Is social media causing security issues for your community?

It used to be that your neighbor had only so far to spread someone's private information gleaned by living next door. Now, that nosy neighbor is probably one of the majority of people in the U.S. with a digital presence...and the intention to use it!

Apartment and condominium residents face a particularly unusual problem in that so many people they might not even know can publicly reveal their whereabouts, extended absences, and even personal practices and preferences. And they can reveal those secrets to a very wide audience that might include nefarious individuals who will use that information to commit crimes or become general nuisances. The security problem posed for apartment and condo property managers is a serious one.

A property manager really can't stop residents from publicizing private information about residents, but that same property manager must develop and enforce security provisions that overcome the imprudent disclosure of personal details about others. And the issue of ubiquitous, instant and permanently recorded information is only going to get more difficult to deal with. Some of the most engaged minds on technology met late in 2015 in Davos, Switzerland, to assess where we are in technology and identify what they called <u>"tipping points"</u> – the place where the world reaches critical mass on a specific technological matter. For example, they defined the tipping point for digital presence as the time when 80% of people have a presence on the Internet. These practitioners and policymakers believe within seven short years 80% of people worldwide will be present on the Internet, meaning at least some information will be available about them to multiple others, indeed others they don't know and don't want to know.

The word transparency is often used in a positive light, but when you are responsible for the security of residents at one or more multiunit residential complexes, transparency can be synonymous with TMI – too much information. And if your security system is linked to the Internet, who knows, it might also have an online presence...one you don't know about.

A digital presence can lead to stalking, dissemination of false information about your complex to a wide swath of people, hacking, physical crimes at your building, identity crimes that could open your property management staff to accusations of negligence, and even gang targeting in response to an incident at or statement about your building.

When was the last time your security team considered the issue of ubiquitous publicly available information regarding your residents, your staff, and your building? By discussing the issues at your next staff meeting, you might find you already have a problem. If not, you're ahead of the game. Implementation of processes and procedures that respond to the new digital "transparency" can help make your apartment building or condominium complex a safer place to live and work.

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