



## Guest Column

Security consultant **Jeff Aldridge** discusses the benefits of a security assessment of your facility.

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# Taking the measure of your security procedures

## How a security assessment can make your hospital safer

**E**very hospital has security procedures in place. But how do you know that your measures meet national norms? A hospital security assessment can help you ensure that you're doing what's needed to protect patients, employees, and visitors.

A security assessment analyzes existing protocols, policies, and procedures, as well as physical security vulnerabilities. Findings are analyzed and written recommendations are made to control potential threats.

From these recommendations, the hospital can develop a comprehensive security management program to teach, implement, monitor, assess, and improve existing procedures.

The assessment should be based on a widely accepted standard, such as the new 2004 JCAHO Environment of Care Standard, which requires facilities to perform hazard surveillance surveys at least every six months in all areas where patients are served, and in other areas of the hospital annually.

The assessment should identify environmental deficiencies, hazards, and unsafe practices. It can then be used to help the hospital to develop its own self-assessment procedure to meet the new JCAHO standards, which require hospitals to collect information about deficiencies and provide corrective action to improve the environment of care.

Many hospitals will turn to an outside consultant to conduct the assessment. In this case, make sure that you choose a healthcare security expert with professional certifications and experience in evaluating hospital security. In addition, the consultant should have hands-on experience as a manager, director, or security administrator in the healthcare industry.

It's important to remember that security is a *process*, requiring on-going training, evaluation, monitoring, and swift attention to

problems. The ultimate success of a security program will depend upon a strong commitment to support this most important process.

### What the assessment covers

The assessment should evaluate the facility beginning in the parking lot and continuing all the way to the roof. Here are some of the components that should be evaluated:

- Geographical location
- Physical design and layout of campus and surrounding property
- Number of uncontrolled access points into and out of the facility
- Criminal demographics surrounding the hospital and campus
- Security incident data within the hospital as well as incidents on campus
- Level of physical security
- Previous security sentinel events
- Current security management program
- Employee security awareness
- Administration and management support
- Patient, staff, employee, and visitor identification
- Violence in the emergency department
- Birthing center and pediatric security
- Pharmacy
- Employee and patient security education. ■

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