



Security in the Age of COVID-19

A View from Regions Security's Carlos Rivero

As we miss the collegiality and information flow of daily life – and great events including CIASF's – we have launched question and answer sessions with key real estate executives and thought leaders. Please see how **Regions Security's Carlos Rivero** is conducting business in the eyes of the pandemic.

Carlos, we hope that you, your family and colleagues are staying safe and well. Can you comment on how your life has changed, both personally and professionally? I am spending about half the business day working at the office, and about half working remotely. I have found time to work on projects I had not been able to work on previously, as there are fewer interruptions when I am working remotely. I have done my best to adjust really well. My staff is doing the same, a fifty-fifty split between working in the office and from home. Security is a 24/7 operation for the personnel in the field; security never sleeps, so field employees are on-site. We have close to 500 employees that have to be out in the field. Warehouse, hotels, office buildings, retail centers, condos, government agencies are all our clients and our people have to be out there, working to secure these locations. We also provide remote 24/7 monitoring services; that group is up and running every hour of the day as well.

What kinds of activity are you seeing? Our clients in the hospitality industry have generally suspended services. There has been an uptick in vandalism and thefts during this quarantine, and some of our customers, and some new customers, have asked us to provide security in response to this uptick.

Can you give us more detail on the uptick in theft and vandalism that you are seeing? For the most part, we have observed this in office buildings and retail shopping centers. Our security employees report trespassers every single night, and the need for security is growing. It appears that the majority of incidents are people looking to 'smash and grab' and steal some goods for resale online or for personal use. Because there are fewer people around, there are more crimes of opportunity; properties and businesses have emptied, and there are fewer eyes out in the community to serve as a deterrent.

Where have you seen requests for increased services? We have seen security being ramped up in condos, industrial parks and some office buildings. At industrial parks, our customers want their tenants to come back to properties that have not been vandalized. Because of social distancing, our office building customers want to take every precaution they can to make it a safe environment for their tenants and visitors alike. Condos have stepped up security because there are more people - staying at home, studying from home and working from home as workplaces and schools are closed. Our security officers observe a lot of people walking around with nothing to do, so there is room for mischief.

How have you protected your security personnel from a health perspective? We have been supplying PPE equipment to our employees with '30-day kits', which we renew every month. We provide facemasks, gloves, disinfecting wipes. Our clients are actually requiring our personnel to have this equipment. Our employees are wearing and using this equipment for both their health and the overall health of the sites they are patrolling.

In this environment, if the need arises, how do you physically intervene in a world that is promoting social distancing? If our security officers witness a suspicious vehicle and there is more than one person, we instruct our employees to call the police. If it is just an individual that seems suspicious our officers have to question them and engage with them.

Do you see any barriers now to recruiting new employees? Yes. A security officer in the State of Florida needs 40 hours of training through a security academy and in order to obtain a State of Florida Security Guard license. We are a licensed security academy, so if we find someone with the appropriate background and experience and personal skills, we have a good candidate for employment. We are still conducting virtual interviews and can conduct the 40-hour certification process virtually. But the bottleneck is at the State level, since the Division of Licensing at the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is closed. This is a huge issue in our industry; we can only deploy licensed security personnel.

What do you look for in the people you hire? We look at their background, conduct a drug test, look at their customer service skills. English is a requirement, and being bi-lingual is a requirement for some locations. We don't only recruit people that have the certification in normal circumstances. If we have a good person with a good resume, we can make them an offer, put them through the academy, and hire them once they have the State license.

Any recommendations for businesses? Yes – to not overlook the need for security even now when businesses are belt-tightening. Social distancing seems to be increasing the need for security, not decreasing it. There are different security solutions alternatives depending on budgets we as a company are offering.