The property thief

For the property thief, the decision to commit a crime on an apartment property is a risk versus reward exercise. The risk of committing this crime is the chance of getting caught, losing the property, and possibly their freedom. The reward is the perceived benefit obtained upon successful completion of the crime. A good apartment security plan will address this concept by using crime prevention measures that will increase the perpetrator's perception of being caught (risk), while diminishing their perceived value of their target (reward).

Property criminals view an apartment community differently than a new resident prospect looking for a place to live. For property thieves, it's more like going shopping and looking at the various items available to steal. They have a choice where and when they will commit a crime. If the thieves don't like the merchandise or the shopping experience at your property, they will go elsewhere. For them, the available targets equate to money. The things they steal can be converted to money or can be used so they don't have to spend their money. Property crimes are usually one of stealth, where the criminal does not want a confrontation or be identified. However, it is possible that the property criminal may become violent if the opportunity presents itself or if surprised, cornered, or captured.

Those arrested for property crimes and usually male and between 18-21 years old. The studies show that most property criminals live nearby their target areas and are familiar with the neighborhood. It is an important comfort factor for them to know the terrain and all the potential escape routes. They will usually work the property on foot, unless they need a vehicle to transport the stolen merchandise. Sometimes the property criminal will have lived in the target apartment community or have a friend who is a current resident. Criminal Deterrence

For apartment managers, recognizing and addressing the lower levels of criminal motivation is the first key to successful deterrence. A good crime prevention program works best on moderately and poorly motivated criminals.

There are some key points to remember:

* A criminal's motivation to commit a theft is at it's lowest level during the first visit to the property * Criminal motivation increases with familiarity of the property * Success, in committing crimes on a property, will increase the level of motivation to continue to commit more crimes * It is three times more difficult to deter a criminal who has been successfully committing crimes on your property

The best places to address lower levels of criminal motivation is at the entrances to the property, the perimeter of the buildings, and most importantly, in the leasing office. The property thief will view the lack of suitable escape routes as a trap and will simply choose another property to victimize. Good perimeter fencing and a reduced number of entrances after hours will often create that perception. Believe it or not, thieves read the signs that say, "Security Patrol" or "Neighborhood Watch" or "Crime Free Multi-Housing Program", even if we don't. Property thieves want to blend into a community, and they get uncomfortable when residents look suspiciously at them.

About the Author

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