

A KINGS III GUIDE:



SPECIALIZING
LIFE SAFETY
& SECURITY
FOR YOUR PROPERTY

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INTRODUCTION

There's no question about it- building safety will always be among the top of a commercial property manager's priorities. In fact, year over year, there is increased importance placed on property safety by both property managers and tenants alike. This can likely be attributed to several reasons. Not only does today's cultural environment and technology present new and increased threats to safety, but increased media coverage of such emergencies creates an ever-present salience of the presence of danger in the public's mind. Additionally, advancing technology leaves little to no excuse for a lack of safety and security.

If you do not have a comprehensive and effective program to address life safety at your building, you will fall behind the curve and leave yourself vulnerable to liabilities associated with tenant and building safety.

The purpose of this guide is to help make accounting for your property's safety seem like less of a daunting task by allowing you to tailor your safety programs based on specific factors unique to your building. There are many aspects of property safety, and we will touch on many of those, but the main focus will be on life safety- the systems, procedures and equipment set in place in order to prevent and respond to building dangers most closely associated with fire and crime.

WHAT SHOULD A LIFE SAFETY PROGRAM ENTAIL?

A comprehensive life safety program combines policy, employees and equipment to:

- 1 Help prevent emergencies and dangerous situations**
- 2 Recognize any security lapse as quickly as possible**
- 3 Minimize and restrain the safety issue at hand and any damages incurred**
- 4 Correct the issue/damage through swift, purposeful and appropriate action**

The following sections will provide actionable steps on how to accomplish the above in a way that makes sense for your property. **READ ON TO LEARN MORE.**



SECURITY SURVEY

PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS TO CONSIDER

The following are aspects of your property to pay attention to during a security survey that will allow you to make specialized safety decisions.

Building exterior and environment

Where is your building located in relation to major roads and busy highways?

Your building's accessibility to both tenants as well as strangers and potential intruders is affected by these factors.

What is the crime rate in the area?

As you can imagine, this obviously affects the level of security required and expected of the building.

Is there regular pedestrian traffic outside your building?

Is your building located on public sidewalks that allow many people to come within close proximity of the area? Are your walking areas more private but there is frequent movement of building tenants in this area throughout the day?



SECURITY SURVEY

PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS TO CONSIDER

Building exterior and environment cont.

Do you utilize exterior lighting?

Is the amount of lighting used sufficient in helping to deter crime? Are sensors used to detect movement or are lights based on a timing system?

Are potential security issues presented by any windows, fire escapes or the roof?

Are these areas easily accessible by those that shouldn't enter the building? Older buildings in particular tend to make use of street-level windows and external fire escapes. This creates more building access points, presenting vulnerabilities.

Are fences used to protect your building?

If not, would it make sense to utilize one? While this is out of the question for many high-rise buildings, it can serve as an effective means of protection for a smaller building in a more suburban area. If fences are used, are there any areas that are still unprotected by the fence or remain vulnerable for other reasons?



SECURITY SURVEY

PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS TO CONSIDER

Building exterior and environment cont.

How many entries and exits are accessible from the outside and where are they located?

How are each locked and how great is the potential for these locking systems to fail? How often are these doors considered “operable,” and when are their off-hours? Are alarms or closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras used to detect when doors are opened, and if so, how are these monitored? If not, could their use substantially improve knowledge of who is entering and exiting the building?

Is there a parking lot or parking garage?

How many access routes are there to this area? Are they safe? Is sufficient lighting provided? Do security officers patrol the area? If not, do tenants have some other means of help or the ability to summon help in the event of an emergency? Is it pay-to-park? If so, are additional security methods taken in order to protect cash receipts? **Do you have emergency help phones in your parking structure?** Who answers them? If a security guard, do they work 24 hours?



SECURITY SURVEY

PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS TO CONSIDER

Building interior and overall design

How dated is the building?

The age of the building should be considered for several safety factors. For instance, are there dated physical building aspects that either present safety issues themselves or may hinder installation of any new safety systems? Additionally, many newer buildings come with existing built-in electronic devices, while older buildings must be retrofitted in order to offer the same type of services.

Are there any factors that increase your risk of fire or potential damages incurred from a fire?

