Guide for Non-Profit Housing Societies
Security Guide

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CHAPTER 1 - GENERAL SECURITY GUIDELINES

The strength of the Social Housing sector comes from the ability and willingness to develop partnerships with health authorities, private and non-profit housing providers, and other levels of government to create affordable housing options for vulnerable British Columbians.

These partnerships bring together resources and funding, expertise in housing and health, and an understanding of the unique needs of local communities. Together, partner organizations can resolve the underlying problems and deliver creative, community-based solutions to prevent, reduce or resolve illegal and nuisance activity and stop the pattern of tenants who fail for a lack of assistance.

The ultimate goal for each housing provider should be to maintain positive relationships with their residents and other stakeholders in order to prevent, reduce, or eliminate these problems and to provide a stable, healthy and secure environment for occupants.

Crime prevention is a combination of activities intended to prevent and reduce the incidents of crime and nuisance activity, reduce the fear of crime, and improve the actual and perceived feeling of safety and well being for the community. It’s important to note that, as a landlord, you can improve the feeling of safety amongst residents by simply communicating with them about issues in a proactive manner.

In most communities, there are a variety of programs and activities that can be implemented to help contribute towards crime prevention. A few samples of these include:

- Target hardening
- Crime Prevention through Environmental Design
- Crime Prevention through Social Development
- Crime Free Multi-Housing Program
- Block Watch
- Combat Graffiti
- Safer Parking Initiative
- Video Surveillance and Closed Circuit TV (CCTV)

For information on how to get started with any of these programs in your community, contact the local Police, your Property Portfolio Manager, or BC Housing’s Security and Emergency Services.
CHAPTER 2 - TARGET HARDENING

Target hardening is a process of utilizing locks and other physical devices to protect your property from unauthorized entry or break-ins.

Break-ins are usually a crime of opportunity. By taking basic precautions, we can create an unfavorable environment for a would-be burglar to work in. Begin by assessing your property security, by looking in areas where the burglars look, which starts outside. Here are some things to consider when you are looking at your property’s security:

- Outside address numbers should be displayed prominently, with reflective numbers that can be easily seen from the street. This makes your property easy to find for police officers and emergency personnel responding to a call.
- On outside doors, use a dead bolt lock with at least a 1 inch throw and install a reinforced strike plate, anchoring it in the wall with 3-4 inch screws.
- Door hinges should be anchored using 3-4 inch screws, as the side of the door opposite the locks can also be vulnerable.
- Exterior mounted door hinges should have non-removable pins to prevent the door from being lifted out of the frame.
- Install full length, interlocking astragals on exterior doors.
- Suite doors should have a wide angle 180 degree door viewer at an accommodating height for everyone in the home.
- Install secondary locking devices on sliding windows and sliding glass doors to prevent them from being lifted out of the track and removed.
- Install laminated glass in locations where windows are at extreme risk of being broken by thieves.
- Install Burglar Alarm systems and post signage to warn intruders.

Residents and visitors play an integral part in crime prevention on the property. You should meet with residents periodically through the year and encourage them to actively promote safe activities, such as:

- Don't allow residents to leave extra keys in the mailbox, under the doormat, over the door, or in some other likely place.
- Educate residents so that they don't open outside doors without knowing who is there.
- Ensure all salespeople, solicitors, and utility workers coming onto the property display proper identification and credentials.
- Tools, ladders, bicycles, and toys should all be brought inside at night or when residents are not home. Burglars will often use items found in the residents’ yard as tools to gain entry to the home.
- Ensure paths and door areas are well lit, and utilize motion sensor lighting in areas of risk that should not have movement occurring at night time.
- Encourage residents to use timers and light sensors inside their home when they are away in the evenings.
- Encourage residents to notify a reliable neighbour when they go on vacation, and have someone pick up their mail and newspapers while away.

CHAPTER 3 - SECURITY WINDOW BARS
If windows are at risk of being broken by thieves or vandals, there may be a variety of remedies available to consider. Remedies often include one or more of a combination of solutions such as:

- Lighting the area outside of the window.
- Laminated glass (glass reinforced by a film of plastic laminated between).
- Increasing visibility and surveillance to the area outside of the window.
- Using active or passive devices to “detect” persons outside the window.
- Installing barbarous plants to keep people away from outside the window area.
- Installing burglar alarms to lessen the risk to the room accessible by the window;
- Changing the use of the room so that the area becomes a lesser target.
- Installing window security bars.

It’s important to recognize that the presence of security bars often creates a perception that the area where they have been installed is unsafe. There is a risk that simply having installed the window bars could become the catalyst that begins a negative perception of the area. You should consider all of the alternatives to window bars before initiating these kinds of installations at a site.
CHAPTER 4 - ANTI-GRAFFITI SOLUTIONS

Some graffiti is quite artistic; however, the main difference between graffiti and art is a matter of permission. Graffiti is writing and drawing on surfaces without owner permission and is illegal.

Some of the techniques you can use for graffiti prevention include:

Textured Wall Surfaces
Prevention is best accomplished at the design stage by using textured surfaces or limiting the surfaces that are accessible to be written on. For existing buildings, there are anti-graffiti coatings that can be applied to surfaces and 'scratchiti’ films that can be applied to windows and glass. Neither of these applications will actually stop graffiti, but will assist in easier removal of graffiti if the surface gets 'hit'.

Planted Materials
Plantings around the base of walls can also assist in the prevention of graffiti as long as they are low dense shrubbery, preferably with thorns. Climbing vines that attach themselves to the wall eliminate large writing surfaces.

