



A Checklist for Library Building Security

The United States Occupational Safety and Health administration (OSHA) has prepared a very thorough **Small Business Handbook** to help business employers meet the legal requirements imposed by the *Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970*. Although it contains information not relevant to library operations, there are checklists which will help the library staff ask questions they might never have thought to ask. The handbook can be accessed at www.osha.gov - click on "Publications" then scroll down to "Small Business Handbook" or <http://www.osha.gov/Publications/smallbusiness/small-business.pdf>

ACTION NEEDED

Management of Materials, Property, and Building Contents

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|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is cash out of customers' reach in secured containers (and, if possible, out of their sight)? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are rare items and those of considerable value kept in locked rooms or cases with alarmed doors or gates? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are displays in public areas arranged so that missing items can be readily noticed? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is there a schedule for checking inventory often enough to detect ongoing theft? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are all desks in the building lockable and kept locked? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is valuable equipment (e.g., computer terminals and printers) either bolted to desks or secured in safe places at night? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are personal belongings kept in locked areas to which only the staff has normal access? _____ | |

ACTION NEEDED

Doors, Keys, and Locks: Entry and Interior Space Control

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Is door security such that no customers should be able to enter or leave the building undetected? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are door locks durable heavy-duty dead bolts in good repair, with secure hinges that make them difficult to pick or damage? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do all entry points to the building have adequate and functioning alarms? _____ | |

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Are master keys to the building plainly marked “Do Not Duplicate” And distributed to as few staff members a practicable? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Can the library afford break-resistant windows with strong security locks or alarm systems? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are all fire escapes, vents, ducts, and skylights – potential access points for intrusion - protected in the same manner as doors and windows? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> If the “walkaround” audit revealed blind spots and “secret places,” has an attempt been make to get rid of them? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> What are ramifications of not allowing customers to carry bags and other materials into or out of the building without being stopped? This isba privacy issue, but most people will consent to checking their belongings once they realize that it’s for everyone’s safety and security, and has the extra bonus of keeping the cost of library restocking minimal. _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are designated staff or guards given the responsibility for inspecting bags and other materials carried into and out of the building? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are doors to all staff areas locked with peepholes drilled into solid doors? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are display cases kept locked? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is anything being done to prevent people from loitering or “hanging out” in rest rooms and private or restricted locations? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is the library willing to consider limiting access to rest rooms (e.g., key access with one person at a time permitted to have the key)? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are staff members not left to work alone on floors or in remote locations? | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is it feasible to leave “peepholes” in library stacks by leaving sections of shelving empty?_____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are all library records securely stored, including lockdown files and password - only accessible computer programs? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is there periodic maintenance and repair of locks, hinges, and door closers? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are emergency exits clearly identified inside and out? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Does the library have some form of internal communications system, accessible to all staff? _____ | |

Windows

- Are all windows either made of break-resistant glazing panels or covered with secured grilles or screens to prevent easy break-in? _____
- Are all ground-level or below ground-level windows key-locked? _____
- Are all duct openings secured from the inside? _____

Barriers/Fencing/Gates

- Is the exterior of the library well lighted after dark with bushes and shrubbery small enough to prevent hiding? _____
- Are fences and shrubs placed and trimmed so that they do not block visibility? _____
- For the sake of perimeter control, is it possible to avoid or get rid of hidden locations outside such as weeds, vines, bushes, and close trees? _____
- Is it possible to get rid of dark or hidden spots in the library's parking lot? _____
- Do local or campus police patrol on an unpredictable schedule, both during normal operating hours and at night and on weekends? _____
- Are padlocks securely attached to fences or gates, with hinge pins difficult to remove? _____

Lights

Over and over again, studies of crime have shown a positive correlation in public places of lighting with safety. The more there is of one, the less there is of the other. Few potential criminals are willing to attempt their deeds in well-lighted places where the risk of being seen and identified is high. These are questions for the self-examining library to ask concerning the placement, level, and adequacy of lighting within and outside the library building:

- Is there adequate lighting in all public areas of the building? _____
- Are study areas, carrels, shelving, and stacks arranged for maximum visibility? _____
- Are master fuse and lighting panels operated only through key switches? _____
- Are fuse and switch boxes kept locked and as vandal-proof as possible? _____
- Are all bulbs and fluorescent lighting tubes covered and locked? _____

