

Mark Chamberlain, President

Utility Security Solutions

THE PERSONAL SIDE OF UTILITY SECURITY- A FRANK DISCUSSION

What does “Utility Security” mean to you? Keeping the gas, water or electricity flowing to your customers? Most all companies have emergency plans in place in the event something happens to disrupt the flow of your product and there are numerous government regulations, requirements and penalties to deal with. But what about the individual security of your employees in the offices and the field. Who writes the rules on these issues? Let’s be honest, has there ever been a situation that you couldn’t handle, Right?

Was that the end of the matter? Not always. Altercations, disagreements “and conflict can linger with a person for a long time depending on the situation. They can greatly affect one’s attitude and well-being. But hey, that’s part of dealing with the public, and we need to get over it. Why is it, that if the first customer we deal with in the morning gives us a hard time, it ruins the rest of the day? Don’t we all want to let it roll off our backs and go on? Sure, but that is easier said than done. Men, let’s face it, this is easier for you than it is with the ladies in many

**HELP
EMERGENCY**

cases. When was it that you honestly asked the front-line CSRs how they are feeling about their security? Unfortunately, that uneasy feeling they get may be happening on a routine basis. This can take a toll on them but most men will never recognize it.

— Ladies are usually far more aware of their surroundings and people than most men are.

The job of a CSR is one of the most trying jobs in the utility business. Sometimes it seems that everyone is out to get you or has some problem that you cannot solve because they just will not listen to you. Guys, we sometimes just don’t get it. Let’s think for a moment about today’s society that often seems to make women out as totally helpless creatures. I can tell you that after training thousands of ladies in self-defense, that is the farthest from the truth. They can be wildcats and a force to be reckoned with, especially when they have had some training in hand-on-defense. I



am married to a Tae Kwon Do Black Belt and as Mr. "T" always said "I pity the fool that messes with her".

Don't we all want to feel that we can take care of ourselves in the event it is needed? Of course, we do, but it has never happened to us before and it may not. But what if it does?

WHAT IF

Our utility has never been robbed but what if it is? We have never had a disgruntled employee or customer turn into an active shooter or killer. We have never had a serious bomb threat. We have never had a crazy customer nut up in the office or the field. We have never had to lockdown or shelter in place. But these things only happen to the "other guy". Or that's what we always think. Not so, think about your offices. What would you do? Where would you go? How would you react? How would you communicate it to other employees? Would they even believe you? When you call 911 the police don't magically appear. You are on your own for the most dangerous first 10 minutes or longer. What do you do? When was the last time you even discussed it? When did you last practice it, if ever? Are we naive with our own safety? Like most small to medium utilities, we don't have full time security, armed guards and in many cases a designated safety director. And even if we do, they are usually not trained in security issues and emergency response protocols. However, we usually know most of the customers we deal with, and nothing like this has ever happened here. This can give us a very real, but false sense of security.



TWO OPTIONS

We have two options. Do we just keep on going as though the world is still a perfectly safe place and bad things only happen in big cities? Or do we seriously ask the question, "what if it happened in my company?" If you select option one then we must assume that you are willing to accept the consequences of inaction in the event that something disastrous happens. Not a good choice. However, if

you go with option two, and embark on a serious discussion of what do we do if bad things happen, then you will already be making your company safer just by talking about it. This will begin to take you down the road to creating a more secure working environment for you, your employees and your customers. It all begins with recognizing that weakness exists and seeking out the right resource to help you to see where and how to improve. Will it take time? Will it take resources? Can you afford it? Well, the answer is, "can you not afford to do it."

TAKE ACTION

We started off talking about keeping the product flowing to the customers, and this is paramount. However, making sure that the employees and customers that entrust you with their personal safety must come first. You never want to be the one to tell a loved one that their family member will not be coming home again. The water, gas and electricity flow can wait.

Make a commitment to seriously discuss personal security and look into getting the experts to do a Comprehensive Security Assessment for your utility. You will be glad you did and your employees will thank you. Don't be the "other guy".

For more information please contact Mark Chamberlain at www.UtilitySecuritySolutions.com