For instance, fires present an increased risk for high-rise buildings due to complexities with evacuation and the opportunity of spreadability. Furthermore, certain rooms, such as broadcasting rooms, generator rooms, telecom rooms, fuel oil storage rooms, etc., present unique risks in the event of a fire, to be discussed further later.

Are there designated areas that are known to be more susceptible to danger or crime?

Assess this using both your knowledge of past activity in your building as well as generalities known to be true. As an example, some of the most common areas for theft in public buildings include public washrooms and reception areas, while serious crimes tend to occur in more private rooms, such as offices.



SECURITY SURVEY

PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS TO CONSIDER

Property usage

The way in which your building is used as well as how traffic moves throughout the property should be considered when tailoring your life safety systems. The following are particular items to take note of:

- ✓ The number of tenants who regularly frequent the building
- ✓ **The type/nature of the building's tenants-** If you manage a commercial building, it is important to recognize unique risks presented by their business that you may need to safeguard against. Some examples:
 - ✓ *Companies that work with combustible materials or flammable machinery (i.e. restaurants) obviously create an increased risk of fire, so you will want to implement a more advanced fire system than what is considered the norm.*
 - ✓ *Tenants that handle valuable assets (banks, jewelry stores) will create more unique and detailed security needs.*
 - ✓ *More and more lately, civil unrest is present and should be handled as a property safety concern, especially when building tenants work in a field likely to cause such a disturbance. Ex: Trade missions*
- ✓ How regularly stairwells and elevators are frequented

These areas have their own unique safety needs. See our blog posts on each:



ELEVATORS



STAIRWELLS

SECURITY SURVEY

PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS TO CONSIDER

Property usage cont.

Particular property usage items to take note of cont.:

- ✓ Whether weekend traffic differs from weekday traffic
- ✓ Highest areas of traffic on the property
- ✓ Where and how mail is delivered to the building
- ✓ The building's operating hours and how it is closed/shut down/locked
- ✓ Who opens and closes the building
- ✓ The number of people who enter the building after operating-hours, why they are there and how they get in

The usage and traffic characteristics mentioned above will help you make decisions regarding life safety matters such as:

- ✓ Determining if there is a need for security guards. If so:
 - ✓ Where they should be located
 - ✓ Their hours- should there be 24/7 surveillance?
- ✓ Deciding which, if any, of the building entrances can remain unlocked during off-hours
- ✓ Assessing means of accessibility for tenants/guests and (if needed) logging methods in order to account for who all is in the building and when

Once you have completed your security survey and have taken note of the items highlighted in this section, you will be equipped to make important life safety decisions that make sense for your property. Read on for some of the important safety options to be considered.



METHODS OF SAFETY

We will now switch focus to the number of methods that you can utilize to keep your property safe. The importance of the security survey, mentioned in the previous section, is that it allows you to make life safety decisions that make sense for YOU and YOUR property. What exactly does this mean, though? How will you know if something “makes sense”? How can you know if you’re doing too little or too much? Here is a top-level look at three aspects that will help you make that call.

Tenant and community expectations

1 As a property manager, you have a responsibility to meet tenants’ expectations based on their perceptions of similar buildings and the community/neighborhood by which you are surrounded. Would your tenants expect you to have a high-security profile or a low-security profile? For instance, would highly visible security measures, such as security guards or obvious surveillance, create a sense of safety for tenants, or could it have an opposite, negative effect and make the building actually appear unsafe since there is an assumed need for such safety measures? An example of how the community you are within can affect this: If your neighborhood is known to have a high crime rate, your tenants may expect to see combative measures against this and would be reassured by visible cues of such security methods (i.e. a security guard at the building entrance). On the other hand, if you are situated in a more isolated neighborhood with few instances of known crime, a high-security profile building could alarm tenants and turn them off, making them think that your building is unsafe because of increased security measures.

Your budgetary capabilities

Obviously, your budget will play a role in how you structure the safety measures on your property. For some buildings, budgetary limitations can have more of an affect than others. For instance, newer buildings likely have a number of state-of-the-art technology already in place, while older buildings may have to work both technology and its accommodations (ex: retrofits) into the budget. Use your budget to help guide your prioritization of safety items and timing as opposed to making any cuts.

