



## ***The Importance of Sound Security Policies and Procedures***

by Eric K. Rodriguez

The importance of sound security policies and procedures (P&Ps) may seem quite obvious to the security professional; however to the lay person not involved in security this may not be as easily understood. To define security policies, simply put they are written documents that state how a security department plans on protecting the lives and property in your business. This means not only the tangible but the intangible assets as well. It is not only a set of rules for behaviors and guidelines for situations, but it sets out objectives for your department. It is a constantly changing document that is never finished or 'set in stone'. Some of the key points of sound security policies are to protect a property from liability, to create structure for the organization, to make the job easier on all staff by giving a clear job description, to help prevent unforeseeable incidents and lastly to provide a clear plan of action for emergencies and disasters, both man-made and natural.

Arguably, the most important reason for having clear and precise security policies is for liability reasons. Having a security department policy that spells out how to complete a procedure in a specific manner, one that is safe and legally viable will help protect the property from litigation and legal retaliation. By documenting events and incidents and following your department policies you help protect not only your property but yourself from liability. Having to go to court regarding litigation against your property without a clear set of department policies can cause you and your company to lose a case, possibly costing millions of dollars. Our culture is made up of many laws and rules that are put into place to protect us from a variety of issues. Not having a clear cut set of policies in your department, let alone the company is asking for trouble.

Of all the departments within a property or business, security must be the most structured and sometimes the most rigid. The security department is tasked with the safety and security of the entire property. They are responsible for every guest and employee. Most security policies and procedures are put in place to protect the people you work with and the guests you serve. Many professionals in the security world know the saying "life before property." That is not to say they don't care about property, it just means that the lives of fellow team members and those of guests come before anything else. Having sound policies that are well known, documented, and followed, help ensure that we succeed in enforcing our credo. Discipline can be very difficult to understand by other departments, especially if they don't have a lot of contact with security. The thing to remember, with any department or individual, is

to make sure they understand the security department is enforcing set policies and procedures for their safety and not for any other reason.

Security policies and procedures are not just to make our lives difficult as some may think, but can also make our jobs easier. In all departments, within any business, there must be some policies and procedures. Without any, chaos would be sure to ensue. Most will agree, however, that security's P&P's are more strict, rigid and, most importantly, essential to the operations of any property, whether casino related or not. By having all P&Ps documented and available to your staff, you are saving yourself a lot of headache's down the road. Remember, the key to success is built on the people you work with and doesn't fall directly on your shoulders. A successful executive once told me that most company presidents or chief executive officers (CEO's) displayed an inverted pyramid when describing their company; the CEO at the bottom and the other employees filling out the rest of the pyramid. The reasoning was that the CEOs felt that they held up the company and that without him/her the pyramid/business would collapse and fail. In fact, after much discussion, the executive told me that it is just the opposite. He felt that the pyramid was correct in normal shape because he was at that top, but it was all the others underneath that held him up. They were his support and foundation; working on the line with the guests every day and that without them he would fall and fail. The point of this story is to remind you that by involving more of your staff, keeping an open dialogue and ensuring that your P&P's are updated and available you will create a higher caliber of security officer and provide a higher level of customer experience. As with most businesses our job, ultimately, is for the business to be successful and security plays a primary role in that.

No matter how much training, studying or time spent working on policies and procedures; it can never fully prepare you for every contingency or incident that may occur. In fact, it's understood that your P&P's can change at any time to reflect company policy changes, new management decisions or even current incidents that may show you areas of needed improvement. It is our job to ensure that all of our staff, as well as other departments, are aware of security policy changes so that we can work together to provide the greatest experience for our guests. Remember that the main purpose of security P&P's is to prevent unforeseen incidents or events that can jeopardize the safety of your employees and guests. You can never prepare too much, especially for events that you think may never happen where you work. While working as a security officer

at one of the major resort/casinos in Las Vegas, I remember going over our P&P's and seeing there were procedures and contingencies for everything from earthquakes to tsunamis and from fires to tornados. This struck me as quite humorous because when would you have a tsunami or tornado in the Nevada desert? As the years progressed and I witnessed sand storms sweeping the Vegas Strip so thick that you couldn't see two feet in front of you and thunderstorms so bad that flash floods ripped vehicles off the road right in front of me, I began to realize it was my job to ensure that everyone on the property was safe no matter how ridiculous or crazy an incident/event sounded.

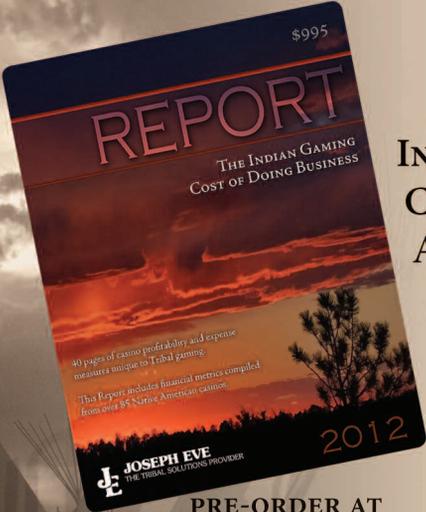
A simple breakdown of what your security policies and procedures should contain is as follows:

- 1) Department procedures.
- 2) Company procedures and how they interact with yours.
- 3) Emergencies, all types no matter where your business is located.

- 4) Disasters and contingencies for working with community emergency response groups.
- 5) Protocols specific to the protection of life and property.
- 6) Internal and external department relations and how they interact with your department.

All policies and procedures should not only be saved on a computer but should be printed and made available to your staff. Everyone should sign a company non-disclosure form when given a copy so that they understand the importance of not handing out this document to unauthorized people. Understanding that your P&P's are the first line of defense when it comes to protecting your fellow employees, guests and the property you work for will create a successful mindset and will help prepare you for any incident that you may encounter. ♣

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