Lock it down

Typically, when there’s news of a lockdown, the media is reporting about schools. And while lockdown is certainly critical to school security, there are other buildings—such as hospitals and commercial office buildings—that should seriously consider adding lockdown capabilities.

With that, it’s important to find reputable lockdown product. In recent years, many companies have invented new products to allow for faster and easier lockdown. However, many of these solutions result in products that are often less safe in other emergency situations, such as non-fatal violence or fire emergencies.

Therefore, when Gottwalt is asked to consult about lockdown, he discusses the following with architects and building owners:

1. **Card or fob-based access control**: “Access control is the foundation of lockdown security,” says Gottwalt. “This gives building owners the ability to control who enters openings—specifically, when and where. It also provides for an audit trail to aid in investigations.”

2. **The why behind lockdown**: Access control isn’t adequate in the event of an emergency. That’s why every facility—from retail and commercial spaces to corporate offices, healthcare facilities and more—should include an overall emergency lockdown plan, one part of which is electronic hardware with remote locking capability. “Before we determine a lockdown plan, I ask about the security threat to the facility,” says Gottwalt. “We discuss human and physical assets, as well as the necessary barriers that need to be put in place.”

3. **The desired speed of lockdown**: “The ability to secure a facility quickly and easily cannot be overstated,” he says. “Locking down a facility by key can take several minutes. If there’s a perceived need for faster lockdown, then an electronic solution should be specified.”

In fact, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s “Active Shooter Event: Quick Reference Guide,” approximately 33 percent of attacks occur in business settings—compared to 29 percent in school environments. Additionally, 12 percent of attacks occur in “other” buildings, such as hospital emergency rooms, for example.

If you have a health care or commercial real estate client, it’s important to introduce the idea of lockdown early. “The sooner lockdown is considered, the easier it is to integrate it into the design of a building,” says T.J. Gottwalt, Strategic Architectural Account Manager for Allegion.
Finally, Gottwalt reviews the floor plan with clients. “We discuss how to compartmentalize a potential threat in stairwells, tenant spaces and other areas, or how to quickly safeguard people from that threat, given the layout of the building.”

A building—and the human and physical assets inside it—is an investment worth protecting. By designing a well-thought-out access control and lockdown strategy, you're enabling building owners to secure their investment for years to come.

Designing a comprehensive security strategy
A comprehensive security strategy should be an ongoing part of designing a safe environment. Door hardware and electronic software that enable access control and lockdown are a key part of that strategy; however, they are only one part of an overall strategy. For that reason, Gottwalt recommends that building owners consult a Certified Protection Professional (CPP) to develop a comprehensive lockdown strategy that includes:

- Safety committee—composed of administrators, security, IT, facilities management and emergency responders from the community—to regularly assess current assets, threats, hardware, procedures, etc.
- Policies and procedures that define how you'll control access at your facility, along with staff roles and responsibilities for implementing those procedures. Protocols and actions should be clearly defined, documented and practiced regularly.
- Staff training of policies and procedures, including staff accountability

Centralized lockdown:
- Centralized lockdown is initiated by an authorized individual
- Simultaneous lockdown across a building or campus occurs when a combination of access control software and hardware are in place
- Hardwired is ideal in new construction, whereas wireless is more affordable in retrofit situations

Remote local lockdown:
- Standalone electronic solution provides instant local lockdown
- Lockdown is activated by a remote fob within proximity of a door
- Requires individual with an authorized fob to put door in lockdown mode

Manual lockdown:
- Keys manually lock down a room or space
- Lockdown speed depends on how fast individual gets to door and locks it
- Requires the highest level of staff accountability

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