Exterior Lighting
Good security lighting in dark areas can also help prevent graffiti.

Quick Removal
It is very important that if your building or property is vandalized with graffiti, that removal should be immediate and thorough. Graffiti attracts other graffiti, so quick removal is the most cost-effective way to reduce the chance of graffiti-growth. In addition, it is more likely that the graffiti 'artist' will move on to another area if the 'tag' is removed before a lot of people can notice it. Studies have shown that removal within 24 to 48 hours results in a nearly zero rate of reoccurrence.

Laminated Surfaces
Some organizations such as telephone, electricity and cablevision providers can install laminated surfaces on their service/demarcation boxes to prevent graffiti. The laminated surfaces are specially coated to prevent graffiti from sticking, and allow them to be easily cleaned. If you have service boxes that are being targeted on your property, contact the service provider to request the installation of the laminated surface.

Anti-Graffiti Policing Teams
Many police organizations have established specialized teams to combat graffiti in their area. These teams will photograph the graffiti, and compare it to their database of offenders. If they catch the person responsible for creating the graffiti, they often hold them responsible for cleaning up the damage they have created. Whether or not a specialized team has been formed in your community, you should always report new incidents of graffiti to the police.
CHAPTER 5 - VIDEO SURVEILLANCE TECHNOLOGY:

Before considering the use of video surveillance, you must first consider alternative strategies to improve the safety and security of residents and staff. This includes limiting Closed Circuit TV (CCTV) coverage to uses that do not violate people’s “reasonable expectation of privacy” as defined by law. Before deciding on whether or not to proceed with video surveillance systems, Housing Providers should review the Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA) Guidelines for Video Surveillance.

When assessing any potential system, the benefits of surveillance must outweigh any potential reduction of personal privacy inherent in the system's use. Legitimate safety and security purposes for CCTV include, but are not limited to, protection of tenants, staff, visitors, buildings, property, and for criminal investigations.

Prior to installing any new security cameras or systems, Housing Providers should conduct a “Security Threat and Risk Assessment” to help with the decision. The assessment should incorporate the following criteria when determining if a system or specific camera placement is to be utilized:

- What are the potential risks for the area, and what are the consequences of those risks?
- What is the likelihood of the risk occurring, and what other conventional means would be effective in achieving the same level of security, if any?
- Is there an inherent “expectation of privacy” in the area(s) proposed to be monitored?
- What usage is being proposed: temporary, permanent, covert, overt, employee monitored or tenant viewed?
- Are there written records of specific incidents that could have been mitigated or prevented through the use of security camera technology?
- What is the frequency of incidents and their impact on property and/or personal safety?

Camera placement and usage:
Tenants have a reasonable and legal expectation of privacy in, and immediately around, their homes. Therefore, the use of surveillance cameras must be confined to public/common areas.

Cameras must not be directed to look through windows or doors of adjacent buildings or through the windows or doors of private residences. The use of security cameras to monitor people entering a private home/unit is generally not permitted. Some temporary exceptions may be made when significant and identifiable life safety reasons exist or when required for legal authorities as part of an ongoing criminal or civil investigation.

The use of cameras around public entrances/exits, parking areas and storage areas is generally acceptable, including:

1. Building perimeters, entrances, exits, lobbies, corridors, receiving areas/docks, storage areas, cash handling locations, etc,
2. Areas at risk of robbery, burglary, arson, assault and theft, etc.

For information on BC Housing’s requirements for installing video surveillance systems, contact your Property Portfolio Manager, or BC Housing’s Security and Emergency Services.
CHAPTER 6 - CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN (CPTED)

CPTED is the proper design and effective use of the built environment which may lead to a reduction in the fear and incidence of crime, and an improvement of the quality of life. It has proven to be a very affective measure in preventing, and in some cases eliminating, criminal and nuisance behaviors at properties.

The Four Strategies of CPTED include:

1. **Natural Surveillance** - A design concept directed primarily at keeping intruders easily observable. Promoted by features that maximize visibility of people, parking areas and building entrances: doors and windows that look out on to streets and parking areas; pedestrian-friendly sidewalks and streets; front porches; adequate nighttime lighting.

2. **Territorial Reinforcement** - Physical design can create or extend a sphere of influence. Users then develop a sense of territorial control while potential offenders, perceiving this control, are discouraged. Territoriality is promoted by features that define property lines and distinguish private spaces from public spaces using landscape plantings, pavement designs, gateway treatments, and similar "CPTED" fences.

3. **Natural Access Control** - A design concept directed primarily at decreasing crime opportunity by denying access to crime targets and creating in offenders a perception of risk. Access control is gained by designing streets, sidewalks, building entrances and neighborhood gateways to clearly indicate public routes and discouraging access to private areas utilizing structural elements.

4. **Target Hardening and Maintenance** - Accomplished by features that prohibit entry or access: window locks, dead bolts for doors, interior door hinges. This concept ensures that maintenance standards support the actual and perceived feeling that the property is cared for by occupants and management.

The process of developing and then initiating a CPTED plan can be extremely complex. A considerable amount of planning is required, and with a building or property that has already been constructed, the implementation process can often take months and years to complete. Despite the significant investment in time and resources, the benefits of a completed plan are worth the effort.

Some community police organizations offer free assistance in developing a CPTED analysis for a property, and assistance is also available through your Property Portfolio Manager, or BC Housing’s Security and Emergency Services.