

Public-Private Partnerships are Essential to Public Safety

Our country's police departments are under immense pressure to keep crime rates low despite whittled-down budgets and a reduction in manpower. Business leaders committed to safety and security often look to extend the efforts of their local law enforcement. Over the past several decades, the importance of public-private partnerships has risen to the forefront. Establishing public-private programs that further police and security cooperation in the protection of people and property helps to enhance the safety and security of our communities.

There are many respected organizations dedicated to fostering dialogue between public and private entities. ASIS International's Law Enforcement Liaison Council and the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Private Sector Liaison Committee are just two examples of groups who work to facilitate a collaborative environment and partnership between public law enforcement and private security professionals.

It is very important to have cooperation between both of the public and private sectors. This is especially true in large metropolitan areas that have a high density of security professionals. Police officers appreciate the role security officers play as they are an extra set of eyes on the street, and can share observations and monitor trends. Police can communicate with security personnel about possible threats in the area, and give them photos of wanted individuals to look for.

Communication and cooperation between citizens, private security and law enforcement is crucial. Our cities have endured and thrived in the face of terrorism, but cannot afford to let their guard down. With an understanding that the public and private sectors working in unison are stronger than either is alone, partnerships are the cornerstone in defending against crime and terrorism.

Additionally, private security can supplement and support state, county and municipal police agencies by relieving them of some of their service calls. As budget reductions result in reduced police forces, more private and public enterprises are turning to contracted private security officers to supplement police agencies.

The key is to hire high quality security professionals and develop relationships between all public and private groups - whether or not formal "partnerships" exist. Private, contract security officers can make a significant impact on safety and security as they can be dedicated to specific posts or areas, serve as a deterrent to crime, and be a resource to local law enforcement and the community.

The collaboration between public and private law enforcement and security needs to extend beyond on-the-spot information sharing. Proactive security efforts and emergency planning initiatives should also involve everyone with a vested interest in safety and security. As businesses of all types implement prevention and response plans for everything from workplace violence to natural disasters, security professionals are quick to recommend the involvement of local law enforcement agencies and first responders. Involving everyone in planning and training will allow plans to be as situational as possible, and also help ensure a more efficient implementation when the worst case scenario does occur.