

Emergency Planning

Contact: Richard Goss CPP

Type of Industry: Wholesale

Responding to Bomb Attacks

The Problem:

In late 1999, a large wholesale chain with seventeen stores nationwide suffered a series of bomb threats and actual detonations at different stores, resulting in the death of one security officer and injury to another staff member. Because there was no apparent motive, management of the chain was unable to pinpoint where the next attack might occur or why their stores should be targeted. Staff and customer confidence fell quickly, resulting in staff resignations, loss of company reputation, and a sharp drop in sales. No crisis management or contingency plans were in place.

The Response:

The company's senior management brought in a consulting team to perform physical security and risk assessments of its stores nationwide. One two-person team performed these assessments, and another pair gave mail and package screening training to staff at each store. Eight staff members, selected from the lowest to the highest levels, were interviewed and information that had been hidden by senior store management was revealed. Using experience in conjunction with special risk assessment software, the consultants completed all assessments and other requirements within the time-frame set by the customer.

The Outcome:

One of the most positive results was staff buy-in to the notion of a proactive security function. Employees became more alert during their working hours, and the security staff was allowed to do the work they were being paid to do. Security manpower deployment and duties, as well as physical and electronic security needs, all of which had been ignored for some time, were evaluated and assessed by outside professionals. The risk assessment software not only identified the most serious weaknesses and identified priority issues, but also graphically showed senior management the costs and return on investment (ROI) of upgrading physical and electronic security.

The recommendations were gradually implemented and are still being completed. No further incidents have been reported over the last 12 months.

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