

5

KEY
ELEMENTS
OF

property
safety

for commercial and multifamily property managers



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INTRODUCTION



We all want to do well at our job. Lucky for us at Kings III, helping you property managers do your job better also helps us do our job better. Why is this? In our case, it's because we share a same goal. We're sure that we're telling you something that you already know, but when we speak with the property managers that we do business with, **BUILDING AND OCCUPANT SAFETY CONSISTENTLY RANK AS TOP PRIORITY.**

We also recognize this importance. In fact, it's the reason we are in business. However, we recognize that the services that we provide make up only part of the essentials needed to help ensure the safety of your property. As someone responsible for the wellbeing of others on location, you must view a variety of safety aspects to cover your bases.

Kings III deems the five essential items of property safety to include crime prevention, fire prevention, maintenance, emergency preparedness and emergency monitoring/response. This guide will walk you through each element's need-to-know's. **READ ON AND SEE. ▶**

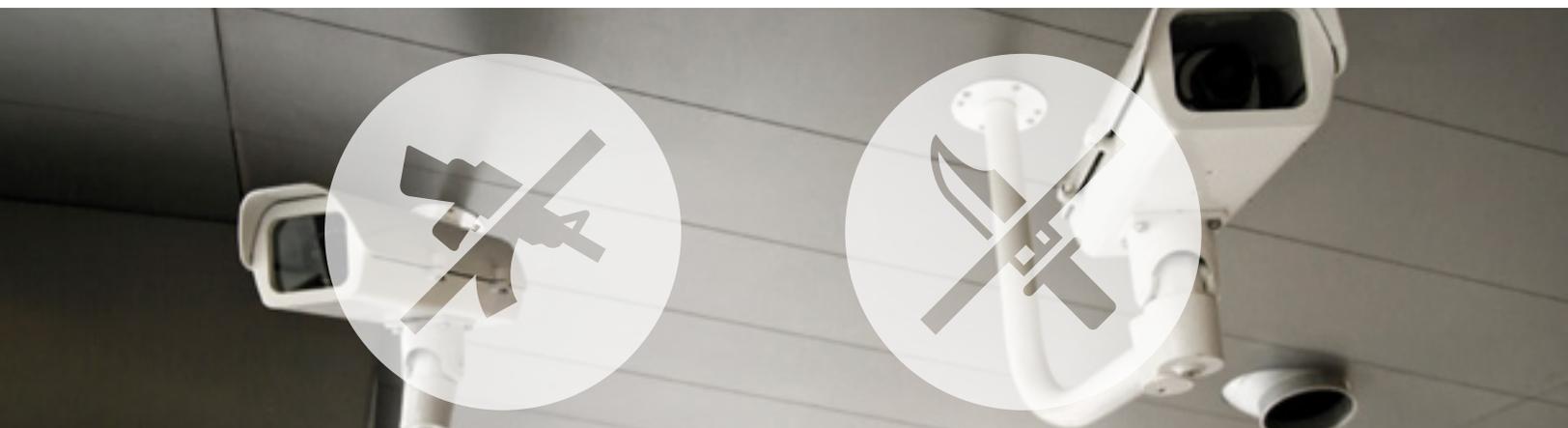


1

CRIME PREVENTION

While factors like where you're located or how isolated your property is can play a role, an unfortunate reality that we have to face is that crime can and does happen anywhere. It's not something that anyone wants to encounter. *Whatever happened to the Golden Rule, right people?!* However, because crime is more common than we'd like to believe, it is something you simply must anticipate if you manage any type of building. As we've mentioned and will continue to reiterate throughout this guide, the well-being of those on site is your responsibility, and may be liable for safety shortcomings that result in injury.

Of course, you cannot completely eliminate the risk of a crime occurring on your property, but there are measures that you can take to decrease your liability and minimize the opportunity for crime. **CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:**





1

CRIME PREVENTION

continued

property planning stages

If you're in the early stages of planning a new property and have some leverage when it comes to property design, location and functionality, you should be mindful of the following in relation to crime prevention.

CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN (CPTED)

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is an ideal approach, if applicable, that utilizes physical features and the surrounding environment to protect properties against crime. Some examples of CPTED applications include implementing building access control by utilizing physical features; allowing for expanded access view of potential criminal actions within the property by way of leaving blinds open, windows facing public sidewalks and/or roads; and more.

CPTED techniques allow buildings to implement design for protection purposes while avoiding a "prison camp" type approach. As mentioned, this approach works best when implemented during the planning stages of property development due to cost effectiveness. When approached this way, hardware applications are incorporated during the property's construction, as opposed to adding them at a later date and incurring additional costs.

