

Association of Condominium,  
Townhouse, and  
Homeowners Associations

# ACTHANNEWS

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**December 2015 /  
January 2016**

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*Santa has asked if Gael, Bruce & Yvonne can help out at the North Pole. We said "YES!" so the ACTHA offices will be closed Monday, Dec. 21 and will re-open on Monday, Jan. 4. Have a happy and merry holiday season!*

## CONTRIBUTING TO THE SECURITY OF YOUR ENVIRONMENT

By Steven Siegel of U. S. Security Associates

We need to be concerned about what goes on around us. How can we approach and handle situations and how can we assist our communities in becoming safer areas to inhabit? As you choose to live where you do, it is your responsibility to love and care about your family and community and to respond to situations whenever persons, situations or incidents arise or occur that could pose harm.

The pertinent question for most is not how, but what will happen should you encounter a situation where life or property is threatened. In truth, if we prepare before the situation occurs, we may be able to eliminate the opportunity for the situation having a negative outcome.

Use of the following options are integral in helping secure your community and surroundings more effectively.

### ***Crime Prevention through Environmental Design***

**(CPTED).** Is your property neat and clean? Are your trees and shrubbery trimmed? Do you eliminate places where the "bad guys" can hide? A clean environment says that you care. Do not create areas where people can hide and wait for an opportunity to pounce. By not cleaning and maintaining your property you are sending a message that you don't care. You are subconsciously inviting the "bad guys" in.

***Lighting.*** A well-lit area is a huge crime deterrent. Make sure you lights work. Change burnt out bulbs immediately.

***Security Cameras.*** Traditional cameras and monitors are common. Home security systems are available and inexpensive. Professional companies can remotely monitor your property via cameras. Cameras are great; but, they need to be

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## TIPS OF THE MONTH: Common Mistakes Boards Make

**Failure to educate.** It's essential that Board Members read and understand their governing documents, rules and State law. The board should know what is expected of them including how meetings should run.

**Fiscal irresponsibility.** Board members not taking time to read and understand the financials can cause problems. It is imperative that board members not fall into a false sense of security and assume that everything is running smoothly. There should be proper checks and balances including obtaining two signatures on checks.

**Selective enforcement or failure to uniformly enforce governing documents.** Often boards are accused of playing favorites. This would include board members attempting to institute new policies and ground rules. Over regulating can pose a problem. Rules should be reasonable. It is important to be fair and consistent.

**Failure to maintain confidentiality or generating gossip.** There are often times when boards discuss confidential items. It is wrong for board members to knowingly disseminate confidential items to residents. In doing so they are opening themselves as well as the association to possible litigation.

**Micromanaging and abusing power.** It is important that the board works with their management company for the daily operations of the property. Board members should not be making decisions in their self-interest. Failure to disclose personal interest can create conflict.

**Failure to collect overdue assessments.** While boards sympathize with owners during hard times, delaying assessment collections hurts the cash flow of the association, making it difficult to fulfill its financial obligations and setting a precedent for other owners to make late assessment payments without fear of legal action. Boards should have a collection policy whereby owners, at a certain period when past due, the board pursues legal action.

Tom Skweres of ACM Community Management

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monitored in order for a quick response should a situation occur. The ability to record and store video for a minimum of 30 days is also very beneficial.

### **Cellular/Smart Telephones.**

An advantage of smartphones is that they take photos and also record video and audio. It's quite simple to learn how to use these features. These capabilities can help prevent a situation from occurring and can provide proof that there is/was a problem, which should be addressed. Use your telephone to call the police, security or manager when the situation presents itself.

### **Gates/Fences/Locks/Windows.**

Any deterrent is better than none. Keep doors and garages closed and locked. Use a security bar or piece of wood to keep your sliding door secured. A security brace will keep your door from being forced in. Close the door behind you in common areas. If you see an open door, close it. If it should be locked and isn't, lock it. Don't allow someone to gain unauthorized access by "piggy-backing" in. Don't allow a crime of opportunity. Take away the easy opportunities, and make it more difficult for the "bad guy." Close and lock windows. If you can use security bars and you feel you need to, before installing, refer to your association documents, board or manager to see if they are permissible.

**Fences.** As long as fences are maintained with no breaks or areas that have fallen, they help to provide an additional deterrent. They slow the "bad guy" down and help to protect the areas inside the perimeter.

**Timers.** Timers are an excellent way to turn lights on/off when you are not home. Utilize three of them and think logically as you place them in your home. Move them around week to week. Unpredictability is key. Bad guys look for patterns—don't be predictable. Change the time and locations, Opportunity and predictability are the bad guy's friends—don't make their lives easier.



**Common Sense.** Common sense is a valuable commodity; good judgment is gold. Always be thinking "if—then" and not "what-if". If you see someone lurking around your car, do not approach, but stay back and prepare to call security or the police. Take mental notes regarding the person's features (height, skin color, mustache/beard, weight, hair length, glasses, clothes, time, etc.). Snap a photo if intentions are nefarious, note how fast they turn and leave. If they are just admiring your car, they won't act in a strange manner. Always think common sense—it will keep you from placing yourself or those near you in a dangerous situation. Don't forget—most people will respond when they hear a person yell, "FIRE!"

**Security Officers/ Lobby Attendants/Patrol Officers/ Door Staff.** Not only do these trained professionals monitor your property, but they are also specially trained to observe, report and take appropriate action. They provide a visual deterrent, and can respond to many different situations. An individual in a clean crisp uniform is a prime example of pride and can deter situations from happening through visibility and attentiveness. There are many functions security officers provide in varying capacities depending on your property's need and requirements.

### **Alarms/Motion Detectors/ Card Access and FOBs.**

Many different types are available. Choose one that makes the most sense for you and your property. Motion detectors are very efficient for in-home use; models that are connected to lighting are even better. Loud alarms are great. All can be monitored on-site or tied to a central station for remote monitoring. They can also be connected to your smart phone to alert you immediately.

In conclusion, there are many types of security methods available. Whether inexpensive or expensive, simple or complicated, security professionals and/or monitors, you can find a product or service that fulfills your needs and budget. Research—the internet is a wonderful tool. Network—ask others what has worked for them. If we all do our part—we all stay safe. Together we are the solution. Let's not let neglect or carelessness lead to disastrous consequences.

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## Question of the Month

By: James Erwin of Erwin and Associates

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**Q.** Our townhouse association board sent out the budget in the time frame specified in the law (30 days). However, when I attended the board meeting, the budget had changed to reflect a 19% increase over what had been distributed to the owners. In addition, the budget is to be a three-year budget. Can a board arbitrarily change the budget after providing it to the owners and are they also able to adopt a budget of more than one year?

**A.** Both the Illinois Condominium Property Act and the Illinois Common Interest Community Association Act require mandate that association boards provide the ownership with notice of its meeting to adopt a proposed *annual* budget at least thirty days prior to its adoption by the board, and that the notice must include a copy of the proposed budget. Both statutes further state that the notice shall also include, more specifically, “an indication of which portions are intended for reserves, capital expenditures or repairs or payment of real estate taxes.”

So, while the board has the power and authority to discuss the proposed budget at a properly noticed meeting for that purpose, and to pass an amended budget after open discussions on the matter, it is improper for the board to simply amend the proposed budget after distribution but prior to the meeting. The intent of the law is to give the ownership advance notice of what the board will be discussing and voting on. Your board’s actions subvert that intent and are not proper. Additionally, a three year budget is improper in that the governing statutes require boards to approve annual budgets.