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| <input type="checkbox"/> If electrical failure occurs, is there an instant and automatic power backup system? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are emergency lights inaccessible to the public and secured? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Does the library have a program of periodic testing of all light fixtures? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is there provision for adequate and automatic after-hours security lighting that is adequate and practical, not just aesthetic? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is there periodic review and discussion of changes in lighting due to building alterations or changes in traffic flow? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do all staff understand what to do in the event of a light or power failure? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Does the library have a contract for periodic maintenance and repair of lighting? _____ | |

ACTION NEEDED

Intrusion and Fire Alarms and Protection

The purpose of most alarms is to alert staff and authorities to emergencies. It is assumed that fire alarms are required by state or local ordinances for public buildings, but intrusion alarms are expensive systems that the library may wish to get along without. They are expensive purchases often requiring equally expensive service and maintenance contracts. Asking yourself these questions will help you decide whether your library needs such alarms.

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Has it been determined that burglar alarms are necessary (e.g., the identification of something valuable in need of protection)? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Does the library's insurance provider insist upon or give a discount for intrusion alarms? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are silent panic alarms necessary and feasible at entrances and remote areas? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are audiovisual signal alarms necessary to monitor door openings or pedestrian traffic? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are emergency and exit doors provided with alarms? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are interior alarms installed on exhibit cases, rare document displays, and drawers for petty cash? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are alarm monitors always secured, tamper-proof, and away from mainstream traffic? _____ | |

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Are explicit written instructions on the operation of alarms and the action to be taken in the event of a problem printed on or near alarm signaling devices? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is a sprinkler system installed? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> It there an adequate system of fire alarm devices? Does the fire department generally respond to alarms promptly? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are street fire alarm boxes nearby? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are adequate fire extinguishers present on all floors? Are they of the appropriate type? Do they get tested and serviced on a regular basis? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are there written procedures for fire alarms, drills, and evacuation, revised as necessary? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are all staff aware of a systematic fire or other emergency evacuation plan? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Does the library conduct periodic fire drills? _____ | |

ACTION NEEDED

Stack Access

Most public libraries provide public access to open stacks. This is a convenience for the public, permitting browsing and exploration. It is also a risk for those who use open stacks. When the library follows an open stack policy, here are some questions to consider:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> How can the library's physical arrangement be altered for better surveillance and room and stack monitoring? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> How much surveillance can be achieved by staff from their desks or workstations? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> What if the best method of floor patrols for stack areas? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> How can surveillance be augmented by staff while shelving and retrieving? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Would increased lighting in stack areas help reduce opportunities for crime? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Before admitting people to open stacks, should the library inspect briefcases, packages, and other belongings without unduly delaying, irritating, or inconveniencing the public? _____ | |

Security Gates

Security gates are designed to prevent the disappearance of uncharged books via the front door. Once installed, they will protect the book stock to a certain extent, but all library staff should be aware that such gates have their obvious limits. In the first place, it doesn't require a sophisticated knowledge of electronics for a person to figure out how the magnetization system works and then to defeat it by removing the magnetized strips before attempting to make off with books. Secondly, books may be removed in others ways, such as being slid under or sailed over the gate's effective field, or may simply be removed through an unguarded staff entrance, and openable window, or with a cooperating staff member.

A clever thief will sometimes conceal two or more books on his or her person, and when the alarm goes off, sheepishly give up one to reproving library staff, while walking away with the other undetected. Such gates, moreover, can do nothing to protect most magazines or to ward off mutilation of library materials.

Here is a checklist to follow for libraries using magnetic security gates in the attempt to safeguard their property:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Are all public exits from the library (except for required fire doors) gated? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is it possible for would-be book thieves to throw books out open windows? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are security gates "on" at all times during normal operating hours? Are they in proper working order? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is the magnetic field of the gate sufficiently sensitive that the alarm will always go off when an unmagnetized strip passes through it? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are the gates tested periodically to ensure that they do not malfunction? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have all books in the permanent collection been fitted with magnetized strips? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are magazines and newspapers magnetized? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are circulation and security staff properly trained in the procedure to follow when the gate alarm goes off? _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do all staff know what to do when it appears that a patron has attempted to exit the building with an improperly checked-out book? _____ | |