

# Optimising construction security

Carl Clarke, of Clarke Construction Security, describes how our building sites should be protected against crime...

The lack of willingness by construction companies to take security seriously on their building sites has resulted in almost every construction site being the victim of theft at some point during the works. Some sites are repeatedly attacked, with insurance companies taking the hit and now refusing to insure building sites. The increasing costs of man guarding, and the growing health and safety issues, has meant that companies have looked for alternative protection solutions. The resulting demand has seen a growth in the electronic security market, with some very innovative and hi-tech systems to cover what is a very difficult scenario. The ever changing nature of the building site requires very careful thought to the types of equipment used and the position it is utilised in.

There are two main types of security for a building site, physical and electronic:

- The perimeter boundary should have a secure fence or hoarding with appropriate gates for the site. Most construction companies and local authorities do not allow barbed wire or similar to be used due to the possibility of a law suit being brought against the council/site by any person sustaining an injury in the attempt to illegally gain entry to the site. Anti-climb paint is a proven method to deter unwanted entry by opportunist thieves;
- The compound should also have its own perimeter fencing or hoarding with proper gates, as this is where most of the expensive machines, tools and materials should be kept, and will create another barrier;
- The site offices should have sufficient doors and locks with grills or shutters on the windows;
- The new building itself should, as soon as is practicable, have temporary doors installed;
- Machines should have Data Tagging or similar at the very least. Immobilisers should be fitted to the larger machines with proper ignition switches so they cannot be started with a screwdriver, etc.;
- All small items of plant and equipment should be in metal tool boxes in secure containers or store rooms.

However, if the intruders have been successful in entering the site, they need to be detected in order to deter them from

going any further and to initiate a response. The basic system should detect the intruder and raise the alarm. The alarm can be either a siren which sounds for a set period of time or a speaker which blasts out a recorded message. All systems should be monitored, the monitoring station will receive the alarm from the system and then contact any number of keyholders. A good response to the alarm is crucial.

The next level of security is a camera system. The sensors are still required in order to detect the intruders, which then enables the camera system to send live pictures to the monitoring station, where upon the operators may take control of the cameras and track the intruders around the site. They may also communicate with the intruders via a personal address system, informing them that the police have been notified. The police will act on a confirmed alarm activation and respond to the site.

For the larger construction sites, there should always be guards on-site, as no one response officer would know the site sufficiently to effectively establish that the site was secure and clear of any intruders that may still be on-site.

Access control is also becoming more of an issue as materials, tools and equipment are going missing during the day through the main gates. Therefore, many sites are using guards on main entrances, with mechanical barriers to check vehicles in and out of the site, as well as the pedestrian traffic. More and more sites are also controlling the pedestrian traffic with ID cards.

The future of construction security is the use of security systems either on their own as a 'stand-alone' system or as an effective tool for guards, in order to adequately cover the larger sites.

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