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# Access Control Fundamentals

By the Security Executive Council

One of the recurring themes of discussion amongst security leaders regarding COVID-19 has been the use of access control systems and procedures to mitigate spread.

We recognize not all organizations have the resources or support to provide state-of-the-art access control capabilities and enhancements. However, even small operations and processes, when well implemented and well managed, can prevent risks entering the workplace. Given the growing spotlight and reliance on these systems as we embark on the new normal, now may be a good time to revisit some basic guidelines for site access control.

The following fundamental access control guidelines are adapted from the SEC's Physical Security Strategy and Process Playbook, with a few of the most-mentioned COVID-19 considerations appended to the end.

## General Performance Guidelines

- Identify the areas and levels of security you need.
- Integrate security into your environment and business operations.
- Control physical access to your site, buildings, and offices.
- Control access to your proprietary information.
- Detect unauthorized access to your site or your information.
- Be prepared for incidents and emergencies.
- Respond quickly and effectively to incidents and emergencies.
- Report incidents promptly and correctly.

## Planning Considerations

- What are the realistic types of threat to the facility?

- Assess the volume and composition of pedestrian traffic in the area.
- Will signs and clear perimeter lines control pedestrian walk-on?
- Is it sufficient to have a set of restricted vehicle access points?
- Do you need barriers, gates, fences, or berms to control access and circulation?
- How do visitors access the site? Do they need a separate access point?
- Is adequate parking provided in appropriate locations?
- Is it possible to light the site effectively?

### **Zones of Protection**

For purposes of security, most operations can be divided into four zones. The zones generally are thought of as concentric circles—each zone refers to the contents of the physical area within the circle. A zone forms a line of protection; it is used to identify the security level required for a particular area.

- *Zone One:* the property on which the building is located.
- *Zone Two:* the building perimeter and its facade. This includes all the entry points to the inside of the building, such as doors and windows.
- *Zone Three:* the “open” interior areas within the building such as reception areas, lobbies, halls, cafeterias, and open office spaces. This zone can also refer to those areas located in Zone One that require greater access control and tighter security measures (for example, equipment areas, storage facilities, or parking areas).
- *Zone Four:* those high-security areas where only very limited access is allowed. These areas are usually within the building, such as a computer room or laboratory, but they can also be located outside the building. Power generating equipment, communications equipment, chemical tanks, and hazardous material storage all might qualify as Zone Four areas.

The application of multiple zones, in a series of concentric circles, provides for increasing security as you move toward the center.

### **Suggested Security Requirements**

- Use an environmental design that incorporates natural barriers and landscaping.
- Install signs of the right type in the right places to show the extent of your organization’s property, the circulation pattern in effect, and any potential hazards on the property.
- Use lighting that conforms to national lighting standards
- Minimize access and egress points.
- Use walkways, tunnels, and overpasses to avoid additional access points.
- If fencing is used, secure or control access to all gates.
- Perform routine inspections and provide an audit trail of all inspections.
- Be certain that you have the rights to inspect property and vehicles by posting the required signs.
- Park trucks, forklifts, and other vehicles away from fences and buildings so as to not

provide assistance to those seeking unauthorized access to the facility. Be certain to remove the keys from all vehicles.

- Utilize electronic access control systems in conjunction with human oversight and involvement.
- Provide intrusion and unauthorized egress detection systems.

### **COVID-19 Related Considerations**

- Consider making site visitation by invite only.
- Consider methods of access control that do not require contact with keypads or readers.
- If feasible, adapt and modify current technology or procedures to include temperature screenings both on entry and on exit from the facility. However, remember that a high percentage of cases are asymptomatic or presymptomatic, so temperature screenings are far from a guarantee of a COVID-19 free environment.
- Collaborate or integrate with HR to ensure that employees and vendors on mandatory quarantines are not allowed re-entry before their quarantine period expires.
- Maintain detailed records of access interactions in order to better facilitate contact tracing.

For more extensive thought leadership on how to use access control systems to mitigate COVID-19 risk, visit the [SEC's COVID-19 Resources page](#), where you can find a Decision Insight paper on this topic by SEC subject matter experts Neil Johnston and Francis D'Addario..

**Visit the Security Executive Council web site to view more resources in the [Security Program Strategy & Operations : Strategic Planning/Management](#) series.**

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