



# CRIME FREE MULTI-HOUSING PROGRAM

COMMUNITY SERVICES DIVISION • NEW WESTMINSTER POLICE SERVICE

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## This Property Is Under Surveillance

**W**hen a crime occurs in an apartment building, such as a vehicle or laundry room break-in, many times there is no eyewitness, unless the property has surveillance equipment. This evidence can be a valuable source of information, if it is set up correctly.

There are many different types of closed-circuit television (CCTV) systems. Most systems today typically use digital video recorders (DVR) that are either PC or non-PC based. Instead of recording video and audio data to a VHS tape, the DVR records to a computer hard drive or removable media such as a CD or DVD.

The advantages of using digital recordings over VHS videotapes to record information are many. Cassette tapes are bulky, vulnerable to loss of data and have to be replaced frequently. Re-using tapes to save space and cost causes poor picture quality. With a digital recording system, information stored on hard drives can be protected more effectively from loss due to tampering, accidents and operating errors.

Video and audio stored on your DVR can be accessed quickly and efficiently, viewed or retrieved locally or remotely across the internet and by multiple users, and can be tied to alarm systems. In researching DVR's, you will quickly learn that all DVR's are not alike. Price, quality, performance and user applications vary widely.

Continued on page 2: CCTV

### Keep these points in mind when setting up a surveillance system:

- 1) Strategic placement of cameras is more important than the number of cameras.
- 2) ID cameras should have field of view set to cover stomach to head. These cameras should be zoomed in at or near head level to provide good quality shots from which a person can be identified.
- 3) Cameras should be in colour unless the area under surveillance has extremely low light. Colour cameras are normally only slightly more expensive than black & white cameras and some vendors no longer sell black & white cameras. Cameras and specifically their lenses are the most overlooked part of a surveillance system. They are critically important when it comes to image quality. Lenses can make or break a system as they do the focusing. Using high quality name brand cameras and lenses is important.
- 4) Ensure sufficient lighting in areas that are under surveillance.
- 5) Images from the surveillance system should be accurately date and time stamped.
- 6) Use the lowest compression possible (i.e., *larger* file sizes taking up *more*, not less, hard drive space). The higher the compression, the worse the image quality will be. It is better to only have enough hard drive space to save one week of good quality video than four weeks of poor quality video.
- 7) Images from the surveillance system should be recorded at a minimum of 640 X 480 pixels in frame mode or 640 X 240 pixels in single field mode.
- 8) Surveillance system should have a CD/DVD writer and/or USB/Firewire ports in order to access files. This can prevent police from having to seize the system's hard drive in serious cases.
- 9) Ensure recording device is in a secured area and cameras are securely placed.
- 10) *Avoid Quad systems.* Since four camera views (instead of one) take up each frame of video, it is very unlikely a suspect could be identified as the camera images are ¼ the size of other systems.



**NW Fire Inspector Brent Joel demonstrates how to use a fire extinguisher at Cedar Court Apts annual Crime Free Safety Social. CFMH member since 1997.**

## Safety Social

An important part of the Crime Free Multi-Housing Program is the annual Resident Safety Social. The event renews the property's membership in the CFMH program and is a great way to get all residents involved in the safety and security of their home.

A representative from the New Westminster Police Service presents information on apartment, personal, and auto security. It gives residents an opportunity to meet each other and develop a community of "eyes and ears." Other presentations focus on emergency preparedness and fire safety for apartment living.

In working together, management and residents can keep their residence a desirable place to call home.

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### Continued from page 1: CCTV

To make your CCTV system useful to a police investigation, picture quality is extremely important. Unfortunately, scenarios from popular television shows like *CSI* don't exist in real life. Clear images of suspects cannot be created out of reflections from glass or dark and blurry images. When deciding on a video surveillance system, do not determine the quality of images from live feed. Live feed is uncompressed and will always be clear unless there is a problem with a specific camera. Instead, view video clips that have been exported from the system (i.e., previously recorded images) to determine image quality.

## Fire Safety Tips

Fire safety is everyone's responsibility and each resident should plan to be fire safe. Most high-rise buildings (over ten stories) are constructed of fire resistant materials and contain closed stairwells. Fires in these buildings are usually confined to individual rooms or apartments, furnishings or possibly one floor.

Two or three storey wood frame buildings have either enclosed stairwells, or if an older building, external fire escapes. Enclosed stairwells have fire doors that must be kept closed at all times!

An apartment or high-rise fire is no cause for panic if you plan ahead. Post these tips:

### MANAGERS:

- Ensure your Fire Safety Plan is current. The plans should be posted in a visible area on each floor and include floor plans and evacuation procedures.
- Know how your fire panel works. This helps to identify the location of the fire alarm.
- Have your fire alarms, sprinklers, smoke detectors, and extinguishers serviced regularly.
- Ensure your fire doors are kept closed. Check the doors, including suite doors, for any gaps that may occur due to a building settling and shifting over time. Repair where necessary.
- Keep a current list of residents in an accessible place.
- Know which residents may need assistance out of their units.
- Conduct and practice fire drills with the residents.

