

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE, ORGANIZED ACTIVITY CONTINUE TO BE PRIMARY RETAIL CHALLENGES

When it comes to identifying threats and mitigating risks of all types, people and partnerships are the key.



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Security Management conducted interviews with three prominent security professionals in the retail sector to gauge the current landscape of retail security operations: what's important, what's causing headaches, and how are they successfully fulfilling their mission? Alan F. Greggo, CPP, CFE, senior regional asset protection manager, Microsoft Corporation; Peter Chie, CFI, operating vice president, asset protection and risk management, Bloomingdale's; and Kathleen Smith, CFI, vice president of loss prevention, Albertsons/Safeway Inc. are all members of the ASIS International Retail Asset Protection Council and have more than 75 years of combined security experience.

On workplace violence being a primary focus:

Greggo: "When you look at it through risk assessment, I know what my primary assets that need to be secure are: the people who work in my stores and the customers. And a primary risk is that acts of violence can hurt them. We're going to do everything we can to reduce that risk."

Chie: "When you think about the retail environment and how it has evolved over the last decade, the typical mall environment has shifted from a place where people would go to shop for clothing or other merchandise to becoming more of a lifestyle experience. You're seeing a lot of an-

chors going away and being replaced with higher end restaurants and movie theaters—lifestyle types of venues being created in malls to transform shopping spaces into multipurpose destinations and increase customer traffic. For the domestic and international terrorist, they see this and think 'This is a group of soft targets. I can do a lot of damage to a lot of people all at once.'"

On security's role in preparing retail staff for potentially violent situations:

Smith: "We have some computer-based training that all employees are required to complete, and that is what really sets the baseline. After that, you periodically reinforce what is in the training. When

there is an incident at a location, it's a learning experience you talk through at that location, but then you can use that at other locations. And it's not just that, things that are in the news at the time can rise to the top and be a good source to reinforce the security messaging that the training provides."

Greggo: "Keep in mind, in retail, employees of the store are focused on sales, their goals, and on engaging and creating the customer experience. The threat of violence is not the first thing on their minds. The training is designed to give them something to fall back on when a situation occurs."

On working to mitigate the effectiveness of organized retail crime, or ORC:

Greggo: "ORC is still a big cost to retailers. We have some techniques that are helping—the organized retail crime associations, or ORCAs, for example. These are partnerships between retailers in an area together with law enforcement and the courts. They get together regularly, discuss the issues affecting their area, learn from each other, and learn how the three components can most effectively work together to prevent criminals from being successful. These associations have had quite an impact. Of course, criminals are always changing their methods and they're always able to recruit people to assist their efforts. It is a constant cat and mouse game."

Chie: "The trends in merchandise theft and methods they're using have actually become less sophisticated in my opinion. Many organization's security protocols are out there on YouTube, Google, or the dark web: they know if a retailer has a hands-off policy; they know if the security representative can't go past a certain point outside the store. And they're using that knowledge against companies. Additionally, rather than trying to locate and sneak out with a few high-value items, retailers are seeing more grab-and-run type of activity, where three or four bad actors at the same time are grabbing a bunch

of coats, for example, and running out the door. This more aggressive approach is harder to mitigate. We have data analysis tools that identify patterns and analyze when and where someone might try this. We communicate with other stores in the area. We're getting better at being able to predict some of the things that might occur and prevent them from happening, but criminals are always changing their methods, working to be creative, so it requires constant vigilance."

Smith: "We try to build a predictive model based on a lot of different data points, from social media posts to crime data to individual store reports. We utilize all the information we can get to try to predict the types of criminal activity that are likely to occur in a given area and put procedures in place to protect against them. We always need to be changing it up, because they're always changing it up. Our goal is to prevent negative events from happening."

On the relationship between store and corporate retail security:

Smith: "You want to become a partner for the retail directors. You want to cultivate a relationship where you as security are not the bad guys, the ones trying to restrict what they do or are only there to enforce rules and regulations. You want a proactive mindset that is solutions focused. We share the same goals, so if we enter a dialog and come to a balanced solution together, that's going to be win-win."

Greggo: "We need to position ourselves as being trusted advisors to the retail business. When risks occur in a retail setting, we want to be the first people that leadership and store managers think of. We want them to reach out to us with what they see and collaboratively work on a plan to address the risk, a plan that makes sense for them and protects the business. It's not us dictating. It's us listening to the stakeholder knowledge and providing expert security and protection feedback to reach an agreed-upon solution."

