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Tips for Enhancing Campus Security and Safety

The security of your campus is an important investment that requires continual attention. Too often, safety and security are examined only after an accident or incident has occurred. Please consider the following suggestions to taking a proactive approach to the security at your campus.

A campus environment has a myriad of potential safety hazards, from unclear fire exits, disabled fire alarms, to vehicular/pedestrian conflicts and poorly lit parking lots. In addition, campuses have collection of “high risk” facilities, such as athletic complexes, theaters, mechanical rooms, and residence halls full of experimental students. At times, this widespread area of potential hazards can seem overwhelming and daunting to control. However, ensuring you have proactive processes in place to make security a priority will quell these feelings of unease and guarantee the safety of your campus.

Design and adhere to a routine safety inspection program. This program should include a focus on regular safety audits conducted by a team that includes an “outsider” who has not been overexposed to the campus. Often the concept of “selective blindness,” the phenomenon that happens over time when you see the same environment everyday and become blind to small changes or opportunities, can occur on a campus. Therefore, this person could be a professional consultant, or just someone who is not regularly exposed to a particular area of the campus. The safety inspection should take place during evening hours so that lighting issues, hiding places, and other haz-

ards are visible. In addition to examining the exterior features of the campus, it is also recommended that the safety inspection plan includes an annual examination of each campus building.

Document your proactive safety actions. The results of this safety inspection can be documented in an organized, itemized, database format. This will allow for tasks to be prioritized, delegated, and sorted according to departments or campus areas. Once hazards are removed, the database can be updated to reflect what was done. This document will provide the academic institution with hard verification of their vigilance to safety.

Always think safety. In addition to routine inspections and audits, it is necessary to put security at the forefront of landscape management and of new construction/planning. Routine landscape maintenance can help eliminate many of the exterior security issues on a campus. It is helpful if these services are carried out by professionals with campus landscape experience, as they are cognizant of the security issues that need to be watched.

For example, to avoid finding poorly lit areas and locations for predators to hide during a safety audit, it would be beneficial if your landscape maintenance provider was able to remove these risks before they became hazardous. This could include routine pruning of trees that block lighting, trimming of hedges to avoid obstructed views, and relocating plants that have become dangerous hiding places for predators. In terms of any new campus development, parking lots

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should be constructed away from high traffic pedestrian areas, but not so remote that they become dangerous. Proper plant choice is an essential consideration when undertaking new construction. Though plants and shrubbery may be neat and small when first installed, they will grow and could pose interference with lighting and surveillance cameras. Choosing plants that minimize these risks while adhering to a proper landscape maintenance plan will improve security and alleviate the need for corrective actions further down the road.

If you adhere to the above recommendations and make sure to consider your campus’ security a recruiting tool rather than an obligatory duty, you will be sure to reap improvements.

If you would like more information on the proper landscape maintenance practices to guarantee a safe campus, please contact CampusCare® at 508-668-7490, (toll free) 866-543-4333 or sales@campuscare.com

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