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Cultural Properties Council

November 2011

Message from the President



In reviewing 2011 I am pleased to say that we achieved most of the goals that we set early in the year and were a very active council. Despite some turnover in members we still managed to stay on track and move the council forward. We even added several new members.

A big accomplishment was the acceptance by ASIS of the guideline that was written by council members on Exhibit Case Design. I want to thank Doug Hall for leading this effort, and encourage all of our members to participate in this process in the future.

We had more than 75% attendance at the Annual ASIS Conference and several presentations that were submitted by our members were accepted. These sessions represented both the Museum side and the Faith Based Organizations side of our Council. We also set up and staffed a booth at the Annual Conference.

This is the second newsletter of the year and although I was hoping for more submissions by council members I thank those who have submitted articles. Next year we will attempt to increase the content and frequency of this newsletter. Our members have also currently submitted two white papers to ASIS and are awaiting approval.

We as a council have also decided to foster a better working relationship with the Museum Association Security Council, of the American Association of Museums. Our Council member Steve Keller is also now serving as Chair of that committee and it is agreed that we all exist for similar purposes and must continue to cooperate in our efforts. Thanks again to all the members of the Cultural Properties Council for your continued efforts.

An Ounce of Prevention – Worth More than a Pound

By Stevan P. Layne, CPP, CIPM, CIPI

In a popular tourist town recently, the manager of an historic house museum was somewhat shocked to find that sometime prior to her arrival, someone had entered the building and removed several valuable items from the collection. The alarm system, temperamental at best, was not activated at closing the previous day. The lone video camera was focused on an exhibit case and was not capable of observing anything else. The historic locks on perimeter doors were not complemented by more sophisticated devices, and key control was not the best. Missing from the collection, irreplaceable items from the historic past of the expansion westward by settlers and explorers.

That story sounds somewhat familiar when reading of losses from valuable collections in Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, and throughout the U.S. Valuable collections need to be protected in a manner similar to the protection of a bank vault. Regardless of the historic environment, proper protection measures are available, at reasonable costs, for any structure. Unfortunately, the gaps in protection that most often lead to losses are people-caused, or “people-ignored”, as in alarms not functioning, doors not secured, cameras not providing maximum coverage. Where sensible policies or procedures are found lacking, or shortcuts taken in the process, the results may be catastrophic. Security is not convenient. There is no other way to state the obvious. It is too late to lock the barn after the horse is galloping across the meadow.

I have always tried to look at each facility being evaluated in a practical, common sense approach to how it should be protected. The elements that must be taken into consideration are the structure itself, the area crime rate, exterior barriers, night lighting, locking devices, building penetrations, accessible window glass, electronic systems and staffing.

You need to approach the protection of your facility as you would consider the protection of your home. You would not (or should not) leave on vacation without checking all of the doors and windows, setting timers for lights, asking neighbors to check, stopping newspaper deliveries...making arrangements to assure that your property is secure.

The same basic principles apply to protecting museums, historic houses and facilities, which are actually more of a desirable target because of what they contain. When you close for the day, since more than one person may be responsible for locking up, you need a detailed checklist to follow which makes the process more consistent and less prone to error. Someone needs to walk the entire perimeter to check for doors and windows being secure, ladders or other tools left unsecured (or available to assist burglars), fences or gates left open or needing repair, and lights needing replacement.

You need to provide a checklist, that should be followed by anyone responsible for closing, initialed by anyone performing the check and turned in daily.

While all of the above described threats are real and do occur in historic properties, the greatest threat is fire. Fires occur regularly in buildings under construction, buildings not protected by proper detection systems, and often in buildings whose occupants ignore reasonable practices in fire prevention. A part of every employee's responsibility is the practice of practical measures in fire prevention. This means reducing the amount of clutter and litter in office or storage areas. It also means being observant for hazards such as overloaded sockets, flickering fluorescent lights, flammables stored near fuel sources, or any other condition that may lead to or enhance fires. Small appliances and electrical malfunctions are the primary source of fires in public facilities. Coffee pots and space heaters need to be unplugged at the close of business, regardless of the use of timers.

It's not difficult to address these threats, nor to mitigate them. It takes common sense, an aware staff, and a plan. There is a boatload of information available on the Internet. The American Red Cross, FEMA, the Department of Homeland Security, NFPA, and several other agencies publish, at no cost, guidelines and recommendations for protecting people (your greatest asset), as well as valuable collections and historic structures.

Incident Command – It's Time to Jump Aboard

Michael Kirchner, CPP, Editor

Whether you work in the US or not, you have probably heard the term "incident command" over the past several years. The concept is simple and the positive results are real. Regardless of the incident or event there are certain major management activities or actions that must be performed. Even if the event is very small, and only one or two people are involved, these activities will still always apply to some degree.

With that concept in mind, the organization of the Incident Command System is built around five major management activities. They are, Command, Operations, Planning, Logistics and Finance/Administration. These five major management activities are the foundation upon which the ICS organization is built. The system has considerable internal flexibility. It can grow or shrink to meet differing needs. This makes it a very cost-effective and efficient management system that can be used applied to a wide variety of situations. A major premise in the ICS organization is the use of plain language and the avoidance of codes. When dealing with multiple agencies, organizations or groups this helps to mitigate the confusion that surrounds major emergency events. Another tenet is called the span of control. This means how many elements or persons may be managed by any one person. Effective span of control may vary from three to seven, with the ideal being five. Going along with this idea of span of control is the rule that everyone reports to only one person. That is a must for effective emergency management.

Following the horrific events of September 11, 2001, and a close look at the response to the events of that day, U.S. President George Bush signed Presidential Directive #5, on February 28, 2003. This directive ordered the creation of a National Incident Management System (NIMS). This system was developed and is based on the principles of ICS. Since then every public U.S. emergency response agency has been trained and currently uses this system. These are the people who will respond to your facility in the event of an

emergency. It is time we all learned about this system and incorporated it into our Emergency Operations Plans. We need to be on the same page as our first responders. It is time for the private sector to embrace ICS and change the way we deal with emergencies. I encourage you to seek further information in the United States at www.fema.gov/nims or in Canada at www.icscanada.ca



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