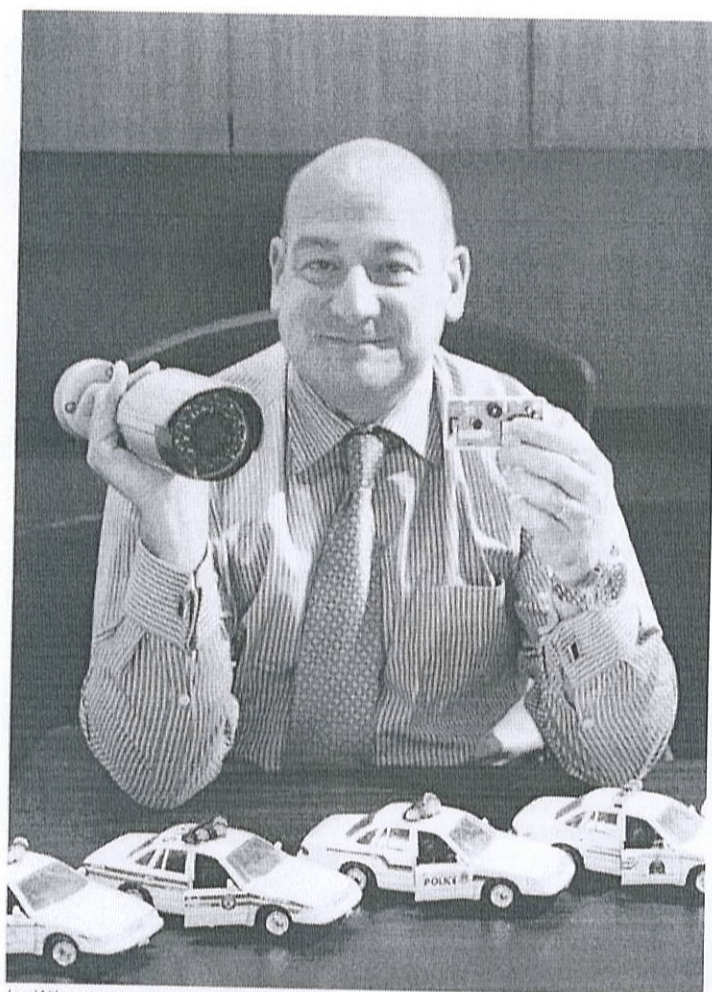


trade talk

TIGHTENING UP

Construction site security takes on greater importance as recession lags

by Tricia Radison



Joe Wilson is a security expert with Sonitrol.

Increasing security on construction sites is one way contractors can make the most of slower periods.

"There are opportunities for due diligence," says Sgt. Mark Dumont of Calgary Police Services Crime Prevention Unit. "Now is the time to really implement your security measures—when it's not as busy."

Dumont deals with new home construction site theft but says the basic concepts of site security apply to larger sites as well. Many of the tactics are common sense activities, such as maintaining key control by keeping a log of keys and their users, that are hard to keep up when struggling to stay on schedule during busy periods.

Theft of expensive heavy equipment, materials and tools may also increase due to the recession, observes Joe Wilson, a security expert with Sonitrol who is based in British Columbia. (Sonitrol has offices in Calgary, Edmonton, Red Deer, and Lethbridge.) But he adds that construction sites are always vulnerable.

"Vandalism, I'll suggest, is a greater risk than actual theft," Wilson says. "They're getting inside and they're kicking in doors and windows and walls. Opening up water valves and flooding the place. Starting fires. They think it's fun."

Wilson has seen many criminals in action on construction sites thanks to

his company's SonaVision monitored video, a system that allows police to catch the bad guys immediately. Infrared video cameras and motion detectors are mounted on poles around the perimeter. If heat and motion are detected, the cameras send video to the Sonitrol Operations Centre, where staff members check for a person or vehicle then alert police.

"Police response across North America is documented at between three and five minutes," he says.

The technology solves several problems. Other video cameras may record the crime, but often police are unable to



Cameras and motion sensors like these can be placed around a construction site to detect intruders.

TIPS FOR SECURING YOUR SITE

These suggestions from Michael J. Arata Jr., security expert and author of *Construction Site Security*, can help protect your materials and equipment.

- Line up your heavy equipment so you, your crew, and even police driving by can immediately see if something's missing.
- Use kill switches on heavy equipment so machines can't be hotwired.
- Regularly walk the perimeter to check fencing for holes or spots where it may have blown over.
- Consider portable, motion-sensor lighting and closed circuit TV cameras, especially on large sites.
- Arrange for on-site security personnel who can alert police as soon as the site is breached.

act due to image quality or because the criminal has already escaped. Guard dogs are a pain and, says Wilson, can be befriended or immobilized. And security guards are only human, potentially falling asleep or simply unable to keep an eye on the entire site.

Wilson advises sites be kept dark at night. The reason: A lit site allows thieves to window shop before striking and makes it easier to navigate the site during the robbery.

Says Wilson: "Civilians think light deters because you'd never go out on a site that's all lit up; somebody might see you. A criminal doesn't care." ☐