PROPERTY ZONING

Another concept popularly adopted during the property planning phase is the defensible space concept. The defensible space concept involves dividing the property that you are responsible for into smaller, clearly defined zones. The zones then become points of focus in implementing the CPTED concept. The various zones are defined as being private, public and semi-private, implemented so that everyone is aware who should be in a zone at any given time.



1

CRIME PREVENTION

continued

property planning stages

PROPERTY ZONING

ZONE TYPES:

1

public zones

Public zones, considered the least secure zones, are ideally accessible to everyone. Such areas often lack controlled access and are therefore accessible to office visitors and members of the public. They offer very little opportunity for close surveillance.

private zones

Private zones are restricted and allow controlled access that is limited to select individuals. A good example of this within the multifamily industry is a private residence. A barrier is usually erected to divide the various zones.

2

3

semi-private zones

Semi-private zones generally serve the purpose of a buffer between private and public zones. These are typically common areas such as a laundry area, interior courtyard, etc. While they can be accessed by members of the public, they are separate from the public areas and may have increased security. They also enhance building protection.

1

CRIME PREVENTION

continued

management stages

Of course, many of you are looking for ways to proactively prevent crime in a building you already manage. Don't worry, there's still plenty for you here! To follow are suggested safety measures that and ways to incorporate your occupants into the safety process.

IDENTIFY YOUR STAFF

All building staff should be easily identified. This means use of uniforms, photo ID badges and/or access cards. This is especially important for maintenance workers. Intruders often pose as building staff to get through security access points. Anyone who is not properly identified as a staff member should be stopped and questioned.

PARTNER WITH YOUR LOCAL POLICE

Another important step is to partner with the police. Be sure to keep regular open communication with your local police. This will allow police to become familiar with your property and gives you the opportunity to plan for quick resolutions in the event of any criminal activity or on-site emergencies.





1

CRIME PREVENTION

continued

management stages

SCREEN POTENTIAL OCCUPANTS

It is advisable to perform background checks if possible to screen those who will potentially occupy your property to get a better understanding of who they are and any questionable history. This increases safety for you and others on your property. Areas to look into include police, court and credit records. Weeding out those found to be non compliant helps improve the property's security and can help to get rid of criminal or rogue elements. Additionally, going through this process can provide peace of mind to new and current occupants, knowing that everyone on location goes through the same process.

EDUCATE EXISTING OCCUPANTS

You should educate your occupants on issues about their own security and what they themselves can do to help prevent crime on the property. This can be done in several ways. You can hold "safety sessions" in which you hold a public, perhaps catered, meeting where you go over action items that residents can take to increase safety. You can also simply post reminders publicly on your property or send via email. Many properties will have the local police come out and periodically speak to their occupants.

You may initially think this does not fall into your wheelhouse, but ultimately, you are responsible for safety on your property. The more your occupants know about preventing crime and handling crime, the safer your building remains as a whole.

By using a multi-faceted approach that addresses your property's environment, its management and its occupants, you can greatly decrease the opportunity for crime. Read on to learn more about our next element of property safety: **FIRE PREVENTION.**



FIRE PREVENTION

Fire safety is a common concern. I mean, who hasn't gone through a fire drill, and most of us since early childhood?! Fire safety is a universal message because a fire can occur anywhere, and the damages can be severe. Later on in this guide under our Emergency Preparedness section, we will address some of the more traditional aspects you may think of when it comes to fire safety, such as fire emergency response. However, this section focuses on preventative measures- actions that you can take to lessen the likelihood of a fire on your property.



take arson prevention measures

Technically, arson could fall under this guide's first section, as it is a crime. However, we want to include it specifically in this section about fire prevention because those trying to prevent fires on their property typically think of naturally-occurring fires and may overlook the possibility of someone starting a fire on purpose. To help prevent arson, place a high value on your building's security measures. Practice safety measures for arson similarly to how you would for any other type of social risk: make sure to keep the area outside your building well lit and remove items that may be highly flammable. Always lock doors and windows after business hours to help prevent unwanted intruders and implement crime prevention measures mentioned in the previous section.



FIRE PREVENTION

continued

educate your occupants

Sounds a little repetitive from last section, doesn't it? However, there are safety items specific to fire prevention that your occupants should know. When it comes to building fires, one of the most common causes is electrical combustion. With commercial properties, your maintenance team likely has more freedom to enter leased spaces than would a multi-family maintenance team, but in both cases, your occupants should receive communication from you on best practices for helping to prevent fire from electrical combustion. In order to avoid accidental electrical fires, make sure occupants know to never use electrical cords that are cracked or broken. The amount of devices per outlet should be limited to prevent overloading, and any appliances that can be should be unplugged overnight when people are away from the building.





