



Security Access Systems Go Green

by Brad Higdon

Our current economic environment has an impact on our lives, including cost of living, personal security, and protection of property.

Also on our mind is the green initiative to preserve our environment for current and future generations. Today's technology allows us to protect our property as well as go green. How well does your association address these concerns when it relates to security access systems? Every community has a need for security access systems. Some areas that may need selective access would be a clubhouse, main gate, owner's unit, elevators, common areas, garage gates, and so on and so forth.

Whether it is residents, delivery persons, maintenance personnel, or guests, how do you control the access to your facility? Chances are you use a plastic card made from PVC. Other than PVC cards having an effect on our environment, there is a cost associated with managing them. PVC cards and key fobs require management of purchasing, replacing, updating, and tracking inventory, which may add to the budget of a community. Advancements in technology have not only allowed us to find green alternatives to security access, but have allowed us to eliminate the costs associated with the use of PVC cards, key fobs, brass keys, and other instruments that must be purchased and replaced when they are lost or stolen. An alternative credential would be Fingerprint Biometric Access. (Fingerprints are never stored. A unique number is associated with each fingerprint, as it is with PVC cards and key fobs. This number



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cannot be used in any way because it is unique to the system and is not related to other databases.) Biometric describes a method used to identify a human being uniquely based on one or more specific physical characteristics. The physiological uniqueness of a person's finger defines the difference between each person.

Fingerprint biometrics are the most common and proven of all biometric based systems used for security. Other biometric systems include facial recognition, iris recognition, retinal scan, voice, and hand geometry. One advantage to using these biometric systems is never having to use external credentials such as keys, cards, or fobs. Also, it is impossible to forget, loan, or steal your fingerprints. You will find fingerprint security in every airport, many corporate offices, and a growing number of residential buildings. This technology will allow your current credential readers (cards and fobs) to be replaced with biometrics. In most cases, this replacement can be accomplished without any changes to your wiring and software with little or no downtime.

Access control was once a big-city concern, but today, even areas with few foreseeable problems are taking the initiative ahead of time. All of these systems are a necessary encumbrance to secure buildings, assets, and people. A community that is lacking in security is more vulnerable to theft and unauthorized use of lobbies, restrooms, showers, beaches, parking, storage, and other areas by non-residents. Residents of communities using a common key have a false sense of security. Have you ever noticed someone at the pool you didn't recognize? Have you had residents move from your community and not return their common key? Did your parking gate ever open for a vehicle not registered to your community? Are your facilities

being used after posted hours? These are questions asked on a daily basis in most communities. Communities that have not gone the electronic route have no true control over how many keys are out. The electronic system saves greatly by removing the necessity and cost of re-keying.

Associations should be proactive and perform an internal evaluation of the access to these areas. Here is a list of items to use to coordinate your evaluation:

Make a list of all buildings and entry points on your premises. These would include front/rear entrance, service entrance, elevators, stairwells, garage, pool, beach, exercise room, offices, etc.

Categorize the individuals that will be entering your community: Categories can be resident, management, security, employee, guest, contractor, etc.

Determine the hours of access to be assigned to each category. Example: Residents: 24 hours, contractor: 9:00 A.M.-5:00 P.M. Monday thru Friday, guest: July 1 through July 15, 2009.

Determine your security exposure by entry points. This may include doors being propped open by residents and not being monitored, door hardware not latching properly, or locks easily tampered with from outside to gain entry.

Contact your local security consultant to conduct an on-site survey with your staff.

These will allow you to customize the access to all of your entry points, as well as controlling other components such as lighting and air conditioning. The software associated with these systems will also maintain records of each person's entry time and date. These records can be useful if a crime is committed or a break-in occurs on the premises. Once you have chosen the right access control system for your building, you can implement the following procedures.

Schedule lighting for a pre-determined time, to activate after access has been granted, such as after a resident enters the library, laundry facility, or gym.

Lights can also be turned on for set increments upon activating a button and/or a pre-determined schedule.

Programmed energy management: Schedule air conditioning for pre-set times and dates, and/or special events. This can also be programmed to allow air conditioning to be turned off if the door is left open for a lengthened period of time.

Door monitoring capability: Monitoring can also be performed on doors that are not electronically controlled; Door Opened, Door Ajar.

Access control has come a long way and was originally only found in high-end or governmental installations. However, today's technology allows the average user to have a system installed, from a single door to a complex installation at an affordable price. The initial cost of these systems has proven to pay for themselves over a period of time. The system's report capabilities allow authorities to know which doors are locked, giving them control over who can enter your building. At the same time, the system protects the assets inside—clubhouse, exercise rooms, libraries, laundry facilities, etc. All of this can be incorporated into an electronic access system, which also provides a complete audit trail of who entered and when.

In conclusion, many of today's communities are brimming with activity. Thanks to innovative thinking and new technology, your community may be able to streamline and improve security while reducing energy use and costs.

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