

Real Estate Journal

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How important is your family and residential estate protection to you?

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As a security associate for Corporate Resources Group (CRG), I have provided security for a diverse range of assignments within the metro-Boston area. My details have varied from strike and corporate security, to black tie functions, to security in the CBS news anchor booth covering the 2004 Democratic National Convention, to deploying to New Orleans on a "high threat" security team at Children's Hospital in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

Due to recent public safety and security issues, CRG has noticed a rising number of families are hiring private security firms to protect their persons and estates, which augment their home security systems and local law enforcement. This lifestyle trend has been substantiated by the Department of Justice. According to a Bureau of Justice study across the U.S. in 2003, one in 26 homes were either burglarized or had a family member aged 12 or older that became a victim of a violent crime committed by a stranger. Furthermore, over 75 percent of total crimes recorded were burglaries. This translates to over 13 million property thefts!

What was once considered a luxury by few is emerging as a necessity by many. Frequently traveling business executives, vacationing families, stalked or threatened individuals, professional athletes, celebrities, public officials and diplomats are recognizing the benefits of personal security professionals on either a fulltime or an "as needed" basis.

Is Private Security Effective?

The best security system for an estate is one that encompasses both human intervention (active system) and a technologically advanced mechanical alarm/sensor/gate system (passive system). Since the police can not be everywhere at once, a dedicated security team that works in conjunction with a state-of-the-art security system provides a seamless umbrella

of overlapping checks and balances. Depending upon where the security personnel are placed, inside or outside the compound, they would either become the first or supporting line of defense before the police arrive.

Arguably, the best advantages of possessing an active security system (private security personnel) is the ability to project an air of deterrence to unwanted personnel, and a competent individual who is standing by on scene to address an issue. Although not realistic, imagine how much your confidence level would increase if one or two police officers in an unmarked cruiser were posted 24-7 in your neighborhood? Such a security presence within your residential area would, most importantly, provide a level of deterrence that would encourage potential criminals and burglars to seek easier targets. According to conventional wisdom, professional burglars, the ones who are most likely to target higher end residences, will conduct one or more reconnaissance "drive-bys" in neighborhoods *before* breaking into a house. Such "professionals," not unlike the police and security professionals, are very methodical and deliberate in conducting their "business." Therefore, their "planning" is a tool that they employ to stack the deck in their favor. Since their job is to maximize the chance of success (a burglary) and minimize failure (getting caught), professional burglars are like electricity. They follow the path of least resistance. So it stands to reason that these people will be deterred from a residence that has dedicated, armed security professionals posted at the estate, and search for easier targets.

Should an incident arise, such as a breach, a dedicated security agent would be on scene to investigate and address the situation posed by the imminent threat to the estate and its residents. Additionally, the agent would act as the eyes and ears for local law enforcement and would conduct initial liaison with a police officer once he or she arrives. At that time, if the issue required further action, the security professional could backup the police officer and serve as a witness after the fact.

Is Private Security Necessary?

On top of servicing the primary client, we

have noticed the residual benefit to their neighbors. Many neighbors have expressed an enhanced peace of mind. Although we are dedicated to a specific client, they know that through excellent relationships with the police and by possessing their pre-programmed telephone numbers, a cruiser can be summoned and professionally briefed if an agent notices anything suspicious.

Additionally, when a residence thinks of "security" they only consider protection of life and property from human threats. For some reason people do not regard threats to general safety, or of a natural, animal or medical nature to be one in the same with "security." However, unless a specific human threat is known, the likelihood of a family or an estate being harmed from one of these categories is significant. Finally, such personal services cater to the unique needs and whims of the individual client while safeguarding their requirement for privacy and confidentiality.

Private companies fulfill this "guardian angel" role effectively. In addition to providing an experienced security professional, such companies can offer other services: estate assessment, executive protection for family members, investigations, background checks and due diligence for house staff, recommend and subcontract estate security systems, conduct estate surveillance on a full or limited basis while the family is away, and provide polished security agents for a wide variety of functions taking place at an estate.

What To Look For When Choosing Private Security

While any company can boast great service and qualified security associates, delivering on tall promises is another matter. How do you sort out the credible companies from the pack? Consequently, knowing what you should look for when choosing to hire a private security company can be difficult. This is because you are shopping for a firm in an area that is probably well out of your field of expertise. This article should give you a very brief overview of residential security. Referrals are always a great source for narrowing down your search. However if you do not know anyone who can provide a reference, research the

Internet.

Next, give the prospective firm a call and ask to speak with a company officer, owner or a managing partner. After a 15 minute conversation you should start feeling comfortable having a representative meet with you. Only the most reputable and dedicated companies will impress you by making a sincere effort to find out your specific needs and concerns, patiently answer all your questions, and do whatever it takes to secure a positive *business relationship* with you, regardless the hour of day or night.

What you are looking for are clues that suggest professionalism, credibility and competence. What is the company's mission statement? What are their core values? How long have they been in existence? Are they fully licensed, bonded and insured? What are the company officers' backgrounds? How quickly could they respond to your needs even if your request is in the middle of the night (stalkers and burglars do not keep bankers hours)? What separates them from their competition? Do they have any referrals that you can speak with?

At this point your own good judgment should already be telling you if you are favorably impressed, or not. Finally, you should arrange to meet with a company representative. Upon a favorable meeting, which includes a clearly defined scope of work, the appropriate contractual paperwork will be filled out and scheduling should begin within a reasonable time, unless an exigent situation presents itself.

Ultimately, residential estate security is an all encompassing service that needs to be trustworthy, personal, flexible, discrete and professional in order to be effective. What are at stake are the *most important* assets in your life, your family and the roof that shelters them. Therefore, the most important question you need to ask yourself when considering estate security is, "How important is my peace of mind that my family and residential estate are in good hands while I am away or asleep?"

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