FIRE PREVENTION

continued

perform fire risk assessments regularly

Fire risk assessments should be done regularly by your building's health and safety professional. If your building does not have a health and safety professional, it is recommended to outsource to a company registered in Fire Protection Services. This assessment involves surveying the entire building to determine all possible fire risks. This includes evaluation of the building's condition, its age, escape routes in the event of a fire and any potential items in the building that could be fire hazards, including items that could start or spread a fire. Fire hazards may include broken or missing fire equipment, compiled trash, burnt out bulbs on exit signs and stairwells that are blocked and open fire doors.

A thorough assessment should include details of all fire signage and fire safety equipment currently in place at the building, who occupies the building on a regular basis, and any safety training that is currently in place. The resulting Fire Risk Assessment Report will allow for analysis of the current way that fires are handled at your building and uncover weaknesses or gaps that should be remedied. This can be included within your **Emergency Action Plan**, to be discussed later in this guide.

Of course, while the risk of a fire on the property can never be completely eliminated, the above measures decrease the likelihood and allow you some control over the fire safety process.

3

MAINTENANCE

When you think of building a comprehensive safety plan for your property, maintenance may be overlooked as a top line item. As a property manager, property maintenance is an essential part of your job not only for aesthetic reasons, but also to prevent the unsafe and unsanitary conditions that can arise from property wear and tear and negligence. For a more comprehensive list of maintenance activities you should regularly perform, see our blog post, [“**BUILDING MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST.**”](#) The following, however, provides a short list of maintenance items that specifically contribute to on-site safety.

security checks

The following are basic maintenance items vital to preventing unsafe situations related to crime and occupant injury:

- ✓ Ensure all meters and valves are clearly labeled and identified.
- ✓ Keep vacant units secure and check them frequently for any signs of suspicion.
- ✓ Regularly check condition and security of all outside doors’ locks.
- ✓ Repair any flooring damages, including loose tile, rotting wood and cracks in paths and/or sidewalks. (Ladies in heels will thank you for this too!)
- ✓ Survey all window guards at least once annually; replace if necessary.





MAINTENANCE

continued

fire hazard upkeep

The following are pertinent fire safety maintenance items that you or your maintenance team should regularly carry out:

- ✓ Check the working condition of fire extinguishers at least bi-annually.
- ✓ Ensure all stair corridors and/or fire escapes are free of obstruction at all times.
- ✓ Regularly check smoke detectors (we recommend at least monthly), and be sure to replace detector batteries at least once a year.





MAINTENANCE

continued

cleanliness counts

Property management is responsible for keeping the building clean, as uncleanliness can cause safety hazards and, in some cases, malfunctions in equipment. Swimming pools, drainage systems and all exterior space should be cleaned regularly based on usage. After cleaning, it is important that you replace all filters. Check the filters in air conditioning systems and public washers and dryers, if you have them. This improves operating efficiency and equipment longevity.

Keep an eye on hazards that can escalate quickly, such as mold, worn out floors and rusty interior walls.

INTERESTED IN SPECIFIC MAINTENANCE MEASURES AND SAFETY TIPS FOR OTHER AREAS ON YOUR PROPERTY?

See our blog posts on safety for the following areas:



ELEVATORS



FITNESS CENTERS



PARKING GARAGES



POOLS

4

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

You'll notice that all previous sections have focused on prevention. Of course, a big part of property safety is doing everything you can to avoid unsafe conditions, but if you stopped there, you would have an incomplete plan for property safety.

Unsafe conditions and emergencies can occur regardless of how much we do to prevent them. This is why having an implemented **EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN**, known and practiced by occupants and building staff, is often required, and is essential for overall property safety. You cannot consider your property "safe" if you have only prevention measures in place, but no guidelines to make an emergency situation as safe as possible.

the EAP bare minimum

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



4

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

continued

recommended for your EAP

However, in today's reality, emergencies are varied and often complicated, so we recommend being as specific 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

Keep documentation of the appropriate service, business phone numbers, emergency phone numbers and if applicable, the emergency contact at businesses involving safety items that are close to you. Examples include*:

- ✓ Building security
- ✓ Electrician
- ✓ Fire department

DESIGNATED PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

Your EAP must define the responsibilities of any property staff with responsibility in emergency procedures. This can vary from building to building based on size and specific needs, but typically, the designated emergency personnel include the building owner as the highest ranking staff member, an emergency coordinator and emergency teams, such as floor/area monitors or evacuation teams. Names, contact information and emergency roles should be listed for each person along with the responsibilities for each role.