2

METHODS OF SAFETY

Your liability to provide adequate security

3

Finally- you, the property manager, are responsible for providing adequate security for your building. What the heck does this mean? Here's a general definition from the courts: Adequate security is the "security necessary to protect life and property under the circumstances existing in the building and the neighborhood of the property in question." ([Source](#)). This is why your security survey is so important- you absolutely need to be aware of any unique risks or weak areas in order to provide the necessary security. Property managers have battled lawsuits in the millions based on such safety criteria. Suddenly that budgetary cut doesn't seem so smart, does it?

SEE OUR BLOG POST:

["CRIME PREVENTION FOR YOUR BUILDING"](#)

Now that you know what to keep in mind for your property's own safety specialization, let's get to the heart of it- what should you include in an effective life safety and security profile for your building? Here, we will review some common and recommended safety efforts. Reminder: Many of these components are not required for property safety. Think of these components as a list of options and use your knowledge of your own property to curate a mix that works for you.

When you think about building life safety, it is truly a combination of procedures, personnel and technology working together. So, for the purpose of this guide, we have split "Methods of Safety" into two parts: "Protocol and Personnel" and "Technology."

READ ON FOR SPECIFICS.



METHODS OF SAFETY

Protocol and Personnel

Security guards

Security guards are a very hands-on approach to your building's life safety. They create an atmosphere of high security and add elements of authority, supervision and human judgment. Some examples of properties that are good candidates for security guards include:

- ✓ Residential properties in urban or high-crime areas
- ✓ Banks
- ✓ Jewelry stores
- ✓ Commercial buildings housing sensitive information

If utilizing security guards, you can contract through a security guard service or hire directly. If budget permits, contracting tends to present more benefits. Some of the benefits include less property management liability, the ability to easily supply replacement guards in the event of an emergency and HR issues (payroll, personnel disputes) taken off the property manager's plate.

The primary safety function provided by security guards is the property patrol. The frequency of these patrols should depend on your own building's needs and resources. It is recommended that guards perform these patrols at arbitrary times to avoid potential criminals learning and working around their schedules. During patrols, you will want your guards to seek out any suspicious behavior, people in the building without appropriate credentials, fire hazards, unlocked doors and anything else that may seem unusual.

A downside: When guards are on duty, property managers and tenants alike can develop an inflated sense of security. However, there are always building blindspots as well as the potential for human limitations and errors.

METHODS OF SAFETY

Protocol and Personnel cont.

Mobile security services

Smaller buildings who may not have the need or resources for a staff of security guards but would still like some sort of overnight safeguard can utilize mobile security services. With this service, the property manager can have a radio-equipped car drive through a property and check all entrances after hours. If something seems to be awry, they will contact the local police.

If you only have a small amount of after-hours building traffic, you can also utilize this service to allow tenants into the property after hours. The tenant can call the mobile security service number and have a patrol car come out to meet them. After showing identification, if the tenant is on an approved list provided by the property manager, they will be let in by the patrol staff and can repeat the process when they want to leave.

Security office

A typical facet across many different types of properties is one central designated physical area dedicated to life safety, security and emergency response. Depending on the size of your building, this could range from a manager's office or a front information desk for smaller buildings with less staff to an entire life safety control center, fully staffed and occupying a whole floor (typically the ground floor or basement).

This area should be treated as a security command post. In addition to carrying and connecting all life safety technology, such as alarm systems, any television monitors, fire control systems and public address systems, it should also serve as a headquarters for all safety personnel and should host building logs/registers, overnight phone answering systems, the building's lost-and-found, etc. Due to the nature in which this space will be utilized, it should be hosted in a protected area of the property. In large buildings and buildings with a large amount of safety equipment, it is recommended that it should be staffed 24 hours a day.



METHODS OF SAFETY

Protocol and Personnel cont.

Logs and registers

If people will be entering your building after-hours, it is important for you to know who is there and for how long. This is why many properties implement a check-in or log and register system. At its simplest, this system entails leaving a sign-in/sign-out sheet at the security office or near the entrance designated for after-hour entry. This requires people to sign in when entering the building and to sign back out upon leaving. Many forms will include additional details, such as where exactly on the property that the entrant will be located, who they are visiting, etc.

