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Bldg. SECURITY News
INFORMATION TO MAKE YOUR BUILDING & COMPANY MORE SECURE
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OPTICAL TURNSTILES

Controlling Access In Commercial Buildings

Since 9/11, commercial buildings, institutions and government agencies have been grappling to find cost-effective and aesthetically pleasing ways to control access to their buildings. For most small buildings, it's not a problem. Small buildings can effectively handle the problem by placing card readers on exterior doors. However, with large, busy buildings, the same approach is impractical. Piggybacking (holding the door open for the person behind you) is the major security breakdown problem in high-traffic areas such as the main entrance.

The Past Problems

In the past, there have been two ways to effectively manage access in high-traffic buildings. The first is manual verification. With manual verification, all persons requesting entry to the building must show an authorized badge to a guard before entering. Unfortunately, this approach is costly and provides a very low level of security. The use of guards is just plain expensive. More important, guards can't know for certain whether badges are fake (which is not difficult to do these days) or whether familiar faces are still employed with the company.

The second way to manage access into a busy building involves the use of unattractive mechanical turnstiles in the lobby. Most building owners cringe at the thought of using them because they create a "prison-like" atmosphere in many lobbies.

The Solution

One practical solution to providing secure high-traffic access control in the lobby of a busy building is to use Optical Turntiles. An Optical Turnstile system is a set of parallel pedestals that form lanes—they look like mechanical turnstiles without the barrier arm. Each pedestal is equipped with photo-electric beams and a logic board.

Typically, Optical Turnstiles are located in a pivotal main-lobby location. To gain access to the interior of the building, an authorized person uses their access card at the Optical Turnstile lane. Using a valid card temporarily shunts out the turnstile's photo-electric beam, allowing the cardholder to

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TO OUR *Customers...*

Given today's level of threat, we are facing challenges to the security of our buildings and offices as never before in recent history. To address these challenges, we have two choices: use more manpower or automate with technology. Our advice to our clients, whenever possible, is to make capital investments in technology rather than incur ongoing operating expenses from guards. Although guards play a vital role, the strategic use of technology can make them both more effective and efficient.

That is why we integrate unique products like optical turnstiles into our system designs. They not only reduce manpower requirements, they increase security, since they do not rely on a visual verification of a photo-ID by a guard.

Of course, investing in technology is only part of the solution when it comes to your security system. The other major component is how you are supported in a post-sales environment. That's where we add real value.

As an integrator, we have made significant investments in our service and engineering infrastructure to insure that your security system (really an automation system) is up and running around the clock. For our service agreement clients, if a component fails, we replace it with a loaner. It's that simple. From our perspective, you are not just another number, you are a client.

Wishing you a pleasant and profitable summer,

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The Importance of CCTV Lighting

When it comes to selecting the right camera for a specific application, the most important issue to consider is the ambient lighting. For indoor cameras, this is usually not a problem, since most indoor applications have a constant amount of light (between 50 to 300 foot candles).

However, for outdoor applications, the type and quantity of light becomes more important in determining the type of camera. Black and white (monochrome) cameras are usually not picky about the type of light. If the amount of light drops to low levels, then you have choices—select a more expensive light-sensitive camera, increase the lighting and/or adding infra-red illuminators.

Color cameras create a different set of challenges. First, color cameras operate in the restricted bandwidth known as "visible light," between 400 and 790 nanometers. The use of infra-red illuminators provides no benefit unless the camera is a day/night, automatically changing the optics of the camera from color to monochrome operation.

The second challenge for color cameras is the color rendering produced by the exterior illumination. For instance, a green car under normal sunlight would produce a green image on a color camera. However, under high pressure sodium lamps, the green car would actually look bluish. Although natural sunlight is always best, studies have shown that white metal halide lights will produce the best imaging results for a color camera during low-light conditions.

If you're not sure on which camera fits your needs, then ask one of our sales reps. We'll guide you to the right decision.

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Questions & Answers

Q We plan on installing a card-reader controlled parking gate about 700 feet from our main building, and connect it to our existing access control system. However, trenching the parking lot would be both expensive and disruptive. Is there an alternative approach that would make this addition a less painful process?

A An easy way to solve this problem would be to go wireless. A relatively new product manufactured by Wyreless Access interfaces to most card readers, using the 900MHz band. The card reader connects directly to the wireless transmitter, which sends encrypted information to a receiver. The only limitation is distance. For interior office environments, the limitation is about 200 feet; with line of sight outdoor applications, the maximum distance is 1,000 feet.

Note: In addition to remote parking areas, wireless access control has other applications such as in some elevator environments (eliminating the use of traveling cables) as well as a portable reader used by a guard at a garage entrance.

Q While sophisticated pan and tilt drive cameras are great, how do I stop my guards from zooming in on "unwanted" private areas such as the residential high-rise adjacent to our facility?

A Many of the newer dome cameras now incorporate software that addresses the concern over privacy and the unauthorized use of cameras to view "unwanted" areas. Called video-zone blanking, domes can now be programmed through their internal memory to blank out certain areas for viewing. Blanking of areas is both flexible and user-defined. Again this offers the benefit of blanking only to those areas needing blanks, limits operator viewing of private areas, and protects the privacy of your neighbors.

