



SIX STEPS TO MAKE YOUR GARAGE SAFER AND SMARTER TODAY

In a case where art imitates life—from assault to auto theft—the movie industry has used parking areas as thrill-inducing settings for crime. The U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Justice Programs (OJP) points out that “because parking facilities comprise a large area with relatively low levels of activity, violent crime is more likely to occur in a parking facility than in other commercial facilities.” Offices typically have an equal ratio of parking to work space, but significantly less activity in parking areas create much higher opportunities for crime. Office and property managers can implement the following security measures to mitigate parking facility risks:

Mobile Alert Capabilities

Bluetooth coverage can economically extend throughout the most cavernous of garages, enabling users to contact emergency services through their cell phone – without having to search for a physical panic button in duress, or without cell phone coverage to call 911. Furthermore, personalized security with location awareness means responders and on-site staff will know who to look for and their exact location within the garage, enabling a faster, more precise response at a time when every second counts.

Access Control

Property managers should limit parking lot or garage entry to authorized users—simply implementing this feature serves as a crime deterrent. “Controlling vehicular access to a parking facility, even a public one, is extremely beneficial to security. Merely requiring the driver to take a ticket on entry (often observed by a security camera) and interact with a booth attendant at exit will make a facility less attractive to criminals than one that is wide open and unattended,” states the OJP. Office managers can further support this by confirming that employees have active access control devices synced with parking area readers.

Lighting

Criminals can hide within the shadows created by low or no lighting. In addition to the complicated architecture of most parking facilities, parked cars block light distribution. Property managers must install and maintain bright lighting throughout those areas. This creates a safer environment for patrons to journey to and from their vehicle. To encourage this, office managers should immediately report any lighting issues to building management.

Information

Knowledge is prevention. Be sure to provide tenants and employees with safety tips on a regular basis, whether by email or by memorandum. For example, remind anyone using your parking facility to be aware of their surroundings and have their keys ready—from the time that they exit the building to when they reach their vehicle. Once they get into their vehicle, advise them to lock their doors before they fasten their seatbelt or start their car. “We ask employees that work late at night to park close to doors, so that they don’t have to walk as far when they leave their building,” says Community Relations Coordinator Marco Santiago, MPDC (Metropolitan Police Department of the District of Columbia)!

Video with Two-Way Audio

The OJP acknowledges that, “Security in all types of parking facilities has tended to be reactive rather than proactive and often is addressed only after an incident has occurred.” Through 24/7 monitoring, video technology applied in parking areas can deter, detect and prevent crime. With the addition of a two-way audio feature, patrons can be safely guided to their vehicle and suspicious persons can be verbally challenged in real time.

Signage

Signs help patrons to remember where they parked and how to return to their car as quickly as possible. People are much less vulnerable to criminals if they can move more rapidly through a parking facility. Placing adequate signs featuring memorable words, colors and/or graphics can help with this. If applicable, you can deter crime with signage highlighting the use of video surveillance.