

Considerations for Armed v. Unarmed Security Guards

Deciding What Kind of Security Should Be Hired

It is important to know that hiring a security contractor, whether limited or extensive, armed or unarmed, is a serious business and not to be taken lightly.

Different kinds of security guards are appropriate for different situations. The most important issue is whether you would like security at your site to be provided by a uniformed or plainclothes guard. Depending upon your security goals, hire a contractor who will provide service that fits your needs.

- The main goal of a uniformed security guard is deterrence.
- The main goal for hiring a plainclothes security guard is apprehension.

After deciding what kind of security to hire, you must determine whether the security guard should be armed or unarmed. There are many costs and benefits to be considered when choosing an armed versus unarmed security guard. The following should clarify in what manner security should be provided:

Armed Security Guards

- It is important to determine if hiring armed security guards meets your institution's expectations for security.
- Realize that armed guards may utilize deadly force.
- Determine the training qualifications the security guards have with firearms.
- Determine the contractor's shoot policy and the use of weapons with regard to deadly force
- Keep in mind moral questions when hiring an armed security guard. You should also determine whether the members of your institution will accept an armed guard on the premises. Please note that special care should be taken if your institution serves many young people. Schools should be particularly concerned with the message an armed guard conveys to students, parents and staff.
- Consider the cost effectiveness of an armed guard. They are much more expensive than unarmed security, due to licensing and training requirements.
- Decide whether the presence of a weapon may escalate the possible use of force and violence which otherwise may not occur.

Unarmed Security Guards

- Use of deadly force is not an issue.
- Unarmed security guards often provide the same deterrent as armed guards without the risk of deadly force.
- The protection afforded by unarmed guards is less expensive and incurs less liability and insurance

(Excerpted from ADL security manual)

Hiring Unarmed Security Guards

Many people underestimate the power of hiring an unarmed security guard, because in their estimation a security guard that is unarmed will not be able to do too much. Unarmed security officer's main responsibility is to observe and report, which means that they are trained to prevent crimes from happening in first place. A security officer that patrols a property regardless if it is a constructions site, an apartment building, a retail property or any other property will prevent a high percentage of crime from happening through his presence. Many perpetrators of theft, vandalism and burglaries will not choose a place if there is potential risk to be caught.

Nevertheless, it is highly important that the security guard is well trained, motivated and held accountable. The most effective officers are the ones that frequently patrol the site they are responsible for. That shows potential perpetrators that the guard is active and vigilant. Frequent patrols also increase the security guard's visibility. Many guard companies will unfortunately provide security guards that are not held accountable, which diminishes their affectivity. After a while the best officers will stop patrolling and following post orders if they are not held accountable.

Good security companies will create accountability by employing various electronic monitoring devices and by frequent supervisory visits. Every unarmed guard should be trained by a specific security plan and should be provided site specific post orders with a detailed description of responsibilities and tasks that have to be performed. There should be no room for misunderstandings. That will enable supervisors to check for specific tasks and hold guards accountable.

Well trained, professional unarmed security guards that are supervised and held accountable are a great weapon against crime. Not only will criminals rather choose targets that are unguarded, but officers will report unusual activity to the owner and to authorities if necessary. In the case of theft or vandalism or if an incident occurs they will serve as witnesses and notify authorities. In the United States unarmed security guards are the first line of defense against crimes as theft and vandalism. In Los Angeles security guards outnumber police officers by 4 to 1. Clients should know that an officer's most important weapon is not a gun, but his training, his common sense and his vigilance. When a security officer is well trained and skilled he will not only protect the client's business, but also be a great representative for his company and the client.

<http://www.vpgsecurity.com/hiring-unarmed-security-guards,b46.html>

When to hire an armed security guard

Many clients make the decision of hiring an armed or unarmed security guard without knowing the exact responsibilities of a security officer. Therefore they should always consult with security consultant from different security companies before making a

decision. While an unarmed security guard will give you a false sense of security when employed at the wrong post, an armed guard employed at a post he should not be will create a huge liability for the security company and their client. Additionally, employing an armed security guard will cost a lot more, which means if employed at the wrong post the client pays money for something he does not need.

The responsibility of security guards is to observe and report, which means they can only use force if they or a third party is in imminent danger. The force they can use must be justified. In case of an armed security guard they must be attacked with a gun or fear for their life or the life of others before he is allowed to use a gun. In general if client foresees a situation where their property would be attacked with a gun or employees or customers or the security guard would be put in life threatening situations the security guard should be armed. In turn if the security in all likelihood will not be put in such situations it is absolutely unnecessary and sometimes even dangerous for the security guard to be armed.

A weapon being present will always embellish and sometimes escalate a situation. For example hiring armed security guards to protect from picketers is not recommendable. It will outrage the employees and create dangerous situations that are unnecessary. In normal residential areas and apartment buildings it is also unnecessary to employ an armed guard, because the security guard will almost never employ the gun. The risks of shooting an innocent bystander are too high. Additionally, what potential situation would require the security officer to use a gun? Today about twenty percent of apartment building employ armed guards, which as mentioned creates liability for them and wastes their money, because security guards will almost never use them. Exceptions are gang infested properties and properties where either the life of security personnel, apartment employees or tenants has been threatened. If a weapon has been brandished or seen it should be mandatory for the security guard to be armed. In that situation it will create a liability for the client and the security company if the security guard is unarmed.

The client and the security company should always be aware of what risk factors they are trying to mitigate. If the client is trying to protect their jewelry store or pharmacy from being robbed it would not make any sense to employ an unarmed security guard, because robbers will come armed. On the other hand if the security officer is protecting a construction site the worst case scenario is that perpetrators will steal materials or vandalize the property. In that case the responsibility of the officer is to prevent or to call the proper authorities. By law they are not allowed to use a gun. Therefore it would be superfluous to hire an armed guard. A good security company with professional experienced security consultants should discuss these issues with their clients and help them to make the right decision.

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