



# Intruder alert: Integrated security solutions add new layer of protection

*“Security is always too much until the day that it is not enough.”*

This quote, coined by former FBI director William H. Webster, perfectly

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summarizes the physical security industry. The irony of this fact is that a well-functioning security solution is transparent to the end-user. It is only if the security system fails that it comes to the attention of management.

For this reason, both developers and condominium boards have shown some reluctance to invest in high-end security methods. There are many good reasons for this hesitation. Previously any security system over and above a camera system (referred to as a video surveillance system or VSS) has been seen as an upgrade due to the cost of the equipment and of running cables. Recent advances in the equipment have made VSS, and other technologies, much more useful and affordable to condominiums.

New technologies, such as network video recorder (NVR) cameras, have reduced setup costs because no cables are required. All these cameras need is a power source and

an Internet signal. These cameras also have remote-monitoring capabilities, meaning end users can view footage from off site, which helps reduce false alarms. Advances in technology have also introduced solar-powered security cameras, although a security professional would be hard-pressed to recommend that this be the sole source of the VSS at this time. Further advances mean that corporations can now store information for months, years, or indefinitely should they choose to do so.

Besides improving the functionality, expandability, and accessibility of existing security solutions like video cameras, advances in technology have also opened

up new possibilities for security solutions in condominiums. Security technology, like all technology, has a life cycle. Technology rapidly becomes obsolete as new advances are made, which has the benefit of lowering costs. Security solutions that would have only been affordable to large government organizations 15 years ago are routinely installed in all types of businesses now. Biometric access control systems, such as fingerprint locks, are readily available, and affordable.

One of these security solutions, the intrusion detection system (IDS), is slowly being incorporated into the integrated condominium security solution. The goal

of the integrated condominium security solution is to detect, delay or deter intruders accessing or attempting to access the condominium. Locks, fences and signage are meant to delay, or in the best case, deter unauthorized access to the facility. Video systems and intrusion detection systems are meant to detect, and in some cases, respond, to an intruder.

IDS come in many different forms. There are systems triggered by motion, sound, pressure, or the act of opening of a door.

The motion sensor is perhaps one of the most common. Placed in the high corner of a room, facing outwards, this small device is wired into a system and will trigger an alarm when motion is sensed. The alarm could be as simple as a loud noise that alerts nearby residents that an intrusion has been recorded (and scares off the intruder). Or the alarm can be wired into a monitored security system, which will allow a dispatcher to send out trained personnel to deal with the issue.

Door window contacts, typically installed in residences and offices, are another common intrusion detection device. When a door is opened, an individual is required to enter a (usually numeric) password to prevent an alarm from sounding. As with motion sensors, the alarm sounded could be a noise meant to act as a deterrent, or it could be tied into a system to dispatch a response. On occasion, this system is mistakenly categorized as access control, but in reality it is intrusion detection.

The roll out of these types of IDS measures reflects a security concept called "protection in depth," which sees that assets are protected by rings of security measures. Although the asset might be secured behind a locked door, if the key is lost or stolen, then the thieves would have unlimited access to the asset. Proper security design builds in safety measures and security redundancies/contingencies to ensure that any asset is not protected by a single source.

A large part of conducting condominium security audits is ensuring that such redundancies/contingencies are in place. The more valuable the asset, the more impact its loss will have on a condominium. The bigger the potential impact of loss (sometimes referred to as criticality) to the condominium, the more integrated (and layered) security measures should be in place to protect the asset.

The brain of the security system is called the physical protection system (PPS), which is usually a computer that contains

the database for the access control, among other things, and runs the video surveillance system. Condominium security audits suggest that there is a tendency to monitor the area where the PPS is stored with equipment that is controlled in the same area that it is monitoring. Take, for example, a security camera located in the security office, with the computer that controls the cameras in that same office. This is an example of poor security design, because once an intruder gains access to the office, he or she has the ability to destroy or alter the security system. Proper security contingencies would dictate that this area be covered with additional layers of security, such as intrusion detection systems.

With all these advances, condominiums are sometimes paralyzed in moving forward with the purchase of newer or different security measures. They feel that the technology will be obsolete in short order. This is true — no matter what, the equipment will become obsolete.

However, it must be understood that obsolete does not mean ineffective. A security system might have older or dated equipment, but it is performing properly. This

is because the security system was properly designed to ensure that the equipment met the condominium's security requirements. All security systems should be designed to be integrated with one another as well as allow for growth and expansion.

There is an adage that any security is better than no security. However, a condominium must ensure that their security budgets are spent with the best return on investment in mind. As the cost of technology comes down, condominiums can employ an increasingly wide variety of security measures to protect their property and residents. To ensure best protection for the facility, condominiums should look at integration and security layers when considering upgrading their security to a more modern protection system. The tools are out there — it is just a matter of proper planning. □

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