

Crime Prevention advice for empty commercial premises

Your property is at risk of being illegally occupied or damaged which can be expensive and time consuming to clear. It is important that you focus on the risks to your premises and regularly review your security. Work in partnership to reduce the risk by sharing information with your local business community, crime reduction partnership and local police.

The following information will help you protect your property:

1. Review your property portfolio

Conduct a detailed security review of all occupied and unoccupied property and land, you have responsibility for.

Use a systematic approach of reviewing your premises layer by layer, starting with the boundary and working your way inwards. Look for vulnerabilities in the space between the perimeter, any outbuildings and the main building.

2. Access and boundary treatments

If the individuals cannot get into your site then they cannot occupy it. They will usually need to get vehicles into your site, so fewer entrances will make the site less vulnerable. Invest in a recognised security standard gate and locking mechanism, which is securely fixed to the ground and in alignment with the boundary fence.

Ensure your boundary is robustly constructed and high enough to deter someone from climbing over it. We recommend a minimum height of 2.1 metres. Contact your local planning office for details of what height they will allow as a matter of course. There are a wide range of perimeter fences available with additional security features which will be sufficient to deter a physical attack. Some fencing options have a protruding topping that is difficult to climb, such as weld mesh (paladin), whilst allowing natural surveillance through the barrier. Palisade fencing is not always recommended as a new installation as it can be tampered with and attacked. Some fencing can also incorporate lighting.

3. Prevent vehicular access on to the site

Empty sites can be protected by an earth mound or a ditch which will make it difficult for a vehicle to gain access. However, be aware that a ditch could be used by fly tippers to dump rubbish in, or could potentially be 'bridged' to gain access.

A strong vehicle height restrictor can stop large vehicles entering your site.

If the site is closed, you can prohibit vehicular access to the entrance/boundary by securing it with heavy duty concrete blocks or bollards.

4. Surveillance

A security guard employed at the site will provide a permanent presence and can quickly alert the authorities to any attempt to enter the property.

There are accredited organisations who can provide permanent occupancy of the building. Always be mindful of the personal safety of your staff and remind them to always call 999 in an emergency. Having a monitoring station with remote access to the site means police and the local authority can be instantly notified upon an illegal entry, with or without a security presence on the site. Ensure your CCTV system is an accredited system (correctly installed) and positioned in a way that will both capture the site, and any offences. It should not be in a position where it can be easily attacked or



removed. Two industry bodies accredit reputable CCTV companies: the National Security Inspectorate (NSI) and the Security Systems and Alarms Inspection Board (SSAIB).

Ensure that your property has good lighting levels (we usually recommend BS5489- 2013). Bollard mounted lights are not recommended as they are prone to vandalism and do not sufficiently illuminate the face of any potential intruder.

5. Forensic marking

There are several property marking deterrents which can be used to enhance your security and protect your infrastructure and assets. These contain a unique DNA code which can provide evidence of a vehicle or individual's presence at your property.

There are also similarly constructed DNA spray type devices available that can be linked into an intruder alarm system.

Highly visible warning signs will show your property is protected and warn of the dangers or consequences of entering.

6. Design out your space

Review your forecourt space and adjoining buildings. Consider parking vehicles or heavy duty freight to limit the available space. If the space is occupied it will be less attractive to criminals.

If you don't have any vehicles or trailers large enough to accomplish this, consider if there are any companies who could use the space for storage of their vehicles or freight and whether this a viable option for legitimately occupying the space. Parking vehicles close to or in front of the entrances to buildings can reduce vulnerability by making them harder to access. Please ensure this is safe to do so to comply with fire regulations.

7. Removing the utility supply

These amenities can be attractive to any would-be occupiers. Cutting-off the electric or water supply to the site, if they are not needed, may deter illegal occupiers. Be aware that removing them will impact on any security features you have such as an intruder alarm or CCTV. You will also have to consider fire regulations.

8. Protecting buildings within your site

The vulnerability of a building will depend on a number of factors including its location, local criminality and the type of boundary that exists. If the site is close to the boundary, it will make it easier to target as there is no additional layer of protection.

Protect your doors and windows by using security accredited shutters or grilles.

Some buildings have been targeted for illegal raves on account of having large rooms inside (halls, large dining areas etc.) so if these have entrance doors secure them.

If using a security officer is not an option, consider using a timer switch to create 'the illusion of occupancy'.

Fit a monitored alarm to the building. This is a good deterrent and a variety of alarms are available. Two industry bodies accredit reputable companies: the National Security Inspectorate (NSI) and the Security Systems and Alarms Inspection Board (SSAIB).

