does just one person have the key? Are they guaranteed to be in during a fire? In fact it would be wise of your company/building to do regular drills. Sounds boring and a waste of time, but it is rather important, and to drive that message home a security manager recently had to use smoke bombs to get staff to evacuate during a drill! Keep in mind – these exercises are not designed to be a pain, but to save you from pain.

Another more subtle area of risk is sexual harassment. Most companies have adopted a no tolerance attitude, with summary dismissal being the norm. But to avoid this situation arising, you should try to avoid one to one meetings after hours in an empty office, and to avoid the battle at office Christmas parties. Staff should be given taxi or special transport allowances if they leave alone after dark. Unfortunately, rape is common amongst junior/casual levels of staff, where supervisors 'demand' sexual favors in exchange for jobs. This issue is not so easily addressed, as it demands ethics and integrity. The fall back would be to ensure proper vetting at staff, especially if they are given positions of 'power'.

Finally, that rather over-used threat – terrorism. Before you groan, 'how can that be a threat in my workplace?', think back at Co-operative House, and remember Kenya seems to be a hot-spot. As obvious diplomatic targets toughen up on security, terrorists are looking instead at multinationals, hotels, malls and as we have seen recently, even schools as targets. So be observant, report suspicious behavior and campaign for your company or building to start taking security seriously. Security managers now need empowerment; they should not be hidden within other departments, but should report directly to the MD.

Remember, once you feel fully secure at your workplace, then you can actually get down and do a job of work!

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