However, enforcement on log and registry systems tends to be weak, and they are often not utilized as they are supposed to be utilized, therefore losing effectiveness. Technology can aid with such enforcement and will be discussed later in this section.



METHODS OF SAFETY

Life Safety Technology

Public address systems

If you manage a property with numerous tenants, or if your tenants are widely spread throughout the building, you may want to consider a public address system. This can be used as a quick way to inform all tenants of pertinent safety information during a time of duress.

Alarm systems

Fire alarms are the most commonly required alarm system. Two other popular types of alarms include burglar alarms and intrusion alarms. Burglar alarms are most typically located at building entries and exits and are programmed to go off when something that belongs to the property passes them (i.e. clothes that still have their tags on at a retail store, a computer from an office building). While smaller, less frequented buildings may simply want an alarm bell to make a noise and scare potential intruders, larger and higher-security buildings will likely want their burglar alarms to ring into their security offices. Finally, intrusion alarms, based on movement detection, should be used for very high-security zones within the property. Fire alarms can be pulled manually but they, along with the other two alarms mentioned, are typically set off through detection systems, to be discussed next.

There are two important things to keep in mind when it comes to alarms for your property. First, use extra discretion deciding what types you do and don't need. You don't want to create an opportunity for frequent false alarms and unnecessary disruption. This can create a confusing and unsafe environment. Secondly, if you plan to spend the money on an alarm, be sure that there are multiple staff members dedicated to responding to that alarm as well as someone either on staff or outsourced that is able to service the alarm. Without these things, an alarm will not be effective.



METHODS OF SAFETY

Life Safety Technology

Detection and communication systems

As you know, smoke/fire detectors are designed to sense a fire and notify others of its existence before detrimental damage occurs. Detection can vary based on the sophistication of the detector, but fire detectors usually look for an increase in temperature or the presence of smoke or gas. Refer to your local fire codes for guidance on how many smoke detectors that you need and where they should be installed or located.

Many mid- to large sized buildings utilize advanced communication systems that go beyond simply detecting that something is amiss in the building. For instance, these detection systems can unlock stairway doors, pressurize stairwells and even trigger an emergency message to notify tenants of the occurrence.

These communications can run together seamlessly through a master control system operated in the security office.

Entry card systems and biometric access control systems

These two technologies provide a more advanced and less error-prone approach than a manual check-in system. Through the entry card system, tenants and building services may enter the property or a particular room on the property via inserting a card into a card reader and entering a unique identification number on the digital board provided. A control computer can then log and approve or deny the entry. A log and registry system will still be needed for visitors, however.

Biometric access control systems essentially work the same way- just with a higher level of security, as only those with fingerprints previously programmed into the system may gain access to the building. At Kings III, we use a biometric access control system.



METHODS OF SAFETY

Life Safety Technology



Fire suppression systems

Of course, what probably comes to mind when you hear the words “fire suppression” are the standard wet sprinkler systems that you and everyone you know already have installed and are required to have. However, more and more properties are opting for suppression solutions that are more tailored to their tenants’ needs, such as foam, mist or clean agent suppression systems.

Within the “Security Section” portion of this guide we mentioned that buildings with broadcasting spaces, telecom rooms, generator rooms and fuel oil storage rooms are likely to see benefits from such suppression systems. Because a traditional sprinkler suppression system will likely cause damage to the very items the suppression system is meant to protect, they do not always make sense. Clean agent suppression systems use gaseous agents rather than water to distinguish a fire, leaving minimal residue and damage behind. [Learn more here.](#)

Closed-circuit television systems (CCTVs)

CCTV is becoming a staple for large buildings and smaller buildings with specific security needs as their usefulness becomes more and more apparent. These cameras can be placed throughout the building in place of or in supplement to security guards (therefore providing labor savings) in any vulnerable area in the building (think entryways, common areas, etc.). More advanced CCTVs will come installed with a microphone so that closeby audio can be detected as well.

