

UNITED STATES MARSHALS SERVICE
JUDICIAL SECURITY DIVISION

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Court Security Survey and Assessment
for

Portage County Courthouse
1516 Strongs Avenue
Stevens Point, Wisconsin 54481

September 25, 1995

NAME OF FACILITY: Portage County Courthouse

LOCATION: 1516 Strongs Avenue
Stevens Point, Wisconsin 54481

DATE OF SURVEY: September 19, 1995

SURVEY CONDUCTED BY: United States Marshals Service
Judicial Security Division

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Administrative Office of the United States Courts, the United States Marshals Service, and the General Services Administration entered into an agreement to identify certain security systems to be utilized in all Federal Courthouses. The federal standards are published in a document known as the "Court Design Guide" which contains detailed guidelines for Court Security Systems. Portage County may wish to review the Court Design Guide for possible adaption of applicable standards in the future.

Upon request, the Court Security Division of the United States Marshals Service will perform a Court Security Survey of Courthouse facilities for State and County officials utilizing the Court Design Guide as a reference.

Court Security Surveys examine the physical security of the Courthouses including ingress and egress routes, interior security alarm systems, and security controls such as locks, keys, alarms, and emergency power.

The surveys focus on the current methods used to provide protection for the Judiciary and Court Support Personnel as well as the general public who have access to a facility. Security enhancements are often inconvenient to the personnel affected by new changes. The main goal is to establish sound security measures and encourage personnel to accept the new changes by emphasizing how their overall safety can be increased with a minimum of inconvenience. Sound physical security measures enhance the success of the Judicial process.

Please note it is not the intention of the United States Marshals Service to appear we are attempting to impose or dictate new Courthouse security policies by conducting a survey. Our role is to respond to any request for assistance from law enforcement organizations charged with the responsibility of providing security to members of the Judiciary and offer recommendations or guidelines which may improve their current Courthouse security.

II. OVERVIEW

On September 19, 1995, a Court Security Survey was conducted at the Portage County Courthouse, 1516 Strongs Avenue, Stevens Point, Wisconsin. The survey was undertaken at the request of Peter H. Thrun, Sheriff, Portage County, Wisconsin.

The survey was conducted by Inspector-In-Charge Lawrence R. Lindberg of the 7th Circuit Court Security Regional Office of the United States Marshals Service.

The objective of the survey was to identify physical security deficiencies within the Portage County Courthouse and provide specific recommendations to eliminate each problem. Some of the recommendations will not require an expenditure of funds and will only involve an on-site adjustment of current procedures.

The areas of major interest during a Court Security Survey usually focus on the screening of visitors to a Courthouse facility and the availability of duress alarms for members of the Judiciary. Various other security issues may be identified and recommendations for corrective action is provided.

This survey identifies the absence of security screening procedures on members of the general public who enter the Courthouse and a deficient duress alarm system. Due to the lack of security screening procedures and limited duress alarms, employees and visitors are potential targets of assault or hostage situations.

The recommendations contained in this survey are intended to assist with the improvement of physical security in the Portage County Courthouse.

III. FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. **OBSERVATION:** Individuals can enter and leave the Courthouse at multiple locations without passing through any type of security screening stations.

DISCUSSION: Proper security screening procedures and exit controls will substantially reduce the risk of individuals bringing weapons or contraband into the building.

RECOMMENDATION: The number of Courthouse entrance points should be reduced to one and the remaining entrances should be locked to prevent direct access to the building from the street. One entrance point, preferably the East Door on the first floor, should be designated as the Courthouse Security Screening Station. The station should be equipped with a Magnetometer, an X-Ray Machine, and a full service telephone for use by Sheriff personnel. Rope and stanchions should be purchased to direct the public through the check points and to exit the building. Alarms should be installed at all other doors to immediately identify any individual attempting to make an unauthorized exit from the building. The door alarms should be connected to the East Door public entrance screening post and the Law Enforcement Dispatch Office. The alarms will help ensure persons cannot enter the Courthouse "clean" via the Security Screening Station and then open an unsecured exit door to obtain weapons from the outside. A Gun Locker should be placed at the Security Screening Station entrance. Law enforcement officers, other than Court Security Officers and on-duty Portage County Deputy Sheriff personnel, should place their weapons in this container prior to proceeding to the Courts.

B. OBSERVATION: The Courthouse has an inadequate and extremely limited Duress Alarm System.

DISCUSSION: Duress Alarm Systems provide a high degree of security to Judiciary and other high risk personnel assigned to Courthouses. A properly designed system can serve to promptly alert the Sheriff's Communication Center of a potentially dangerous or hostage incident without the knowledge of the individual(s) responsible for creating the incident.

