Article Side

Responsibilities of a security guard

by Charles Willis

Article published on April 24th 2012 | Home Security

Many clients and many security guards themselves are under the impression that security officers have the same responsibilities that police officer would have. It is important for a security company to communicate to their officers, supervisors, but also their clients that the main responsibility of a guard is to observe and report. He is absolutely not a police officer and does not have the same skills, the same rights and the same responsibilities. Any company that will promise a client that a security officer will catch criminals and run after them and put them in handcuffs is blatantly misinforming the client.

A security guard is responsible to observe report, interdict and prevent. The only time the security officer should put himself in harmâ€™s way is if another person is in physical danger and needs his help. Other than that the most important task of an officer is to prevent. Although a guard is not a police officer he can prevent crime and provide security and safety if skilled and well trained. The best officers will be active, vigilant and extremely visible, which will deter potential perpetrators. As an example there are hundreds of unguarded construction sites in Los Angeles. A professional thief, gang member or vandal will move on to a less well guarded property if he realizes that a skilled officer is guarding the initially chosen property.

Another good example would be a shopping center where panhandlers constantly bother customers of stores in the shopping center and vagrants try to sleep on the property at night. A security guard does not have the same right of arresting vagrants and panhandlers. The security officer is not allowed to leave the property he is hired for to pursue a perpetrator. The panhandler or person that is loitering at the property must be given a warning that has to be documented before the police can arrest him. Nevertheless, security officers will be extremely valuable and effective in protecting the property and in keeping vagrants and panhandlers out of the property if they do it the right way. Establishing a great working relationship with local law enforcement, enforcing a zero tolerance policy for loitering and panhandling, consistently ask vagrants to leave the property immediately and helping the police to make arrests will send the message that the shopping center is off limits. Vagrants and panhandlers will look for a property where they can go after their business unobstructed.

Security Guards are not police officers and do not possess the skills and the rights of police officers, but that does not mean that they cannot be extremely effective in protecting properties and businesses. It depends on the right security plan, the right post orders and on having and communicating the right expectations to the client and the security officers. A motivated guard, who understands what, is expected of him and who is encouraged to work within his boundaries will be able to provide excellent security services. A good security company will not make promises that their security officers will have the same rights and methods like police officers, but it will employ security officers effectively and within their means. That will make properties safer and accomplish the clientâ€™s goals.

Article Source:
http://www.articleside.com/home-security-articles/responsibilities-of-a-security-guard.htm - Article Side

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Article Keywords:
security company in Los Angeles,Los Angeles Security Guards,Dallas Fort Worth Security Guards

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