



**Security  
Executive Council**

RISK MANAGEMENT PORTFOLIO

# Workplace Security Playbook

The New Manager's Guide  
to Security Risk

EXCERPT

**Bob Hayes, Contributing Editor**



SECURITY EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

A research and advisory firm

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Elsevier

The Boulevard, Langford Lane, Kidlington, Oxford, OX5 1GB, UK  
225 Wyman Street, Waltham, MA 02451, USA

First published 2013

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#### British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

#### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress

ISBN: 978-0-12-417245-6

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## 6.9 STRIKES AND LABOR DISTURBANCES

Your first step in planning for strikes and labor disturbances is to monitor the expiration dates of labor contracts. Contact public relations when any strike deadline is near, and notify employee relations and human resources about any situations they may not be aware of.

The primary function of security during a strike is to protect people and the facility. Your plans should cover:

- Coordinating law enforcement assistance;
- Coordinating security efforts in emergencies;
- Controlling access;
- Protecting the premises;
- And establishing communications and other logistical considerations.

Of special concern, it's possible that strikes and labor disturbances can result in various problems for customers and products, such as business interruptions, shipment delays, tampered or damaged products, inventory buildup, and even customer harassment.

### 6.9.1 Law Enforcement

Prior to any strike deadline, you should meet with local police officials to determine under what circumstances they can help you maintain security. Remember, it is not their role to be strike breakers or contract negotiators. In some jurisdictions, police will act only to enforce a restraining order or injunction. Define the circumstances under which you will ask for police assistance, and the nonserious situations in which you will not. When you request police intervention for handling illegal activity during a strike, facility management should agree beforehand to cooperate with any prosecuting actions that may result. Your failure to cooperate in this would reflect poorly on the company and could result in poor police response when you need assistance in the future.

### 6.9.2 Coordinating Security in Emergencies

During a strike, be prepared for fire, medical, and other emergencies. Because of the chance of sabotage and the possibility that assistance may be hampered during a strike, it is a good practice to evaluate your facility's medical assistance and fire protection systems before a strike deadline.

- Inspect all fire extinguishers and auxiliary firefighting equipment.
- Arrange for extended fire patrols.
- Check the first aid station for adequate supplies.
- Arrange to have employees trained in first aid or paramedics avail-

able on short notice.

- Arrange for ambulance service before the strike, and notify local emergency medical facilities of the impending strike.

### **6.9.3 Controlling Facility Access**

Find out how many non-striking employees or temporary workers will be entering the affected facility (this will depend on management decisions about carrying on with normal or limited operations). Then decide on the fewest access points needed for this level of operation. These access points should be in easily monitored areas and provide the quickest and most direct entrance into the facility. Keep picket line crossings to a minimum by encouraging employees to use car pools and discouraging them from leaving the facility for lunch. Consider eliminating unnecessary shipments and reducing others to a minimum.

During the strike, security personnel should cover the access points, and report and record any incidents or pickets that block movement or damage incoming or outgoing vehicles.

If possible, establish a buffer zone of 20 to 30 yards between the picket line and the facility perimeter. This increases the distance between pickets and possible targets of vandalism, creates an area where movement can be easily observed, and establishes a definite line of demarcation.

### **6.9.4 Site Protection**

Site protection functions may need to be expanded during a strike. Determine whether you will need additional security personnel. If your facility uses contract security services, you should determine whether additional security officers will be available (note: some states prohibit agencies from providing guards solely for strike situations). Locations with proprietary security personnel, or with no security officers, may have to assign security duties to other employees.

Instruct people assigned to site protection functions that their duties are only to detect and report abnormal conditions. They should not attempt to enforce the law or confront violators. Caution them against discussing strike-related issues with the picketers.

The placement of protection personnel will vary with each location, but suggested areas include each entrance point and critical areas that are susceptible to vandalism.

### **6.9.5 Communications Center**

Communications are your most important logistical consideration in

planning for a strike. Establish a communications center with adequate radio communications between the various observation points. You will also need to establish communication channels with police, fire, medical, and other vital services.

The communications center should be the receiving point for all incoming information and the originating point for all instructions. Equip the center to monitor all radio traffic, and have one or more dedicated telephone lines. The center should

- Maintain a log of all abnormal incidents;
- Monitor radio traffic;
- Maintain contact with police and other vital services;
- Collect and process evidence obtained by observation teams; and
- Monitor local media broadcasts.

Individuals with decision-making authority should be in the center at all times to

- Coordinate security efforts;
- Establish observation teams;
- Arrange for the safe movement of people;
- Summon police and fire assistance; and
- Make required emergency decisions.

Observation teams equipped with cameras or other recording equipment can document activities that seem to go beyond normal picketing activity. These teams should

- Contact the communications center to talk to the decision-making authority to determine the legality of activities they are observing;
- Carefully record the date, time, and location of any incidents; and
- Objectively report what they observe.

It is important that you closely monitor security situations after a strike, and that you promptly report any incidents.

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