*See more examples and specifics in Kings III's [Emergency Action Plan Guide](#).



EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

continued

recommended for your EAP

WARNING, NOTIFICATION AND COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

Your EAP should also include a section outlining how to communicate an emergency situation with occupants and how often they should be updated, including communicating when immediate danger is over and normal building functions can be resumed. This should be left to the emergency action team's discretion based on how much authority they deem necessary over the situation. Account for your methods of communication with a table similar to the one below:

Device	Location	Coverage Area

[Source](#)

4

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

continued

recommended for your EAP

GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES FOR SPECIFIC SCENARIOS

The next step in laying out the framework for your Emergency Action Plan is a thorough examination of and accounting for the types of dangerous situations that could potentially occur within your building. This assessment should be performed with your building specifically in mind, including the source of where and how this danger could occur. Causes of hazards can typically fall under one of three categories: **building incidents**, **human-caused incidents** and **natural disasters**. Below are some examples of each*:

Building Incidents:

- ✓ Chemical exposure
- ✓ Failure of building systems
- ✓ Structure collapse

Human Caused Incidents:

- ✓ Active shooters
- ✓ Biological hazards
- ✓ Bomb/bomb threat

Natural Disasters:

- ✓ Flooding
- ✓ Tornadoes
- ✓ Ice/snow storms



*See more examples and specifics in Kings III's [Emergency Action Plan Guide](#).



EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

continued

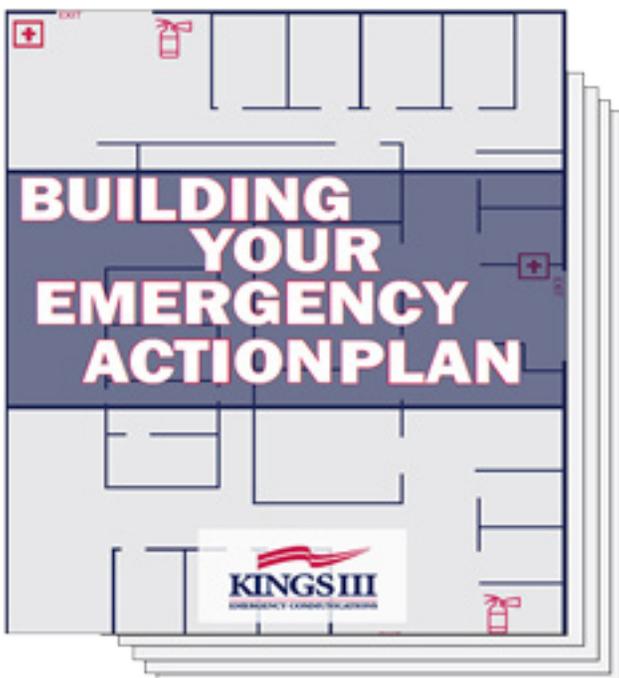
recommended for your EAP

GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES FOR SPECIFIC SCENARIOS CONT.

For any risks that could turn into emergencies, such as fires, crimes, etc., you should create procedures for how you will respond to that specific hazard, including evacuations, lock-ins and more.

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



Once you have finalized your EAP, signage and emergency procedures should be posted and issued to all designated emergency responders within the building. Signs that assist in evacuation should be posted next to all stairwell doorways, in every elevator lobby and in any long hallways or other discernible areas. Copies of your EAP should be available within the building's management office and its security desk to ensure emergency personnel and building staff have access to it at any time. An electronic copy of the EAP should be stored in a secure but easily accessible location. Storage of the EAP on USB devices is also recommended for easy on-the-go printing purposes.



EMERGENCY MONITORING AND RESPONSE

DISCLAIMER: This might be the part of the guide where you may taper off, thinking this section is the typical spot where we try to sell our services to you without providing any useful help. So, out of full transparency: yes, this section deals with an element of safety that we provide services for. Give us some credit though- why do you think we do what we do?! It's an essential aspect of safety! We would not be in business if there was not a need for what we do. If we're writing a guide on the most fundamental parts of building safety, we want to make sure to make it comprehensive. While emergency monitoring may seem pretty straightforward, there are several often overlooked items, misconceptions and, in some cases, even emergency monitoring techniques that could be considered unsafe. So hear us out on what we consider important emergency monitoring items for the safety of your building and we promise to try to limit shameless plugs and humble brags.

emergency phones

It is likely that you are required some sort of emergency help phone on your property, as elevator phones are required by code, and many states require properties with pools to provide an emergency pool phone ([see list of pool phone requirements by state here](#)).

