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SHOPPING SEASON BRINGS EXTRA SECURITY WORRIES TO AREA RETAILERS -
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Columbia Executive Protection LLC
Creating Partnerships For A
Total Community Effort Against Crime

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SHOPPING SEASON BRINGS EXTRA SECURITY WORRIES TO AREA RETAILERS

COLUMBIA, Mo. – Christmas shopping season brings an added gift for area retailers – increased worries over how to safeguard extra seasonal inventories against theft, a local security expert says.

“External seasonal storage areas are always a concern, but they can be an especially big concern this time of year,” said James Murray, executive officer of Columbia Executive Protection LLC. “Maintaining a cost-effective, secure environment for your external stock involves detailed planning that puts thought into making it especially difficult for criminals to take advantage of your store.”

Murray said the problem boils down to security procedures to deal with three main areas of concern: trailers, lighting and keys.

To avoid stolen merchandise, managers should have procedures in place to ensure that all trailer doors are locked except when being accessed and to know who checks that the doors are locked and how they are to be checked. Installation of intrusion alarms should be considered. Trailers should be placed strategically so they are within range of outdoor cameras monitored by security personnel, who also should inspect the trailers regularly in person and should challenge loiterers.

The trailer area, along with other parking areas, should be illuminated to clearly show activity. Lighting should be protected from tampering and vandalism, should produce a light spectrum appropriate for closed circuit television surveillance, and should be evenly dispersed to avoid creating shadows. The operational hours and programmed timing of the protective lighting system need to be considered to cover the actual daily period of darkness.

Special consideration needs to be given to procedures involving keys to trailer locks, and leaving keys unattended for any period of time should be prohibited. Managers should implement procedures that document who is authorized to have keys, issuing them only on the basis of employee job function and level of responsibility; who is allowed to duplicate them; who is allowed to take keys off site; how many keys have been issued; and how many of these issued keys are master keys and grand-master keys, keeping those to a minimum and making sure not to mark them clearly as special keys.

Duplicate keys should be stored in a separate key security control box, and distribution and use of those keys should be kept to an absolute minimum. Access to the store's key duplication facility should not be controlled, and "do not duplicate" should be stamped on all keys.

Managers should maintain a key issuance audit book in a secure area that records all key activity; should maintain specific procedures to assure the return of keys from departing employees; should conduct periodic key inventories, noting which are accounted for and how many are missing; and should notify higher managers and company loss prevention departments about lost keys.

Outwitting thieves can be time-consuming work, but the effort spent in curbing crime helps the entire community. "Store managers should be especially vigilant this time of year in safeguarding their outdoor stock, as well as for numerous other potential situations," said Captain Sam Hargadine, executive assistant to the chief of the Columbia Police Department. "They need to be watching their lots for a number of different types of crime, robbery being one, as well as thefts from cars and thefts of cars. So it's time to be diligent for a number of different issues."

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