

**Topic:** Security Survey or Physical Security Assessment

***Discovering the difference between a Security Survey and the Physical Security Assessment***

**By:** Patrick J.W Chagnon, CPS (II)

With recent news focused on school security and workplace violence, organizations of all kinds are being forced to reevaluate their security profiles. In many cases, organizational leaders are looking to the government or local police for help. But government agencies and local police departments are spread thin.

Equally, Internet searches can be unfruitful. The search results are staggering and often lead down an unsuitable path. A common online option is to download the “free” security survey. These checklists are sometimes provided by state and local government agencies in hopes that businesses or the general public will perceive the government as taking a stand in supporting security improvements. The checklist is popular not just because it’s free, but because it is also quick to fill out and provides leadership with a sense that security concerns are being properly identified and addressed. Unfortunately, this is far from true. In fact, security surveys only distract from conducting a full Physical Security Assessment (PSA).

Think about this for a moment. When a new student enters an educational institution, the educator wants to know if this student can read, write, and do math. If we use the checklist method, the answers will be yes or no. But a quality educator will want to know if the student is meeting required standards, and, if so, at what levels? To answer those questions the survey will not suffice. The student will need to be assessed (tested, interviewed, etc. ...) so plans can be developed and the student can reach his potential. This assessment should be performed by a qualified professional with a background in education, who is able to analyze the results.

Similarly, securing people and property requires specialized training, experience, and the ability to analyze security trends and data in order to develop a proper plan. I would not want my plumber teaching my daughter U.S. History. He is a nice guy and a good plumber, but last time I checked he was not a professional educator. I would also not want him conducting Physical Security Assessments on her school; he’s a plumber, not a trained security professional.

Security surveys have their place. They are a good maintenance tool after a full *Physical Security Assessment* has been completed. That said, if the assets within your organization are truly worth protecting, do not take shortcuts. They will only lead down the path where the litigation team is waiting.