Security TiPS

Protecting Ventilation Systems

While many companies and office-building owners are focusing on controlling physical access to the perimeter of the building to authorized personnel and visitors, one area being neglected is the ventilation system. Given the change in the threat environment, security for ventilation areas, just like data rooms and other areas, also needs consideration as part of your total security plan.

The amount of additional security you need for these areas will be a direct function of your perceived risk as well as architectural feasibility. Outlined below are several steps you can take to minimize your risk.

- ✔ Prevent access to outdoor intakes, mechanical areas and the building's roof. This can be accomplished through the construction of barriers and controlled doors.
- ✔ Monitor sensitive areas with cameras and alarms to alert security personnel and document activities.

For more information, contact your ISS representative.

Did You Know?

That not all proximity access control credentials take the form of a card. One of our key suppliers has recently introduced a small disk-shaped tag called the MicroProx tag. About the size of a quarter, this tag adds proximity access control capability to a users' cell phones, PDAs and other similar nonmetallic devices. The tag is attached to any object via a self-adhesive back.

If you're thinking about upgrading your Wiegand or magnetic stripe system to proximity, the MicroProx tag can play a key role as a permanent or transitory device. By fastening the tag to an existing card, employees can enjoy the benefits and reliability of proximity without the hassle. This also helps if you operate in a multi-building environment with multiple access technologies, where the tag can turn other cards into multi-technology cards instantaneously.

TECH NOTES

Two of the most frequent inquiries we receive from our clients on a daily basis are: "Are VHS time-lapse recorders dead?" or "Should I replace my VHS recorder with a digital video recorder (DVR)?" While there is still some utility left for VHS recorders in limited applications, given today's advancements in technology, our answer to those two questions is "yes!"

The shift toward DVRs as a method to archive video information is now the preferred method for several reasons. First, it's easy to perform a search of recorded information. What use to take hours now can be performed within a minute. Second, DVRs make it easy to distribute video information to ANY location connected to your organization's LAN. This enables your guards to monitor video from remote buildings, saving you both man-power and money.

Not all DVRs are equal, and some have more capabilities than others. For more information on an upgrade path toward DVRs, give us a call. We'll help you make the right decision.

Security HIGHLIGHTS

Integrated Security Domes—Changing The Face Of CCTV

Over the last 15 years, the typical camera has evolved from the standard camera housed inside a "rectangular box" enclosure equipped with a pan tilt drive to the dome. For many of us, the change to the dome appears to be primarily aesthetics. But that's far from the real story. Today's dome cameras are not just domes—they are integrated systems!

As an integrated system, a dome consists of multiple components including: a camera imaging sensor (color or monochrome), zoom lens (both optical and digital), variable high-speed drive (fast pan motion of 250 per second), a bubble, on-board computer and a broad range of software options.

One of the more added-value features of the newer domes is software programmability. Whether using hard-wired lines or the internet, dome cameras can be programmed to store camera and location-specific settings, automatic presets, motion detection and privacy zones (pre-determined areas that can't be viewed by the camera). The advanced software also enhances the performance of the dome under a broad range of lighting conditions. Of course, like any software program, integrated domes come with password protection to prevent unauthorized users from changing the system settings.

Why Choose An Integrated Dome?

More than 50% of outdoor cameras sold use integrated domes. The reasons are very simple. First, advancing technology has reduced their size as well as their cost. Second, high-speed drives and software features make them cost-effective for covering broad areas. Finally, they offer discretion. With a tinted dome, you can't see the camera, so you can't tell whether you are under surveillance. This lack of certainty functions as a great deterrent to theft.

For more information on the right integrated dome system for your application, please contact your ISS sales rep.

Optical Turnstiles *(continued from page 1)*

pass without creating an alarm. Attempting to pass through a lane without a valid access card activates a local and remote alarm, alerting security.

technology

Some of the newer optical turnstiles also include a waist-high Plexiglass or glass barrier to prevent entry without the use of a valid card. Like earlier models, these turnstiles use photo-electric beams and logic boards to prevent piggy-backing as well as shunt out alarms.

Reasons Behind the Trend

Optical Turnstiles are becoming more common fixture in lobbies for several reasons. First, they can be covered with any type of finish (from stainless steel to Corian), complementing lobby decor. Second, they can securely handle heavy traffic—a typical Optical Turnstile lane can process 1,200 to 1,800 people per hour. Third, they help limit your liability by allowing you to screen for authorized personnel only. This means persons without a valid card cannot access your facility without setting off an alarm and drawing attention. Given current legal trends, more companies will be using this approach to reduce their liability exposure.

Finally, Optical Turnstiles provide superior visitor management, forcing every visitor to register with your security or reception desk. Breaching building security through "piggybacking" becomes almost impossible.

Three Rules to Follow

When designing your system, the length of the turnstile pedestals should be four to six feet (anything less than four feet can increase the incidence of false alarms). Second, design your system with enough lanes to handle your worst-case scenario—rush hour. Finally, use off-the-shelf designs for the pedestals—architects love to come up with elaborate designs, but they don't have to foot the bill. For more information on Optical Turnstiles, give us a call. We'll guide you to the right decision.