

Allied Universal Security Team Manages Emergency Hotlines and Dark Site Access

HD Supply Inc.

Situation: HD Supply is one of the largest industrial distribution companies in North America. Through a diverse portfolio of industry-leading businesses, the company provides a broad range of products and services to approximately 440,000 professional customers in the infrastructure, maintenance, repair and improvement, and specialty construction markets. HD Supply teams with top manufacturers to maintain an unparalleled sourcing pipeline, giving their customers unmatched access to the products and solutions they need to succeed.

Challenge: At the Orlando, FL, Corporate Global Support Center, the security center contributes to monitoring 45 remote warehouse locations and the hotlines 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The center also needs to be manned constantly so HD Supply can conduct virtual tours of their facilities.

“The individuals manning the security center have a lot of responsibilities that are sometimes stressful,” said Russ Parry, HD Supply’s Senior Manager of Corporate Security. “Along with monitoring camera systems and conducting virtual tours, these individuals are also responsible for allowing properly identified individuals into locations which have closed or have moved to a different location, otherwise known by HD Supply as “dark sites.” HD Supply is still responsible for maintaining these dark sites, even though they are not in operation.”

A dark site hotline was implemented in late 2008 after the company suffered a million dollar loss due to theft and property damage at a number of unsecured locations. Individuals need access to dark sites from time to time for maintenance purposes or to show the property, and to gain access they must call the hotline. The hotline is monitored constantly by experienced personnel, who answer and respond to approximately five calls per day concerning access to dark sites across the nation. The individuals responsible for the dark site hotline are required to know the identity of all parties whom are permitted to access any facility, and must maintain detailed entrance and exit information.

A second hotline, Emergency Incident Reporting Lines, EIRL, also based at the Orlando Corporate Global Support Center, is for use by HD Supply associates. There are approximately 640 locations across 45 states and nine Canadian provinces, and employees can use the EIRL hotline for emergency situations. The EIRL is not meant to replace 911 in any way. It is HD Supply’s way of being notified and gathering information about a situation once imminent danger is addressed. It is important that someone is available to answer these calls and to make sure the correct information is documented and communicated properly and in a timely manner to appropriate HD Supply personnel.

When a call comes into the EIRL hotline, the operator has to determine the type of incident (of which there are more than 20) being reported by the caller.

Location:

Orlando, FL

Statistics:

- > One of the largest industrial distribution companies in North America
- > Security center monitors 45 remote locations and hotlines 24/7
- > Needed a provider to handle the security services and implement a program to monitor two newly created hotlines



HD Supply has seven different lines of business and each business has its own resources and support functions. The calls are routed to the appropriate business personnel based upon the business involved and the incident type. The ability to properly place these calls takes a lot of experience and training, and excellent interpersonal skills. It was important for HD Supply to find a provider who could handle security services and implement a program to monitor both of the hotlines

Solution: Allied Universal was contracted to provide 24/7 security services for two HD Supply sites in Orlando in 2007. One site is the Orlando Combined Branch which is a warehouse/distribution center in addition to a sales store and office location, and the other site is the Orlando Corporate Global Support Center.

“Security officers conduct internal and external patrols of the corporate facility and warehouses, where products are sold and distributed, as well as provide access control for certain areas,” said Steven Singh, account manager for Allied Universal.

“However, it was the remote viewing of cameras and hotline monitoring that was of utmost importance to HD Supply,” he continued. “Twelve security officers are assigned between both Orlando locations to keep a virtual eye on facilities, provide dark site access and facilitate EIRL calls.”

Singh manages the security team and day-to-day operations for the Orlando locations and reports information coming into the hotlines back to Parry.

“HD Supply’s creation of both hotlines was a great solution to keep the facilities and employees safe and facilitate the management of critical information,” said Singh. “When they assigned Allied Universal security officers to man these security center functions, it attested to HD Supply’s confidence in our Orlando team to execute their vision of safety and security.”

Allied Universal is currently responsible for 40 dark site locations but the number fluctuates as buildings become vacant and others are sold or leased to other tenants.

“The security officer answering the call documents information received and confirms that they have the correct access codes to gain entry to the dark site facility,” said Singh. “The officer then advises the individual accessing the facility to call the hotline upon exiting so we may verify and document that they have secured the property.”

Prior to implementing the hotline protocol, a majority of the loss associated with the dark site locations was due to an individual not securing the facility after leaving.

“If we receive a burglary alarm call from a location, we can now check to see if someone has entered that facility,” said Singh. “If we are unable to verify the reason for the alarm, we dispatch police. If we can verify the cause for the alarm, we disregard, saving a lot of false alarm fees and eliminating the unnecessary use of police resources.”

Some of the dark site locations also have motion cameras. “When the motion is triggered, the alarm company contacts us and then emails us the video clip,” explained Singh. “We immediately review the video clip and advise whether or not police should be dispatched.”

Results: Two years after the dark site hotline was implemented, Allied Universal was able to mitigate the prior loss amount in dollars to zero. “My security team and I are very proud of this fact and it leaves everyone with a sense of accomplishment,” said Singh. “Being part of the process to catch a criminal in the act is one of the many rewarding parts of the job.”

In 2010, there were a total of 174 calls to the EIRL hotline that Allied Universal security officers handled. “The security team effectively determines the type of incident and the appropriate line of business, which establishes who needs to be notified,” said Singh. “Sometimes we receive a lot of calls at once due to a weather-related disaster and our team has successfully handled those professionally.”

The security team and Singh have been praised for their excellent work. Whether it is the security officer’s role to respond or to just help someone in need, everyone at HD Supply is appreciative of their work. Handling the volume of calls is certainly not easy, but the security team does it well.

Parry has 100 percent confidence in the work done by the security team. “If there are any situations that come through the hotlines, I know the security team can handle it.” “We have several HD Supply locations that do not have on-site security but have video cameras that we monitor remotely after business hours,” explained Singh. “The security officers have been able to help apprehend several thieves breaking into fenced yards trying to steal material such as pipe and copper wire because of the remote monitoring. We are able to effectively work virtually from our location to provide coverage where on-site security is not present.”

“This is a good partnership,” said Parry. “We have a first-class security program with Allied Universal and all the confidence in the world that they can handle all situations.”