

Boaters Want Increased Security Measures but Not Intrusive Policies or Structures

By Carl F. Wolf, CMM CMI

It was not too long ago that marinas did not require much in the way of security. Back in the late 70s and early 80s, a polite sign may have been all that was needed to keep uninvited guests off of the piers. Today, the question is, what type or how much security does a marina require?

Marinas are essentially large horizontal facilities located throughout the country on the shores of rivers, lakes, reservoirs and coastal communities. As community focal points, marinas give boaters and onlookers the ability of gaining access to and from the waterfront. Generally categorized as part of the service industry, marinas should have formalized policies and operational procedures concerning the security and safety for the marina customers. Waterfront access creates unique security challenges at a marina.

One of those challenges is that boaters want to know that security measures have been taken by the marina, but do not want to feel like they are in a prison-like environment surrounded by tall chain-link fences topped with barbed wire. Likewise, non-boaters visiting the waterfront want to enjoy the serenity of the waters in and around a marina, but not as a person who is unwelcomed or banned from enjoying the view.

Many different security considerations may be employed by a marina. The following are a few examples of some of the various types of security measures that a marina may provide:

Signs – with the appropriate wording, size and placement, they can be a very effective tool in transmitting the message of who is allowed into the secure areas of a marina. While signs are a great tool, they can become a distraction if there are too many, too large or small or the message is not understood.

Fencing – while it may appear to be the easy solution, the type and placement

of fencing are the key ingredients. Fences need to be visually attractive, difficult to climb, and easy to see through, similar to a wrought-iron style fence. Chain-link fences are not aesthetically pleasing and are easy to climb.

Natural Perimeter – a natural barrier can be another solution to consider. One of the most common natural barriers in use at marinas is a combination of water and vegetation. An aesthetically pleasing gap of water in between the shore and the piers needs to be wide enough to discourage thrill jumping individuals. Designs for natural vegetation along the shores of a marina can be difficult to traverse, while enhancing the natural element of a marina.

Gates – located on ramps or entrances to the piers, they can be valuable tools in minimizing access for unwanted guests in the secure areas of a marina. To be an effective tool in the marina's security plan, a few suggestions

to consider: gates and their adjoining side panels should be wide enough and of the type of material, which discourages climbing over or around the gate; the closing mechanisms and locks must be operating correctly; exiting lock controls need to be positioned at least an arm's length away from prying hands reaching the controls; and the gates need to have a built-in unlocking capability to allow people within the marina the ability to leave in an emergency.

Locks – they are an effective device in controlling access to secure areas, such as the gates, parking lot controls, restrooms, showers and laundry rooms. Mechanical keys, while inexpensive, can be reproduced and distributed easily by the boaters. Key pad access numbers can also be distributed by boaters, but changed as needed. Key cards for proximity readers are difficult to reproduce, can be reprogrammed on an individual basis, and are easy for boaters to use when they are unlocking the gate.

Video Cameras – they are valuable instruments to monitor and record incidents that occur within the system's capability range. Video camera monitoring also allows someone to see what is happening in real-time. However, unless monitored, the video camera recordings may be rendered



Security is becoming more important to customers. However, they want to feel safe without an overwhelming security presence or distraction.

largely useless as a preventative measure in detecting security events in real-time. Newer, less expensive video camera systems can allow users to monitor in real-time from their smartphones or other remote devices. However, it is critical that any system connected to the internet has proper security, as hackers grow increasingly capable of wreaking havoc on a company web-based operation.

- **Facility Lighting** – it can be a strong deterrent in keeping uninvited guests off the property, potentially preventing unwanted activities from occurring. Different types of lighting should be used throughout the facility, such as low-level lighting on the piers and elevated lights in parking areas and along breakwalls.

- **Entrances** – activities occurring near the entrance of a marina create challenges and may render previously discussed security devices ineffective. A few potential options to consider in monitoring or deterring activities at the entrance to the marina: on-site security

guards can monitor during their roving patrols; appropriate lighting, which does not ruin the night vision of a boat operator, but allows others to see what is happening; the use of monitored video cameras; and strategically placed infrared beam equipment.

- **On-site Security** – having on-site security personnel can strengthen the

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marinas protective resources: guard posts/houses; roving patrols which can offer immediate on-site assistance; contact source for first-responders or marina management; and video camera monitoring.

As part of the operation and business plan, marinas should have a written policy concerning security for the

marina with operating procedures detailing the implementation of the security policy. Marina management has the responsibility of identifying potential security risks and plan accordingly. Doing nothing is not an acceptable solution.

Economic feasibility will generally have an impact on the marina’s security plan. For example, a marina providing slips for 50 smaller boats may have minimal financial capabilities, while a 25-slip megayacht marina may have significant financial resources.

Boaters mooring at a marina want to feel secure in their boats, and it’s a marina’s responsibility to protect their property without still preserving the pleasures of the waterfront, not blocking access or views. ⚓

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