Remember, a surveillance system may deter some thieves, but not all. A monitored surveillance system is more effective in catching a suspect "red-handed," but don't let your guard down because a system is in place. Other crime prevention tactics should also be actively engaged. To maximize your property's security, get involved in the Crime Free Multi-Housing Program.

*Technical information provided by Jeff Tannar, Forensic Video Analyst, New Westminster Police.*

# Landscaping For Crime Prevention

The bushes and trees that make your property attractive can also have positive crime prevention effects. Plants with sharp thorns can deter someone from climbing over fences or balconies. Thick plants can make an area difficult to cut through and planter boxes can alter traffic patterns. By using the right plant for the right area, your property can benefit.

Crime prevention defines territory, access control and natural surveillance. Territory is the method of stating what is “public” property and what is “private”. Fences and hedges define territory. To someone walking along the public sidewalk, a fence or hedge clearly indicates that they have crossed to an area that has changed ownership.

Access Control is the ability of either allowing or blocking entry to an area. It can also define the desired pathway. An example of placing a planter box diagonally across a corner grass area that was traditionally being cut by pe-

destrians forces walkers to walk around the planter box.

Natural Surveillance is the ability of allowing people to view areas beyond their property and keep a watchful eye on any suspicious activity. It also provides ‘eyes and ears’ to your property, especially lower units and side exits to the building. One should strike a balance between providing privacy and crime prevention.

When landscaping for crime prevention, keep in mind the height and width of the mature plant. Ideally the planting should not block natural surveillance. A solid wall of 8-foot cedar trees will define territory and privacy; however will also block natural surveillance by providing cover to anyone on the other side wishing to break into ground-level units. Ideally, hedges should be maintained at a height no more than four-feet and trees should be limbed up from the ground at a height of at least five-feet.

Plants with thorns are ideal around balcony areas. The *barberry* species (Wintergreen or Warty) have sharp spikey leaves and can be cultivated into a hedge. Holly bushes are also an ideal choice. Cultivate the plants to grow at least one-foot in depth and no higher than the balcony railing or bottom window ledge.

Other considerations to keep in mind: lighting – trees should not block lights or cast shadows providing hiding spaces. Landscaping can also discourage graffiti. Climbing vines and trellis’ make it difficult to tag a wall surface.

With regular maintenance, the landscaping around your property will add to its appeal to residents and provide a safe home.



**Thorny plants around ground level balconies discourages trespassers.**



**This planter box forces pedestrians to walk around corner, rather than cut across.**

# Parkade Alarm Stops Apartment Sneak Thieves

by Frank Fouchalk

This area is one the largest security concerns for apartment dwellers today. It has been the birth of more violations than any other area in the multi-housing family. It's knowingly the easiest way for a thief to gain entry.

I'm talking about the overhead garage door entry area. The area that spurs conversation on a daily basis between residents, especially when one drives in and out of the building oblivious to the world around them.

All the parkade stop signs in the world don't mean a thing to the person who doesn't have six seconds to wait for an overhead garage door to close. A person who is more interested in catching the 6 o'clock news than a burglar in the act. Shame on this person who individually is the biggest security risk in the building. A selfish, non caring person who values their time more than the safe keeping of the building's residents. So how do we deal with these weak links who constantly jeopardize building security by ignoring these "stop and watch" areas.

These areas are extremely hard to screen, however there is an excellent product out there that will monitor your overhead garage door beautifully. It is an alarm system that protects illegal entry to the parkade via the overhead garage door. This is done by allowing only one vehicle or person at a time to enter through the door. If a second vehicle or person sneaks into the parkade before the door descends, it sets off an alarm in the building parkade. The alarm is loud enough to not only scare the perpetrator away but also alert the residents in the building of the intrusion.

This system works by transmitting a two stage infrared sensor (eye beam) from one side of the overhead garage door threshold to a receiver on the other side of the door. This beam is similar to the "photo eye" that prevents the overhead garage door from descending on vehicles. Once the door has been activated the first stage of the sensor allows one vehicle or person through the door. Once through the door, the second stage of the sensor kicks into action monitoring the door for intruders until it fully descends.

There is an alarm control panel and a keypad, usually installed in a secured room in the parkade. If a false alarm or intrusion sets off the alarm, you can turn the system off by entering a selected code (similar to your home alarm). If nobody is around to turn off the alarm, don't worry because after a set time (to be determined by management) the system will turn itself off and reset the alarm automatically. This system may also be set-up on a timer, whereas you may control what times you want the door to be monitored. For more information on this system, contact your local alarm professional.

*Frank Fouchalk is a locksmith and security consultant with over 17 years experience. More tips on home security can be found at [www.yourhomesecurity.ca](http://www.yourhomesecurity.ca)*



The Crime Free Multi-Housing Program is designed to help owners, managers, and residents of multi-unit rental property work with the police and other agencies to keep illegal and nuisance activity off such property. The result of this team effort is a safer, more habitable environment in which to live.

The program consists of three phases:  
*Phase One:* Residential Managers attend an 8-hour workshop  
*Phase Two:* Meet minimum requirements from a Security Assessment  
*Phase Three:* Management hosts an annual Resident Safety Social.

Following completion of all three phases, the management will earn the privilege of posting signs on the property and using the CFMH Program logo in advertising.

For more information, contact:  
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