Of course, security guards or other designated personnel will still be needed to monitor these cameras in the security office, which is where you can run into some shortcomings. If a guard is assigned to too many televisions or monitoring for long periods of time, they are likely to overlook important details. To combat this, install audioactivity alarms on cameras that ring into the security office when there is activity in the monitored area. No safeguards can completely rule out or prevent human error, but audioactivity alarms and CCTV can help.

METHODS OF SAFETY

Life Safety Technology



Emergency phones

Emergency phones are required everywhere by law in elevators as well as by many states in pool areas ([Learn where here](#)). However, with more life safety options, such as fire detection, security guards and CCTVs, at their fingertips, property managers give little thought to these emergency phones, and many don't even consider placing them in additional vulnerable areas. The fact of the matter is that emergency phones, when monitored effectively by trained operators, provide a safeguard that many of these other safety measures cannot. We have mentioned the human error factor that comes with security guards and security monitoring. What's more?! According to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), smoke alarms only effectively alert occupants of non-residential buildings [about 70 percent of the time](#). Emergency phones are there so that tenants can get the help that they need themselves, even if all other systems have failed them.

We know what you're thinking here-- cell phones. Many property managers pay little attention to emergency phones because they figure everyone has a cell phone, and they're probably correct. After all, it is a rarity for someone not to be nearly physically attached to their cell phone in today's landscape, so it may come as a surprise to you how often we receive calls from people without a cell phone on hand or without service. Often, in the event of an emergency, a person's first reaction is to run away or remove themselves from the situation, throwing normal logic that would tell them to grab a cell phone out the window. Sometimes, our callers' cell phones have been dead. In many instances, it was simply quicker and easier for the caller to find the marked help phone and press a help button than to search around in a purse or pocket for a cell phone. *(More information on what to look for in an emergency phone service next page).*

NOT BUYING IT? Kings III has a whole [video series](#) dedicated to audio from actual calls that our Emergency Dispatch Operators have taken. We bet you'll be surprised at how many callers mention a lack of access to their cell phones.

METHODS OF SAFETY

Life Safety Technology



Emergency phones cont.

Something to consider: Simply having a help phone on-site is not enough. Who answers those calls for help and how they are handled is paramount. Emergency phones may dial out to non-specialized call centers (such as after hours answering services), directly to 911 operators or property staff/security members- sometimes even the property manager themselves. Even with security personnel, it is unlikely that whoever receives the emergency call is properly trained to know the best course of action for each type of emergency that arises. This creates an extra step and delays emergency response.

This is why selecting the right emergency phone monitoring service is essential to your property's overall life safety and security profile. Both security guards and 911 operators don't always receive the highest level of emergency training and often do not or cannot provide pre-arrival medical instructions. 911 centers are simply overloaded with calls and do not want the liability. Unfortunately, you would be surprised at the amount of calls mishandled at these centers. [Just see this horrible example of a 911 operator arrested for hanging up on emergency calls.](#) Something else to think about: properties with emergency phones connected to 911 can receive charges for too many false alarm calls. That's an extra cost that you don't need!

A dedicated emergency response center can eliminate these issues. Call handling is consistent. Dispatchers ask the right questions to dispatch out help, do so, then remain on the line as needed until help arrives. In the meantime, ***they can provide medical and other pre-arrival emergency procedural instructions per their certifications that can help the situation while waiting for help.***

BE AWARE: [Read about additional pitfalls of relying on cell phones and 911 centers for emergency situations.](#) We know, it can be scary!

METHODS OF SAFETY

Life Safety Technology

Emergency phones cont.

Because of the previously mentioned information, it is important that you don't underestimate the importance of your emergency phones or overlook when, where and how they should be handled. Your safest option is relying on a dedicated emergency monitoring company that will not only handle the emergency call, keeping tenants safe, but that also holds a responsibility to you and will notify you of emergency calls received. For utmost liability protection, your emergency monitoring company should keep a record of all calls placed from your property help phone for retrieval of audio recordings upon request for legal purposes. That kind of access is invaluable. [Learn more about the benefits of emergency call recording.](#)

APPROPRIATE PLACES TO CONSIDER HAVING AN EMERGENCY PHONE:



ELEVATORS



**POOLS AND
PROPERTY EXTERIOR**



**STAIRWELLS, GARAGES
& AREAS OF REFUGE**



**PARKING LOTS
& CAMPUSES**

Through the consideration of these commonly used and effective life safety methods along with careful attention to your own property's characteristics and needs, you will be equipped to develop a life safety and security system that most makes sense for your building and the tenants within it.



EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

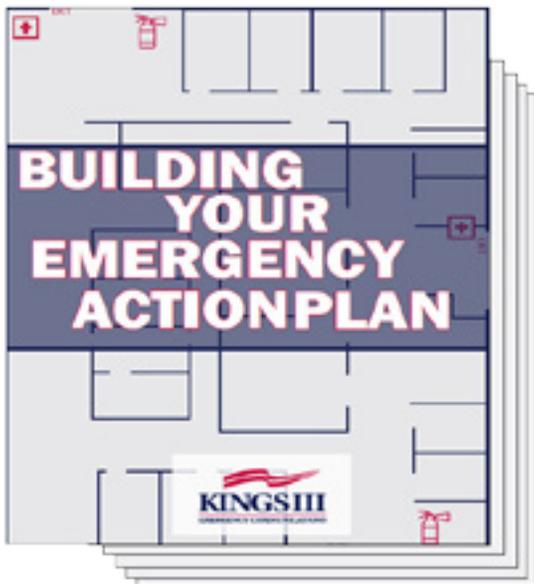
The last component of an effective and fully tailored life safety and security building system is the customized procedures and protocols set in place in the event that an emergency does occur, better known as **THE EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN**.

Building managers are more often than not required by law to develop an **Emergency Action Plan (EAP)**. At minimum, your building's EAP should include:

- ✓ **A procedure of priority for reporting fires and other building emergencies**
- ✓ **Methods and standards for building evacuation**
- ✓ **Floorplans including routes and evacuation assembly areas**

However, in today's reality, emergencies are varied and often complicated, so we recommend being as specific as possible in your EAP to render it truly effective. Some other items that we recommend you map out include:

- ✓ **A list of contacts for reference in an emergency**
- ✓ **Designated person(s) responsible for key tasks in emergency situations**
- ✓ **Warning, notification and communication systems utilized**
- ✓ **Guidelines and procedures for specific scenarios**



For more information on how to create a thorough and effective Emergency Action Plan along with implementation techniques, training guides and example procedures by emergency, see our guide:

BUILDING YOUR EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN



CONCLUSION

Having a relevant, effective and meaningful life safety and security system in place for your building takes time and consideration, but it will be well worth the effort spent. We believe that by reading this guide, you have taken the first necessary steps to get there yourself.

About Kings III

Kings III Emergency Communications has been providing complete, compliant and affordable emergency phone solutions for elevators, poolside, stairwells, parking areas and more for nearly three decades, monitoring more than 50,000 help phones across the U.S. Our all-inclusive turnkey solution includes equipment, installation, maintenance and 24/7 monitoring at our very own Emergency Dispatch Center for one low price.

Two of our key differentiators include our smart line seizure technology which eliminates costly dedicated emergency phone lines and our digital recording and storing of all calls. These coupled with advanced operator training and many other value-added benefits allow us to reduce risk, liability and costs for our customers. We are designed, assembled and supported in the USA. See the Kings III difference [here](#).

WANT US TO TAKE EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS OFF YOUR PLATE?

Fill out [this form](#) and your local Kings III Business Development Manager will contact you shortly.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ✓ [ELEVATOR COMMUNICATION CODE COMPLIANCE](#)
- ✓ [ELEVATOR MODERNIZATION](#)
- ✓ [POOL MAINTENANCE AND SAFETY](#)
- ✓ [ENERGY EFFICIENCY FOR COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS](#)
- ✓ [THE ABC'S OF PROPERTY MANAGEMENT PT. 1](#)
- ✓ [THE ABC'S OF PROPERTY MANAGEMENT PT. 2](#)
- ✓ [BUILDING YOUR EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN](#)
- ✓ [A PROPERTY MANAGER'S GUIDE TO ADA](#)
- ✓ [TOP 5 WAYS FOR PROPERTY MANAGERS TO CUT COSTS](#)
- ✓ [THE FIVE KEY ELEMENTS OF PROPERTY SAFETY](#)

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