

OPERATIONS

Top Ways To Improve Property Management Security At Your Multifamily Properties

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[According to the FBI](#), over 67 percent of all burglary offenses in 2017 were at residential properties, including apartment buildings. Almost double the amount of [residential burglaries](#) occurred during daylight hours than at night, proving property management security is important any time of day.

Landlords can make their apartments more desirable by showcasing the building security features on their apartment website. Adding extra security within the units – not just within the common areas – is an extra level of protection that appeals to tenants.

From high-tech camera systems to everyday property inspections, use these top ways toward improving security at your rental property:



Engage With Local Law Enforcement

An inexpensive way to get the most updated information about crime in the area is to talk with law enforcement personnel. Alex Browning, Vice President of [Corporate Security Resources](#) in New York City, states that they have “liaised with local law enforcement agencies [community affairs or relations departments] to better understand the most prevalent threats within a neighborhood, analyze how property crimes are being committed, and understand what vulnerabilities are being exploited.”

Law enforcement “can be a great resource to provide insights on the way in which property crime has been historically committed at similar buildings or complexes and what tricks of the trade criminals have used to circumvent a building’s security,” informs Browning. Understanding and improving security at your rental property may be just a phone call to your local police department away.

Improve Lighting

Adequate lighting can be a crime deterrent at night or dark days, as criminals don’t want to be seen. Barry Saywitz, President of the [Saywitz Company](#) in Newport Beach, California, says to install “additional lighting on photo cells in all common areas, entrances, and parking areas to illuminate the property for the safety of residents and to deter any outside activity.”

Check Camera Visibility

Obvious placement of security cameras goes hand in hand with proper lighting to deterring criminals. To adequately prevent or catch crimes, security cameras can be installed in various common areas. Saywitz puts cameras and security camera signs in entrances, parking areas, and

laundry rooms to protect residents and their vehicles. Add these signs to inform residents and non-residents that they are being monitored in common areas, so they may be less likely to commit a crime.

Install Gate And Entrance Locks

Saywitz says, “It’s important from a security perspective to install either locks or keypads on all:

- gates and entrances,
- parking lots,
- laundry facilities,
- other common amenities, and
- trash enclosures.”

“It’s often a building’s attached garage or loading dock that is the weakest link in security,” explains Browning about larger complexes. “These areas benefit from robust access control systems, such as video intercoms in conjunction with security gates.”

“
...deliveries should be picked up from the main entrance or lobby rather than allowing a delivery person to go directly to a resident’s apartment.”

Limit Access

According to the [U.S. Department of Justice](#), living in a gated or nonaccess residence or apartment lowers burglary crime by almost 5 percent, so further limiting access is critical to resident safety. Chief Security Officer Jon Harris at [Fortified Estate](#) in Canton, Massachusetts shares his belief that residents should have a specific access card with photo identification, and guests should call in to the resident via intercom or be on an approved ‘current guest’ list held at the front office to be let in.” It’s much easier to track the few guests that enter if every guest “is connected to a resident or staff,” Harris adds.

Browning suggests, “Buildings need to set [security] policies and make sure they have their residents on the same page. For example, food deliveries should be picked up from the main entrance or lobby rather than allowing a delivery person to go directly to a resident’s apartment.” This policy further ensures that unattended nonresidents do not have easy access to the building and shows landlord responsibility for tenant safety.

If your budget allows, the addition of a doorman or security guard in the lobby forms an extra level of security that can stop any forced entry or other resident or guest security issues. Additionally, Browning notes, a human “can monitor the buildings closed circuit TV (CCTV) systems in real time to investigate suspicious activity and serves as a true deterrent.”

Walk The Property Often

There is no perfect answer in the security of your property. Good protocol is to for managers to walk the property often – daily for larger complexes. Saywitz confirms that this practice “ensures that the property stays in a good, clean and safe condition.” Develop a checklist of specific items to look for to make sure nothing is missed. Have both property managers and maintenance managers do site walkarounds. It’s a good way to make sure the property stays in good condition while developing rapport with tenants.

“
[Leaving doors unlocked and the practice of 'piggybacking'] jeopardizes the safety of the entire complex.”

Educate Tenants

Residents are often lulled into a false sense of security while inside the building. Leaving apartment doors unlocked or open when in the laundry room, or leaving a gate open for a friend arriving a few minutes behind (known as ‘piggybacking’), are common security mistakes. This creates an easy opportunity for theft or vandalism and, says Saywitz, “jeopardizes the safety of the entire complex.” Educate tenants with tips to making rental property safe delivered through newsletters, postings, and activities.

Improving Security At Rental Property Attracts Residents

Security affects all apartment building tenants no matter where they live. “There is no question that one security breach can alter a resident’s perceptions of the property or their desire to renew their lease at its expiration,” explains Saywitz.

Extra security pays off in the long run with the potential of a higher property value, increased rents, and less turnover. In today’s uncertain times, let your property be known for its top-notch security and use it as a selling point to gain new – and retain current – tenants.

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