

Security Spotlight

An informational Guide for Securitas Canada Clients and Employees



March 2016

Securitas Canada Limited

Number 145

Emergency Response to Various Hazards



As most are aware, not all emergency situations are the same. In fact, there are many differing types of events that can unfold, and this is where the challenge lies when it comes to a security mission. Since security officers are the front line in our business, they will encounter a wide and distinct set of situations that require some type and degree of response. The difficulty is that for an organization as large, spread out, and diverse as Securitas, establishing basic methods to employ is still necessary to maintain a consistent level of service across all industries and verticals.

Types of Hazards

Before one begins to address the methods and means of emergency response, employees need to understand the major types of hazards, which exist, and could be encountered while performing their duties. There are several categories of emergencies that may have a greater chance or frequency of occurring.

Common incidents that most sites will probably experience are medical in nature. Here officers might have to respond to employees or persons at the site who might require some type of medical assistance in areas such as: falls, injuries, or heart attacks. An officer's training and certification level will be the determining factor in the degree of response. All officers, regardless of their medical training, can call for assistance, can secure the scene/site, make notes of the situation, call for particular medical emergency responders, and interview potential witnesses.

Lastly, it is important to remind everyone that confidentiality is of major concern when it comes to people's personal medical information. Only share this information with individuals that either directly need to know, like EMS, or if the individual has provided written permission to share any personal detailed information.

Next, there could be the need for an officer's response to a burglary, attempted break-in or a theft on site.

In this, an officer must follow the specific post orders that outline the steps that should be taken on that site. Remember to take detailed notes, photographs of damage, and recording of the incident and contact proper personnel as noted in the site plan.

Note an officer is not allowed to take photos or film any person if they do not provide permission. Remember that if an officer is responding and interviewing witnesses, make sure to ask only detailed and specific questions ensuring that personal opinion and conclusion are left out of the notes or final report. Also, note that, in some instances this information could potentially identify a person, so confidentiality is vital.

There might be calls to respond to hazardous materials, spills of varying chemicals or potential lethal materials. This will be determined by the industry in which a security officer works. Each site may have specific training that will determine the level at which an officer responds and might be tied to the type of materials that has been released. Note that if it's at a site where Hazardous Material Waste Operations may be present, then specific CCOHS (Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety) designated levels of training determines the level of action an officer may take.

Until the material has been identified, always assume that the immediate area at the spill or release site is immediately dangerous to life and health, and take precautions to prevent being exposed. At minimum, like most emergencies, determine the wind direction, assist with evacuation of personnel, secure the scene/site to ensure that other individuals remain at a safe distance upwind from the hazmat location. Then contact the necessary personnel for remediation/control of the release and cleanup response.

In all parts of the country an officer might be called to respond to varying types of natural disasters such as: tornadoes, snow storms, lightning strikes, or flash floods, to name a few. Some of these will obviously be specific to the region of Canada where an employee is living and working.

If it's a type of incident that one can prepare for, an officer must ensure that they have detailed and specific information for how to respond when the weather event occurs. If it's an event, like a tornado, where there is potentially very little prior notification, then an officer should respond according to the situation and site plan requirements for emergent incidents. After a weather event, priority should be placed upon assisting any individuals that require medical aid and securing the site, to prevent loss of client property.

Lastly, some industries and verticals have a greater potential to become a target of a terrorist attack. Here the method and response will widely be determined based on the security assessment, site plan, and a particular event. Though it is impossible to know when or where every terrorist incident could occur, it is important to respond with extreme caution. Like other dire emergency situations a security officer should contact the required people and services. Here the most important aspect is to focus on deterrence more so than response. It usually is paying attention to seemingly small details that can prevent or stop a terror event from occurring. Just know that your response should be largely based upon your training and certification.

Common Responses in All Emergencies

Initially, all officers should respond to an emergent situation in the same manner. Regardless of whether an officer discovers an event or is notified of an emergency, they should proceed with caution to the incident. There are many types of actions that security personnel might take during a situation, but at the end of the day all officers must ensure that they are not placing themselves in harm's way.

Upon initiating an emergency response an officer should notify the proper authorities, whether it is the Site Supervisor, Account or Branch Manager, Client contact or 911 Police/Fire/Rescue services.

It is worth noting that an officer might be required to make contact with more than one of these individuals. Upon responding to an emergency situation, all officers should do so in a defensive fashion. Do the best to keep nearby people, property, and environment protected, while maintaining a safe distance to gather all the information to properly understand what is occurring at the location. Remember, an officer is trying to ensure that others are not going to go from assisting to becoming potential victims. If a response does occur make sure that each responder has the proper personal protective equipment for the type of hazard that is present, and has been properly trained on how to don and use the equipment properly.

Remember, as a security officer you should never attempt to respond to an incident unless you have proper training and certification in the type of response that is needed. At minimum assume control of the scene from a safe location until those certified responders arrive, or an incident commander takes over management of the scene. All officers must act as the eyes and ears in reporting on the emergency events and ensuring all necessary sites are secure. If there are any doubts about how to respond or what to do in an emergency situation, ask your Site Supervisor or Branch Manager for further clarification or refresher training