



by Michael Kennedy, CPP
SETEC Protection Service, L.P.

CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

There's a problem, and you know it. It's as if a criminal element has suddenly discovered your property. Where it once was once peaceful and safe, these days it's anything but. The incidents so far have been non-violent burglaries of motor vehicles and things like that, but they are increasing in number and MUST be stopped.

There are victims - employees mostly. The truth is they do not feel safe anymore. Morale is being impacted. Who's next? A client? The CEO?



The Problem

You have a business to run, and security is just one part of it. Your campus is beautiful. It was designed to attract clients and employees, but now it's attracting the opposite. So far, the security solutions you have been offered sound a lot like "throw up a fence and don't let anyone in - fences, gates and checkpoints that would swell the pride of a Fort Knox commandant. Rather than inviting people to come in, you can see your beautiful campus shouting to one and all - "STAY AWAY!"

...and the cost of it all! Hardware! Personnel! Fences! Gates! Electronics!

You are a realist. You know security and convenience rarely are compatible, but surely they could go together a little better - just this once? Can't something be secured without shutting down its operation? There **MUST** be something you haven't tried. There must be some crime prevention approach that actually enhances the look and functionality of your property, supports your operation and contributes to the crime prevention effort at the same time.

Is that too much to ask?

Good News - "CPTED"

If you have ever wrestled with questions like this, there is some good news.

Following will present a crime prevention approach that, by its nature and principles, strives to accomplish much of what you are seeking. In fact, it contributes to your objectives well enough to merit inclusion in anyone's overall crime prevention strategy.

The approach is called CPTED (pronounced sep-ted), Crime Prevention through Environmental Design.

A WORD OF CAUTION: CPTED should be recognized for what it is - a great crime prevention tool, but still one tool among many. Crime prevention and asset protection is both art and science. It requires flexibility. Finding the right combination of tools requires persistence, experience and creativity. Usually the optimum solution is some combination of hard security, procedures, electronics, CPTED, etc.

Using only one tool is rarely the answer to all problems. Consult your security professional on how best to accomplish your asset protection goals with a minimum disruption to your operation.

The Crime Triangle

You have heard of the "fire triangle" - heat, fuel and oxygen - and how it illustrates if you remove any one of the three elements, fire cannot occur. Did you know there is also a "crime triangle" composed of target, desire and opportunity? Just as with fire, if we remove any one of these three components, crime cannot occur.

For obvious reasons, dealing with opportunity is the most straightforward, particularly for those who control private property. Dealing with "opportunity" is generally the locus of most everyday crime prevention efforts. The other two factors are usually out of the realm of most people.



Opportunity - A Favorable Juncture of Circumstances

So what is opportunity? Webster defines it in a way that is immediately applicable to our current discussion: 1: a favorable juncture of circumstances (i.e. the other elements of the crime triangle are also present) and 2: a good chance for advancement or progress (i.e. the criminal deed can be done successfully).

For most criminals, the critical aspects of "opportunity" are presence of reward and not being apprehended. Contrary to popular belief, criminals are not generally risk takers. They habitually avoid high-risk situations in favor of lower-risk ones, even to the point of sacrificing levels of reward.

Hardening the Target

While we can do little about the reward the criminal thinks will be theirs, we can do much to increase the risk they must take to get it. This is called hardening the target.

In 1972, HUD architect Oscar Newman released a groundbreaking work called *Defensible Space*, wherein he explored how opportunities for criminal behavior were literally being engineered into our "built environments." It is generally from Newman's pioneering work that CPTED had its genesis.

The good news is that, just as opportunities for crime can be inadvertently built into our environments, so can properly adjusted and functioning environments contribute to crime prevention by reducing opportunities and elevating risk for the criminal. The properly designed “built environment” becomes a 24/7 crime prevention partner, and you do not have to rebuild to reap considerable rewards from CPTED.

Three Principles of CPTED

To accomplish this, CPTED strategists apply three broad principles that have wide application. These have proven valuable in such diverse areas as school campuses, neighborhoods, public housing, convenience stores, parking garages, downtown areas, city planning and parks. They work both indoors or outdoors, large scale and small, at properties very much like yours.

Skillful application of the principles of CPTED adjusts the “built environment” to create circumstances that are generally unacceptable to a criminal - and an unacceptable opportunity means no crime.

The three broad principles of CPTED are:

- Natural Surveillance
- Natural Access Control
- Territoriality

Natural Surveillance

Natural surveillance occurs when an area is consistently viewed by casual observers. Normal users feel safer in such areas, while abnormal users (i.e. criminals) tend to feel exposed and under observation - because they may very well be.

A casual observer might be someone on a park bench that faces the area in question, or perhaps someone on a smoke break. Even the casual passerby provides natural surveillance. The key word here is “casual.” Casual observers are almost effortlessly aware of what is going on around them, just in the matter of course. The surveillance is “natural.”

This principle has yielded such approaches as installing picnic tables, sitting rails, jogging trails and moving smoking or other legitimate activities into a particular area. All of these bring natural surveillance to bear, and enhance the functionality of the area - not a bad achievement. It is important in this regard to watch for barriers to natural surveillance. For example, a row of hedges or a wall may completely obscure a view into an area and create a zone for criminal activity.

Natural Access Control

Following closely behind natural surveillance is the principle of natural access control. Normally, we think of access control as the use of gates, keys and other target

hardening efforts. In CPTED, natural access control is provided by the legitimate “normal” users as they take ownership of the area. They begin to watch persons who enter. Further, their watching is no longer casual but assertive. This does not mean that they actually confront someone, but it is evident to the abnormal user that they have been observed and are being scrutinized. This is definitely NOT what a criminal wants. It is risky to be there.

This powerful access control occurs naturally, simply by having legitimate users in a particular area who are taking ownership.

Territoriality

This is really the outgrowth and support of the first two principles. It is an intentional application of the age-old idea of marking, in some way, what is public and private space, and the transition spaces in between. This can be accomplished with something as overt as signage, or more subtly with hedgerows, ground cover, a change in pavement textures, different color carpeting, wall hangings, edging, landscaping rocks, lines on the concrete, etc.

These and other marking strategies clearly indicate what is public space and what is private, and the transition zones between them. These strategies alert everyone they are moving from public to more private, monitored, controlled space and provide the basis for ownership.



scrutiny is of great benefit to the crime prevention effort.

So there you have the three CPTED principles. Just knowing them will cause you to look with new eyes at areas and situations under your control and responsibility. If

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Something interesting happens when territory is clearly marked. The normal users of an area tend to become instinctively aware of someone moving into “their” area, and scrutiny occurs - i.e. natural access control. This frequent

you need additional information, type the letters “CPTED” into an Internet search engine, and you will find a plethora of information, or ask your security professional. After all, there is no sense reinventing the wheel.

CPTED is a fantastic tool. It can be used in conjunction with other more traditional strategies to achieve the crime prevention results you want.

It is well worth the effort.

Michael Kennedy is a certified protection professional. He is the manager of quality and safety for SETEC Protection Service, L.P. in Houston, TX. Michael is a member of the American Society of Industrial Security's Information Asset's Protection Council. He is completing his masters in security management through the American Military University. Michael can be reached via e-mail at mkennedy@setecprotection.com.