Vacant Commercial Premises

NATIONAL BUSINESS CRIME CENTRE

Reducing crime through partnership and prevention

The risk factor to business premises will naturally be dependent on a number of factors: area, local criminality, size, stock and security.

The outbreak of Coronavirus necessitated businesses to close across the UK, leaving many buildings empty.

If your business was closed during the pandemic it may be that you have not returned to full operating capacity. It is essential you focus on the risks to your premises if left unoccupied and regularly review your security.

What's in this guide

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TOP TIPS

- ☑ Review your property portfolio.
- ☑ Upgrade perimeter security.
- ☑ Prevent vehicle access.
- ☑ Site surveillance.
- ☑ Forensic marking of infrastructure and assets.
- ☑ Remove utility supplies.
- ☑ Upgrade building security.

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Review Your Property Portfolio

Conduct a detailed security review of all occupied and unoccupied property and land that 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. Out of sight, out of mind: Lock away any items that could be stolen, used as a climbing aide or targeted for arson.

Access And Boundary Treatments

Invest in a recognised security standard gate and locking mechanism, which is securely fixed to the ground and in alignment with the boundary fence. We recommended reviewing the Secured By Design website for further details: **www.securedbydesign.com**

Ensure your boundary is security rated 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, whilst allowing natural surveillance through the barrier. Some fencing can also incorporate lighting.

Prevent vehicular access on to the site - 'Design out the space!'

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 security rated bollards.

If your company has access to heavy-duty vehicles, you can deploy them in any outdoors areas thus 'designing out the space' for any prospective occupation. If you don't have any vehicles or trailers large enough to accomplish this, consider if there are other 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, and maintain compliance with fire regulations.

Surveillance

Ensure your CCTV system is an accredited system and positioned in a way that covers your premises and any vulnerable areas. Please ensure that your staff can operate the system in event of criminality. It should not be in a position where it can be easily attacked or removed.

Some CCTV systems can link to an App on your phone allowing you to monitor your buildings. Some of these possess a vocal capacity, which is beneficial because you can 'communicate' with any intruder. Some have grown 'used to the presence of cameras' and simply presume no one is monitoring them, hearing a voice can change that.

Helpful resources

Two industry bodies accredit reputable CCTV companies:

☑ **The National Security Inspectorate (NSI)**

☑ **The Security Systems and Alarms Inspection Board (SSAIB)**

Ensure your property has good lighting levels (BS5489 - 2013 for public spaces). We recommend low-level dusk-till dawn lighting, which can be enhanced by motion detector lighting if needed.

Having a monitoring station with remote access to the site means police and, if applicable the local authority, can be instantly notified upon an illegal entry, with or without a security presence on the site.

If you need security, it is worth completing an analysis of the risks and threats to your premises. This will help define the security services required and identify whether security staff need any additional qualifications. When tendering for security the Security Industry Authority's Approved Contractor Scheme provides a hallmark of quality within the private security industry.

Whilst low hourly rates may be appealing, buying security on cost alone can be a risk and may indicate legal obligations such as national minimum wage are not being met. Good-quality security provision reduces the risk to your premises, staff and contractors and protects your investment and your brand.

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 traceable liquid/DNA code that 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.
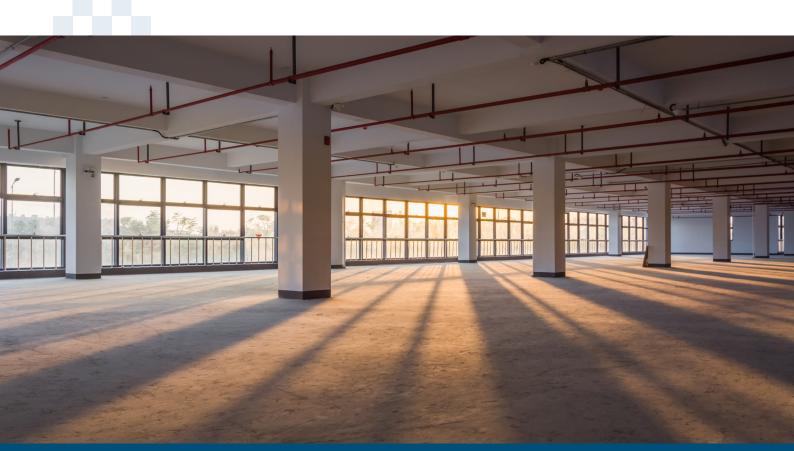

Removing The Utility Supply

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.

Protecting Buildings Within Your Site

The vulnerability of a building depends on factors including its location, local criminality and the type of boundary that exists.

Protect doors and windows by using security accredited shutters or grilles Some venues have been targeted historically for illegal occupations and raves, on account of having large rooms (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'.

Consider the use of fogging systems that activate upon an alarm being activated-these have a proven record of being dissuasive to criminality-you can't steal, what you can't see.

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).**

Lock valuable products away from any shop floor or visible location. We recommend a safe, to the correct security and insurance accreditations, bolted to the floor and located in a safe and secluded location.

Always Report Crimes to the Police

Always report crime to police. This allows police to capture the data and understand the full scale of the crime, which in turn informs their resources and tactics to tackle it.

When a crime is taking place, dial 999 in an emergency.

You can also report to the Police on 101 or alternatively, you can report online at www.police.uk

Helpful resources

Police recommended security products can be found at **www.securedbydesign.com**