

## **Survey Reveals Tenants Want More Security – ‘Common Sense’ Solutions Can Help**

by C.D. Publications

Nearly half the respondents in a survey of 486 property managers say tenants want more security at their buildings, and believe the financial responsibility should be the manager’s burden, a recent study from the Institute of Real Estate Management says. However, an IREM senior VP and a member of a Florida-based real estate company says solutions don’t always have to cut deep into an owner/manager’s bottom line.

The study finds that owners/managers believe most residents do expect to have to foot some part of the bill for increased security, though most don’t want to, and the vast majority of tenants (85%) do not complain about being inconvenienced by new security measures.

The top five security problems reported among those polled are car crime (theft, break-ins), vandalism, controlling building access, general theft and robbery and burglary/trespassing incidents. Among the initiatives most implemented for security are documenting all incidents, identifying recent criminal activity in a property’s neighborhood and conducting background checks on all employees.

The survey finds the top resident-requested security improvements at rental properties are improvement of security officer services, use of closed-circuit TV cameras, access control, increased police presence and improved security in parking/mail pick-up areas. While completing all of these tasks can seem quite labor-intensive on the surface, Louis Nimkoff says common-sense measures also go a long way toward improving safety and security standards residents want. And common-sense doesn’t hurt the bottom line. Nimkoff, of Orlando’s Brio Properties, tells LLMR that even obvious common-sense measures are the kinds of things “you can’t talk about enough because people forget about it.”

One of the most frequently overlooked security aspects, says Nimkoff, is parking lot and entryway lighting. Nimkoff says staff can take care of those problems quickly and easily while building a “team mentality” and winning favor with residents.

“Make a staff event...Stay at a property late....Have dinner together and walk the property,” Nimkoff tells us. And don’t just look for where light bulbs need to be changed, he adds.

Scout for common security issues such as overgrown shrubbery near entry areas or the existence of cluttered and unprotected stairwell areas.

Nimkoff says that reminding tenants to be vigilant - i.e., calling police about suspicious people on the property, not leaving valuables in visible places inside a car, and especially keeping blinds closed at night so as not to advertise what’s inside a unit—can be just as important. “If people aren’t willing to pay more for security, we all need to get back to common sense solutions,” he says. For more information, contact Louis Nimkoff at [lou@brioproperties.com](mailto:lou@brioproperties.com).

Laundry Room Security Overlooked

The most used common area of a multifamily property is often the laundry room. Yet aspects of its security, from location to lighting, appear often to be taken for granted, which isn't appreciated by residents whose only chance to use the facilities is during the evening.

Bill Brill, a security consultant who works with multiple Washington, DC-based law firms, says all too often a laundry room, usually in a basement or other isolated area, is not well lighted and contains machines that accept money.

All of these factors can entice criminals looking for a quick score. Needless to say, such dangers do not sit well with residents.

Louis Nimkoff, of Brio Properties and the Institute of Real Estate Management, agrees telling us that people are often most vulnerable in a building while going to wash their dirty clothes.

"They're preoccupied, and they've got a big laundry basket in their hand—they can't as easily defend themselves," Nimkoff tells LLMR. He says residents who believe such problems aren't being addressed are often prone to look for another place to live.

Both advocate relocating laundry rooms to an active portion of a building, having easy phone access inside for emergency situations and converting washing machines/dryers to a cash-free, debit-based system so there isn't the lure of money for thugs.

Brill indicates that taking care of security before a major incident could save aggravation and the money that could be lost in a legal proceeding.

He says one unfortunate case of neglect that comes to mind involves an incident in Washington where damage caused by a vandalism incident in an easily-accessible laundry room eventually led to a fatal explosion.

"If you don't do it, you could be very sorry," Brill tells LLMR. "This case could be in the millions."

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