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Hot Tips: Top Five Training Topics for Campus Security Officers

by Alan Stein

Auditing security officer training materials on a regular basis is critical to ensuring an effective security program. Following are five of the most in-demand training topics for colleges and universities today.

Residential Life Security — understanding the unique challenges that residential life brings to the campus environment is paramount. An effective Residential Life training course should include critical subjects such as access control, domestic abuse, and drug and alcohol abuse, as well as softer topics like identifying homesick students and mediating disputes between roommates and neighbors.

Fire Safety on Campus — According to the National Fire Prevention Association, fire is responsible for \$8.6 billion in loss annually. What's worse, 4,000 Americans die

each year in fires and another 25,000 are injured. Of the fires that result in death, 80 percent occur in residences. Fire is another challenge of residential life, and security officers who understand what causes fires and how to prevent them can significantly decrease the threat of fire.

Campus Emergency Preparedness/Evacuation Planning — Understanding what constitutes an emergency and how to deal with a *variety* of emergencies inherent in a campus environment is critical. The most effective emergency preparedness courses not only discuss your emergency plan and evacuation procedures, they also include drills so security officers have an opportunity to role play a number of emergency situations.

Report Writing and Clery Act Awareness — The Clery Act requires higher education institutions to publicly disclose crime statistics. Ensuring the accuracy of those statistics depends heavily on precise incident reporting, which requires being able to correctly define various types

of crime. As security personnel become more involved in incident reporting, it's increasingly important for security officers to know how crimes are defined under the Clery Act — such as knowing the difference between burglary and larceny — to ensure accurate crime reporting.

Customer Service — Security officers, like any member of the faculty or staff, are a reflection of your institution. In addition to being courteous, helpful and professional, security officers must also have an appreciation for cultural diversity and an understanding of young adult behavior. Customer service training should be multifaceted and bring to life the good-natured qualities your security officers already possess.

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The University of Pennsylvania is home to nearly 20,000 enrolled in 12 schools. Since all schools are located within walking distance of one another, the geographical unity and urban setting require a safe environment for students.

In late 2004, AlliedBarton Security Services — the university's contract security provider since 1997 — and representatives from the Division of Public Safety embarked on a mission to increase the visibility of security officers on its campus.

Steve Walsh, account manager with

Lights on for Safety

AlliedBarton Security Services and the University of Pennsylvania put students' safety first

AlliedBarton, took charge and examined university bicycles used by the officers. He then added a customized strobe light to the back of them, which made security officers more noticeable — especially during nighttime hours. Prior to working with Penn, Walsh set up a similar system at another customer site.

AlliedBarton's strobe light system is a simple concept that produced solid results. The light is set up on a bag, which is affixed to the bicycles. Walsh custom-designed these devices for every security bicycle on the campus. The light is powered by a battery pack that is contained in the bag, and batteries can last up to 32 hours. It costs between \$140-\$170 for supplies and set up of each bike.

"It was immediately evident that the enhanced strobe light system had a positive

effect," said Domenic Ceccanecchio, director of security and technical services, University of Pennsylvania, Division of Public Safety.

Maureen S. Rush, M.S., CPP, vice president, University of Pennsylvania, Division of Public Safety added, "Increasing the visibility of the officers discourages crime and is ideal for an urban environment."

AlliedBarton tested the program with only one model in December 2004 and, based upon positive feedback, the company began to steadily add the lights to additional bicycles. By June 2005, AlliedBarton had 20 bicycles in use.

"Students gave us a lot of great feedback on the bikes," Walsh said. "It's a straightforward, simple change that has made a difference in the students' peace of mind."