



Local Response | National Support

Security's Role in Emergency Preparedness in Commercial Real Estate

By J. Michael Coleman, Vice President of Commercial Real Estate, AlliedBarton Security Services

Emergency preparedness in any facility is important but the need is heightened in commercial real estate because of the potential for large numbers of people to be involved in the emergency. Fortunately, many commercial properties employ a security team. Whether that team is comprised of internal resources or contracted externally, security professionals should play a vital role in emergency preparedness, response and recovery. Your security team's knowledge of the building and your safety and security procedures, and familiarity with the tenants, positions them as a key player.

If you have an emergency preparedness plan or are preparing one, you are moving in the right direction. Being prepared can help minimize the loss of property and life and also allow the building and security staff to provide the best service to tenants and visitors.



- **Planning** – The unexpected, the unheard of, the “it could never happen here” – all should be considered in the development of emergency preparedness plans.
- **Training** – Both classroom and situational training are important to help those responsible for executing the plan become knowledgeable, confident and prepared.
- **Physical Drills** – Bring those plans to life with physical drills involving all service providers: security, janitorial, engineering, fire wardens and tenant representatives. A well-trained security team can help facilitate these drills.
- **Education** – The integrators who install emergency systems need to actively participate in educating security and management on the accurate and efficient use of those systems. We have found that initial and refresher training on utilization of systems has been a key challenge when considering “preparedness.”
- **Technology** – Technology can play an integral role in your emergency planning. One example is developing a training CD for tenants and employees that reviews floor plans, evacuation routes and other factors such as fire extinguisher locations. This will help consistently communicate emergency plans to employees and tenants. These tools can be customized to meet the specific nuances of the property.
- **Coordination** – Building managers need to recognize that tenants might have their own emergency plans. Those tenants should be applauded for their efforts but everyone needs to coordinate plans to ensure safety and eliminate confusion during an

emergency. A key element is to assure that an individual tenant's plan is not in conflict with the building's.

- **Communication** – Emergency plans should not only be communicated to tenants but also to local authorities. Sharing those plans now will help ensure smooth execution in an emergency situation. Your security team will most likely already have relationships with local emergency services and can serve as a liaison.

Emergency preparedness must be a living and evolving process. Regular reviews and updates account for changing tenants, situations and threats. Utilize existing resources available through BOMA, ASISonline, FEMA and your security provider to develop comprehensive plans. AlliedBarton Security Services' quick reference guide can also help:

<http://www.alliedbarton.com/security-resource-center/quick-reference.aspx>

Recovery efforts are equally important. Getting tenants back into buildings safely, communicating restrictions and bringing in qualified vendors to make repairs will all need to happen quickly. Consider them part of your preparedness plans and ask your security team for their expertise as they will often coordinate the recovery efforts and answer tenant questions.

Turn to the resources you already have to help with and support your efforts. Your security team is there to ensure safety and security and emergency preparedness is an extension of that.

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For more information call 1-866-825-5433 or visit AlliedBarton.com

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