

Global Terrorism – Looking Beyond Duty of Care

In response to recent incidents widely reported in the global media, a prominent security challenge faced by organisations is to ensure that their duty-of-care compliance measures have the reach and impact to deal with the growth of global terrorism and an evolving risk picture.

Terrorist incidents in Paris, Ottawa, London, Tunis, Sydney, and Copenhagen, among others, expose vulnerabilities and highlight the risks companies face, which were previously assumed to be confined to very different, less-secure environments.

As such, companies have to be prepared for this evolving threat to ensure the duty of care of their employees. If not, the moral, legal and financial implications could be significant.

Duty of Care

Employers have a duty of care to their employees, which includes taking reasonable steps to ensure employee health, safety and well-being. A terrorist incident could impact an organisation in a number of ways. Examples include injuries to employees, physical damage to property, disruption to business processes and supply chain, and long-lasting reputational impact. Accordingly, organisations must ensure their preparedness for the risks associated with a terrorist incident; even if the actual risks of such an incident are clear.

Traditionally, organisations' concerns and security measures have been focused on high-risk environments. Most organisations that operate in non-permissive or semi-permissive environments have robust plans in place to prepare for the risks associated with these environments. However, duty-of-care obligations and the growing risk of unpredictable lone-wolf style attacks in unconventional environments increases the risk faced by companies and increases the requirement for a security management strategy that accounts for possible risks in all environments. Therefore, organisations have to think beyond duty of care.

Implementing a Practical Security Plan

Being overprotective of employees is neither practical nor desirable; however, businesses must ensure they are taking action to support and inform their employees of the risks and that the measures are scalable.

Suggested actions that can be implemented by any organisation have been separated into three security categories:

1. Monitor

Understanding the organisation's exposure and identifying at-risk people and assets is key. Monitoring of events, threat levels, trends and potential flash points is vital to understanding the risk to an organisation while ensuring appropriate security measures are in place.

Similarly, creating a culture of reporting in the organisation helps reduce the risk. Encouraging an attitude of 'see something, say something' helps identify unusual activity at an early stage and increases the likelihood of identifying a threat in advance.

2. Prevent

Considering security in advance - ideally in the design phase - ensures controls are in place and are appropriate to the threat level; the ability to increase the level of controls commensurate to the risk is also vital. Awareness training helps employees be prepared to respond, by building the mind-set to be diligent in the face of the risk

3. Respond

In the event that an incident does occur, employees must be prepared to respond fully and promptly to minimise the impact and reduce unnecessary losses. Response plans that include clearly defined roles and responsibilities are vital. It is also necessary that staff members are comfortable with these in advance of any event.

Moving Beyond Duty of Care

Recent incidents have demonstrated that terror attacks can occur against any target, in any environment. Ensuring that a full risk mitigation program is in place in all environments, using the monitor, prevent, respond model, will help an organisation build their resilience to start to think beyond duty of care.

Preparation begins with information, awareness and preparation and response should be the final option. A well rounded security management plan ensures duty-of-care requirements are covered, even in traditionally safe environments.