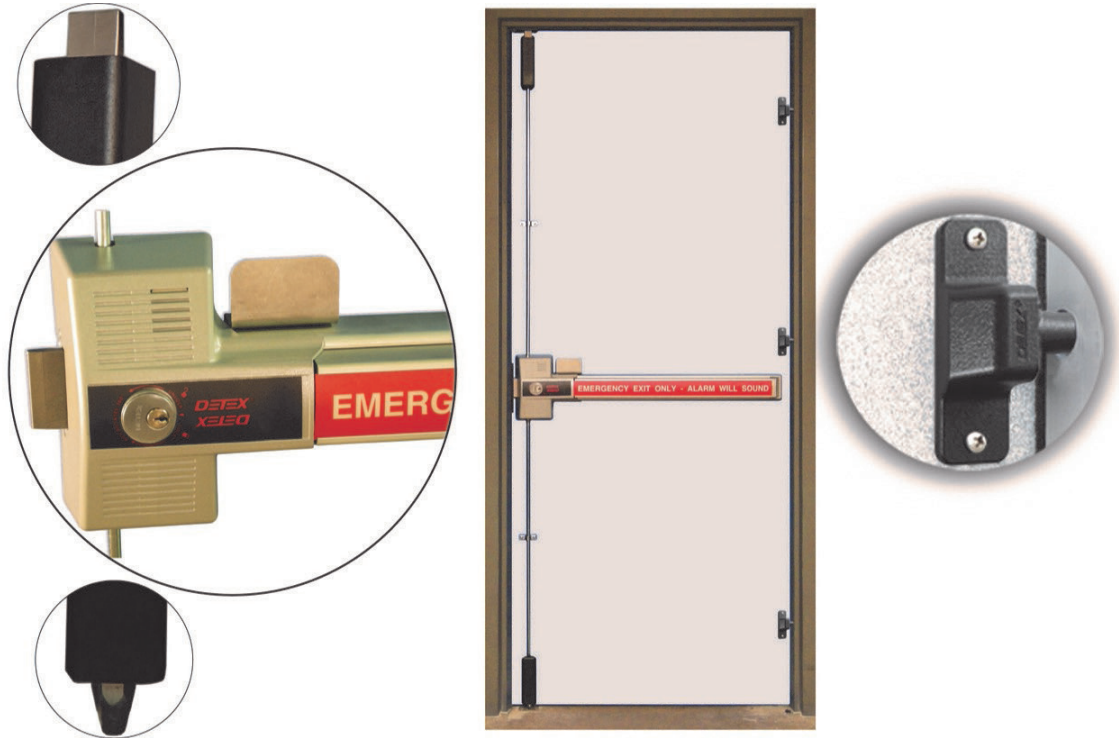
On things they are on the watch for or trying to accomplish:

Smith: "Technology is rapidly changing the world of retail. Just think of all the new and developing ways people are shopping and the number of new mobile pay solutions that are being used. Every new development is a potential opportunity that thieves will work to exploit. Staying ahead of that game while wanting to provide customers with the level of service and access that they want is a real challenge. Security needs to be involved with IT and service providers to a higher degree than before."

Chie: "We use and employ a lot of different types of resources, from access controls to cameras to data analysis. But the single most important resource—without a doubt—is our people. Whether it is workplace theft, a data breach, workplace violence—in all security situations, our people are our number one asset. We have a very robust training program and we work to include them as partners. The key to it all is getting them to understand just how important they are. If we have a gap, if there is an opportunity for someone to take negative action, a well-educated workforce is our best defense against it and our best proactive resource to identify and help us close the gap before there is a negative impact to the organization."

Greggo: "I think it's an ESRM [enterprise security risk management] approach. Security is not a static function. It's constantly changing and so we need to take a cyclic approach where we are constantly identifying our assets, assessing risks, and devising ways to best protect those assets from the risks. We're doing two things: we are seeing and responding to threats, but we're also trying to prevent those threats from ever arising in the first place. If we are collaborators across the organization, working with associates on the floor as well as the leadership of the company, that's how we proactively create a safe, secure environment that positions the company to reach its goals."

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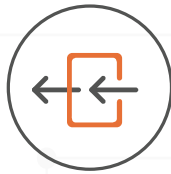
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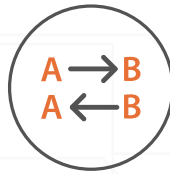
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