

BEST PRACTICES AND CAREER STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION MANAGERS

COMMUNITYMANAGER

NOVEMBER | DECEMBER 2019



Safe and Secure

Best practices you can follow to prevent crime in your community.

BY LAURA OTTO

Community associations provide a sense of safety and security to their residents, but that doesn't mean they can't fall victim to crime.

When sizing up security, it's important for community managers to consider what services are offered to the community and its expectations; the response time of local law enforcement; and the level of criminal activity in the surrounding area and inside the community. An effective manager should help find the best possible methods to deter crime, which begins with education and prevention.

"We constantly tell residents, especially around the holidays, to lock your

doors, lock your windows, and don't leave items of value in plain sight," says T. Peter Kristian, CMCA, LSM, PCAM, general manager of Hilton Head Plantation Property Owners Association in Hilton Head, S.C., and a CAI past president.

PREPAREDNESS PLANS

There is no one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to community safety, but there are best practices community managers can implement to handle the occasional burglary, vandalized cars, or crimes of opportunity.

David Norton, CMCA, AMS, community manager at Spectrum Management Associates, in Sedona, Ariz., recommends

4 Take Note
CAI news and upcoming events.

8 CEO-MC Recap
Senior executives gather to share ideas and best practices.

11 Common Area
Keeping habitats healthy is a long-term investment for community associations.

16 Business Trends
Creating a top-notch resident experience.



that managers encourage residents to be active in their neighborhood watch. This is done in conjunction with local law enforcement.

“Whenever crime prevention tips are distributed by local law enforcement, they should be shared with the community,” advises Norton, a retired police sergeant. Eliminating hiding places around

of the community, locking down the clubhouse, and speaking to first responders. A portfolio manager may have similar responsibilities. “No matter what role the manager is going to play, a successful response is going to depend in large part on the participation of community members in developing and understanding the emergency plan,” she says.

according to the FBI, resulting in 2,217 casualties. Unfortunately, incidents like this can occur anywhere at any time. As a result, Hilton Head Plantation’s active shooter policy took a 180-degree turn last year. The community’s policy transitioned from calling law enforcement, observing, and containing the situation to instructing the first officer on the scene to take down the shooter. “We have learned from recent events that the person is going to continue to shoot until he or she is stopped or runs out of ammunition,” notes Kristian.

Waite recommends creating a “threat reaction plan” that is customizable to each association. Community participation is essential for the plan to be effective. The plan should include lockdown procedures, a notification process for the community, evacuation routes, rally points, and assigned individuals who will communicate with first responders. Additionally, Waite encourages communities to partner with local law enforcement, as these agencies will perform inspections of the property and let managers know of any areas where security can be improved.

Managers should encourage residents to report suspicious activity, such as cars that look unfamiliar or groups of people who seem out of place. Nine times out of 10 it’s nothing, says Kristian, but “once in a while you find someone who is up to mischievous activity, and we can put a stop to it before it escalates.”

Laura Otto is editor of Community Manager.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to community safety, but there are best practices community managers can implement.

windows and doors and installing appropriate lighting also can help communities deter crime, he adds.

Hilton Head Plantation has a lock box program for added safety. The association installs a lock box on the exterior of the home where the resident puts in a copy of their key, and the association’s security department has sole access to it. “If there is a medical emergency and the resident is unable to get to the door, our department doesn’t have to break down the door to get in,” he says. The program has been extremely popular: To date, 75% of residents have had lock boxes installed.

Additionally, community managers can conduct out-of-town checks, where residents fill out a card that includes when they are leaving and returning. Managers visit the home to make sure the doors and windows are locked and check in on the property periodically while the resident is away, says Kristian.

TAKE ACTION

When a community’s security is breached, the manager’s role depends on the association, whether it is an on-site or portfolio property, and if the manager is in the community when the crime occurs, explains Lauren Waite, AMS, a senior community association manager at Leland Management in Orlando, Fla.

An on-site manager may be responsible for contacting 911, initiating the communication process for the rest

Managers must maintain up-to-date resident contact information to notify residents when an incident occurs. Kristian’s team sends out a safety alert via text message to the entire community if there is a break-in. “We tell people immediately, and remind them to lock their doors and cars,” he says. It sounds elementary, but “these are things folks forget to do when they have a sense of living in a safe area.” Typically, associations experience crimes of opportunity, where individuals look for an unlocked door to carry out a crime, he adds.

ACT NOW

More than 250 active shooter events occurred in the U.S. from 2000–2017,