Required or not, there are many areas on your property that would benefit from a monitored help phone, such as:

- ✓ Areas of refuge
- ✓ Campus/parks/public outdoor areas
- ✓ Parking garages/parking lots
- ✓ Public laundry areas
- ✓ Stairwells



EMERGENCY MONITORING AND RESPONSE

continued

emergency phones

Many property managers opt out of non-required emergency help phones because it can seem archaic. 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. 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. Furthermore, even if someone does have access to their cell phone during an emergency situation, there are several pitfalls, such as property location identification, to be discussed in depth in this section.

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.

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, directly to 911 operators or property staff/security members- sometimes even the property manager themselves. The following topics offer important safety and liability information to consider when deciding how you want to handle your property's emergency monitoring in the future.

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EMERGENCY MONITORING AND RESPONSE

continued

overall property and occupant safety

As we mentioned, in many cases, property managers direct their emergency phones to 911 centers or even to onsite staff, including themselves. This may have worked for you in the past or could be the easiest option, but you're reading this guide because you want a safe property, right? Right. To follow are basic shortcomings of these options when it comes to keeping your property and occupants safe.

Directing emergency calls to property staff probably presents some of the more obvious safety issues. You all have your own job responsibilities. 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 and delays emergency response. Finally, and this is a big one- **EMERGENCIES DON'T DISCRIMINATE**. Do you think an emergency cares if it's 4am or Thanksgiving day? Nope. That emergency is still going to happen. People like you and your staff simply cannot be available at all hours. What if you receive a call and are unable to take it? The emergency caller may be left high and dry when seconds count.





EMERGENCY MONITORING AND RESPONSE

continued

overall property and occupant safety

Directing emergency calls to property staff doesn't cut it, so you might think directing emergency calls directly to 911 centers is the safest option. While better than directing to staff, this can still leave some vulnerabilities. 911 operators don't always receive the highest level of emergency training and often do not provide pre-arrival medical instructions. They are simply overloaded with calls and do not want the liability. If you manage a regional or national portfolio, operator training and how calls are handled certainly is not consistent across differing municipalities. Unfortunately, you would be surprised at the amount of calls mishandled at 911 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 false alarm calls to 911. That's an extra cost liability 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.***





5

EMERGENCY MONITORING AND RESPONSE

continued

the property manager's liability

Another overlooked area of relying on 911 and other non-specialized call centers is whether or not you will be lopped in on what's transpiring on your property. This is important for two reasons:

1

It may uncover a problem with physical or systemic aspects of your property that should be tended to.

You will want to be knowledgeable of the incident and take all necessary response measures in order to prepare against potential litigation issues and bad publicity. You will also want to decide how to communicate the situation to other occupants.

2

Because of this, your safest option is relying on a dedicated emergency monitoring company that will not only handle the emergency situation, keeping occupants safe, but that also holds a responsibility to you and will notify you of all 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 upon request. [Learn more about the benefits of emergency call recording.](#)

5

EMERGENCY MONITORING AND RESPONSE

continued

the plug

We promised we'd limit our plugs, but based on the information you were just provided with, there are some things that you should know about our monitoring service, and we've got to brag just a little! Kings III emergency operators receive a special training and certification greater than that of most 911 emergency centers, with Advanced Emergency Medical Dispatch (AEMD), Red Cross CPR and HIPAA certifications. When it comes to taking emergency calls, we are dedicated to learning as much about the situation as possible, making the caller feel comfortable in the situation, dispatching out the appropriate aid and providing certified emergency assistance over the phone until that help arrives.

We also make sure to alert you, the property manager, of whatever disturbance has occurred and have all calls placed recorded on file for accessibility at your request in the event you may need it. These are extra (and important) benefits not offered when your phones direct dial 911 or you're relying on occupants using their cell phones.

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



CONCLUSION

As you can see, a lot goes into keeping a property safe, but if you are able to stay on top of these items, you can help ensure a smoother, safer running system with a peace of mind shared by both you and your occupants. Of course, there is more to property safety than what our guide can possibly offer, but in our humble (although expert in emergency response) opinion, these are the key safety areas that absolutely cannot and should not be ignored.

more about kings iii

Our business is all about delivering peace of mind to our customers by helping them reduce their exposure to risk. Our turnkey emergency communication services are utilized in elevators, parking garages, stairwells, pools, campuses and more. At the core of our service is our very own state-of-the-art Emergency Dispatch Center (EDC), available with highly-trained operators 24/7/365. Our package is full-service: including equipment, installation, maintenance, monitoring and dispatch services bundled in a convenient and hassle-free solution for our clients. 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](#)

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