



By Joanne Richards
R3 Integrators

Security: Keeping Up With the Times

Most people would agree that for the majority of us, advances in technology have significantly improved our daily lives. The use of the internet in particular has allowed us to get tasks done faster and more efficiently without having to leave the comfort of our homes. In a matter of minutes, a unit owner can log into her home computer to check her bank account balance, pay bills, order a new coffee maker, sign up for an online course, and reserve her condo's party room for an event she is hosting.

Similarly, condominium corporations are also benefitting from improved technology and the use of the internet with regard to their security systems. By "security", I am referring to enterphones (intercoms), video surveillance (cameras), and access control (fob systems). Over the last number of years, many manufacturers of security products have been working towards making their products more intuitive, easier to use, and more convenient to access.

More Efficient Security Systems Are Managed Offsite:

Remote management of a security system via the internet now allows security installation companies and, more importantly, Property Managers the ability to program intercoms and access control systems from their offices. For a Property Manager, this means less time standing in front of an intercom system making the necessary change requests and less time for a new unit owner or



tenant to wait to get their information programmed in.

Unit owners should be happy to know that a reported lost or stolen fob can be removed from an access control system in a matter of minutes. A lost or stolen key to a condo, on the other hand, will require that lock to be changed and all-new keys to be distributed to unit owners.

Access control is considerably more secure, more cost effective, and more convenient than using traditional keys. Some security companies will even offer to manage these systems and are able to do so without having to visit the condo.

Property Managers Have a Limited Time at Each Condo:

The actual time allocated for a Property Manager to visit individual condos on a weekly or monthly basis may differ from one condo to the next depending on their specific contacts with the management company, but nevertheless, their time on site is very limited. A Property Manager attending a condo in which there is no remote access to the security systems may have to spend a considerable amount of the allocated time programming the intercom, adding or deleting fobs or reviewing video footage from the camera system. Little time may be left to perform visual checks of the building and to address deficiencies that need their attention. A Property Manager that has remote access to the security systems will have more time on site to do these other important checks since the security items have already been handled back at the office.

Address Vandalism and Illegal Garbage Dumping Sooner:

It goes without saying that video surveillance systems in a condo help to deter bad behaviour, discourage unauthorized visitors, and to assist the Property Manager in finding out who may be respon-

sible for acts of vandalism, property damage, or unwanted garbage dumping. Typically, incidents are reported within a few days of occurring, but it is not always possible to get to the condo to review the video footage. Again, with remote access, a Property Manager is able to view the incident from their office and in doing so, is able to address the incident in a more timely manner.

Increased Thefts in Storage/ Locker Rooms:

Recently, more incidents of break-ins and thefts into storage/locker rooms have been reported. Typically, unit owners are given keys to these areas, which they then pass on to tenants and family members. In many cases, these keys are easily duplicated and become unaccounted for. Over the years, the amount of keys "out there" could be in the hundreds. Personal locks on storage units are also easily cut and removed by thieves. The most cost-effective and secure way to minimize these thefts is to install access control on these doors and to install latch guards over the locks to

prevent the prying of the doors. Of course, the installation of cameras in these areas will also provide additional security coverage for these hot spots.

Easily Controlled Access to Amenity Rooms:

In many condos, the Party Room or Amenity Room is a fantastic place to hold birthday parties, dinner with family, and lunch with friends. A typical problem, though, is how to secure the room from the other unit owners for the duration of the scheduled party. In many cases, this task is left to the super of the condo to unlock the door before the party and re-lock the door after the party. In other cases, the key to the room is given to the unit owner and then collected a later time. In either case, there is an inefficient use of time and resources.

With remote management of the access control, a Property Manager is able to log into the system from the Management office, assign the Party Room to the specific unit owner that is holding the party while at the same time "locking out" all other residents. A schedule is ap-



plied to the room that allows the particular unit owner to be granted access before the party for preparations and during the party but locked out past a specified time.

Moving Forward:

Security systems should be an essential element of every condominium. Is your condo keeping up with the times?



Joanne Richards - After graduating from McMaster University and Sheridan College, Joanne started her career as an operations supervisor for a waste management company. Several years later, she switched gears and became a sales rep for an international paramedical company. Using the skills she learned from both of these positions, Joanne joined R3 Integrators in 2010 and took on the role of Business Development Manager. 



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