Summer Camp Security Measures

Overview
The fatal shooting of 69 people, mostly teens, at a Norwegian summer camp in July 2011 demonstrated the need for summer camp operators to consider security measures. The admitted killer wore a police uniform to gain access to a ferry to the island camp. A camp leader and an unarmed off-duty police officer who provided camp security were suspicious and went to the dock, only to become some of the first victims.1

The Security Checklist below should be a starting point. Every camp faces different challenges because of location, terrain, affiliation and clientele. If experts agree on one point, it’s that camp security is not a one-size-fits-all matter. The checklist came from guides of several national organizations listed at the end of this paper.

These Guidelines Include:
Overview
- Identify and analyze security needs and risk level annually.
- Consider consulting with experts or hiring a security firm to make an assessment.
- Create policies for handling visitors, such as parents and delivery services.
- Develop a relationship with local police, or the New Jersey State Police if there is no local department.
  - Share lists of contact information, as well as major arrival and departure days, with police.
  - Camp should have direct number for police that would not be overwhelmed in an emergency.
  - Invite local law enforcement and EMS to visit camp to brief staff and gain facility awareness.

Security Considerations
- Determine if your campers could be subject to kidnapping, international terrorism, domestic terrorism, and other dangers.
- Examine the camp’s location, accounting for proximity to roads, forests and cities.
  - What are the needs for fencing and lighting, and telephone or cell service? Are there internal communications systems, such as two-way radios or walkie-talkies?
- Ask how the camp can be patrolled or protected, especially areas that cannot be fenced.
- Review the placement and design of buildings to determine secure and unsecure locations.
  - Ensure that site has current drawings of electric, gas, water and sewer systems, including locations of shutoff valves.
Design systems for handling luggage, mail and parcels.

Assess present security arrangements:
- Are any patrols done, and at what times?
- Is any assistance provided by local law enforcement?
- Is emergency transportation available at all times?

Develop guidelines for when campers are in public places or in contact with general public, including camper/staff ratios and missing person procedures.

Tell parents about security measures, but withhold operational details that could aid attackers.

**Training**
- The use of existing staff for security duties is not as effective as comprehensive security management.
- Staff should know that any unknown person found on the property is a potential threat and should be reported to the camp director. Campers should also know what to do when an intruder is detected.
- Staff should also be alert to threats from campers and staffers.
- Develop and exercise emergency plans with staff and campers. Plans should relate to missing camper, natural and man-made disasters, intruders and evacuation procedures.
- Such plans should include procedures for emergency communication with campers, staff, police, fire, hospitals, parents and media.
  - Use words, not a horn or siren, when broadcasting an alert, to avoid confusion. Example: “There is a shooter situation. We need you to ….”

**Resources**

**Sources**
- Operational Management, American Camp Association.
- Risk Management at Girl Scout Councils, Girl Scouts of the USA.

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