



3 Areas of a Building That Require Extra Security

We've all been there. Whether it is a dark stairwell, an all but empty parking garage late at night or an isolated restroom, that nagging fear that there is danger lurking can send chills up the spine as sure as any Halloween Haunted House. For property managers, these three areas top the list of the spookiest places for employees and visitors, and it is your responsibility to do all you can to make them as safe, secure and as inviting as possible. While fright can be fun when you are watching a scary movie, it has no place in the workplace. Here are a few simple tips to make sure your employees and visitors feel safe in these potentially dangerous areas:

Parking Garages

Parking garages often top the list of security concerns. One of the first and most cost-effective tools for property managers looking to make the parking area safer is to make sure the area is well-lit and properly maintained. Eliminate shadows in corners so that the entire area provides good visibility. Another very low-cost tip is to help people remember where they parked so they are not wandering around looking for their car. Some properties use simple slips of colored paper that people can grab as they leave the parking area, for example.

Many garages incorporate panic buttons or security call stations. Some of our customers have started using the KastlePresence platform for even easier access to emergency calling right from an employee's cellphone.

"They are utilizing the KastleAlert function in the app," says David McGuinness, vice president of corporate strategy at Kastle. "If I hear something spooky or I see someone lurking I can initiate the KastleAlert, which goes right to the top of alarm signal priority."

If your property doesn't have good cell coverage in the garage (and many don't), you can invest in adding that capability, which can add up, or use wired beacon technology that eliminates the need for cell carriers. "If there is cellular coverage we will use that; but the wired beacon is a less expensive back-up option," McGuinness says.

Stairwell Safety and Security

The popularity of the Fitbit has resulted in more and more employees using the stairs as part of their exercise routines. While this is great for their personal health, it makes the issue of stair safety even more critical. Besides being a potential area where danger can lurk, slip-and-falls and other health crises are more of a concern than ever before.

Just like garages, stairwells should be well-lit and provide panic stations. Make sure there are good treads on each stair and that there are enough panic stations to easily reach one in an emergency. KastleAlert is an excellent option for these areas since it may be easier to reach a cellphone in a pocket or purse if the person has fallen or is in a health crisis.

Video is a very handy tool for stairwells (garages, too). With the increase in litigation, it is also a good fraud-prevention tool. Just make sure you have enough storage, McGuinness advises.

"I remember years ago there was a wave of fraudulent slip and falls at grocery stores," he says. "People figured out they were only storing the video for 30 days so they would wait 40 days to file a lawsuit." Kastle stores video clips by default for 30 days; but with today's cloud storage it is easy to add as much as you want. "I would recommend 60 days minimum on any of these higher danger areas if there is any concern about liability," McGuinness advises.

Bathrooms

Many buildings today already require a key or code to use the bathroom. But make sure you are also using best practices along with the locks.

Credentials are the best way to secure bathroom doors because codes tend not to get changed and keys can get lost. But whatever method you use, don't have a generic key or card that says "bathroom" on it.

"I have been in buildings where the restroom is in a public part of the building and not dedicated to a particular tenant. My hope is that visitor credential I am given isn't universal and there is a separate one for men and women."

Tell tenants and employees to take a "see something, say something" approach to bathrooms. Remind them not to hold or prop doors. If you make it a company or building-wide policy, they won't have to feel like they are being "rude" not to hold the door for someone.

Finally, always have routine maintenance to make sure the lights are working and there is no water on the floor, and ask employees to be diligent about reporting any issues immediately.

"A dark space could be where someone hides out or lurks," McGuinness says. "Water can cause injuries. It is not just about security, but safety as well."