RECOMMENDATION: Install a new Duress Alarm System in the Portage County Courthouse. The system should be monitored 24 hours per day, seven days per week, by personnel assigned to work in the Sheriff's Communication Center. A remote line should be installed at the East Door Security Screening Station to alert the Court Security Officers when an alarm is activated. The alarm should be silent. Sheriff Officers, when assigned to patrol the Courthouse, could be issued pagers which automatically produce a signal whenever a duress alarm is activated. Duress Alarms should be installed at each Full-Time Employee's desk within the building for acceptable coverage.

To ensure minimum coverage, Duress Alarms should be installed in the following locations:

1. Basement, ENT Office (1). Install one alarm at the desk.
2. Basement, University Extension Office (3). Install one alarm at the counter, one at the Agent's desk, and one alarm at the full-time employee's desk.
3. Basement, Emergency Government Office (1). Install one alarm at the employee's desk.
4. Basement, Golden Sands Office (2). Install one duress alarm at the employee's desk on the North side of the room and one at the employee's desk at the South side of the room.
5. Basement, A.S.C. United States Department of Agriculture Office (3). Install one alarm at the counter, one at the Manager's desk, and one at the employee's desk.

6. Basement, Maintenance Office (1). Install one duress alarm at the Building Manager's desk.
7. Basement, Planning & Zoning Office (3). Install one alarm at the counter, one at the manager's desk, and one alarm at the Secretary's desk. *
8. First floor, Purchasing and Microfilm Office (2). Install one alarm at the front employee's desk and one at the back employee's desk.
9. First floor, County Business Administration Office (2). Install one alarm at front Secretary's desk and one alarm at the manager's desk.
10. First floor, County Clerk's Information Office (2). Install one duress alarm at the counter and one at the employee's desk.
11. First floor, County Treasurer's Office (3). Install one duress alarm at the front counter, one at the employee's desk, and one at the County Treasurer's desk.
12. First floor, County Park Superintendent's Office (1). Install a duress alarm at the front desk.
13. First floor, Veterans Service Office (2). Install one alarm at each employee's desk.
14. First floor, Register of Deeds Office (3). Install one duress alarm at the front counter, one at the employee's desk, and one at the County Register's desk.
15. First floor, County Personnel Office (2). Install one duress alarm at the full-time employee's desk and one at the Director's desk.
16. First floor, City Treasurer's Office (2). Install one duress alarm at the counter and one at the full-time employee's desk.

17. First floor, City Engineer's Office (2). Install one duress alarm at the counter and one at the full-time employee's desk.
18. First floor, Inspection Office (2). Install one duress alarm at the front desk and one at the Community Development Director's desk.
19. First floor, City Clerk's Office (3). Install one duress alarm at the front counter, one at the employee's desk, and one at the City Clerk's desk.
20. First floor, City Personnel & Mayor's Office (2). Install one duress alarm at the front Secretary's desk and one at the Mayor's desk.
21. First floor, City Assessor's Office (2). Install a duress alarm at the front counter and one at the City Assessor's desk.
22. Second floor, Circuit Court Reporter Offices (3). Install one duress alarm at each Circuit Court Reporter's desk.
23. Second floor, Circuit Court Offices, Branches One, Two, and Three (6). Install a duress alarm at each Secretary's desk and one at each Judge's desk.
24. Second floor, Circuit Courtrooms, Branches One, Two, and Three (6). Install a duress alarm at each Clerk of the Court's desk and one at each Judge's bench.
25. Second floor, District Attorneys Office (3). Install one duress alarm at the front counter, one at the Secretary's desk, and one at the District Attorney's desk, *Welfare Fraud Investigator*
26. Second floor, Corporation Counsel's Office (2). Install a duress alarm at the Secretary's desk and one at the Corporation Counsel's desk.
27. Second floor, Child Support Office (3). Install one duress alarm at the front counter, one at the Secretary's desk, and one at the District Supervisor's desk.

28. Second floor, Clerk of the Court's Office (1). Install one duress alarm at the front counter, one at the employee's desk, and one at the Clerk of the Court's desk.

C. **OBSERVATION:** Protective security material and devices are not present in the Courtrooms.

DISCUSSION: Protective bench armor and Courtroom observation devices improve the personal safety of Judicial Officers. Adequate Courtroom lighting enables members of the Judiciary to visually identify any potential Courtroom problems.

RECOMMENDATION: Install Bench Armor in the Courtrooms utilizing the following guidelines:

a. Armor should be installed on the interior in the front of the bench and covered with material compatible with the existing decor.

b. Armor should be installed on all vertical sides of the bench.

c. Courtroom lighting system should be "key controlled" to eliminate unauthorized personnel from turning off Courtroom lights.

D. **OBSERVATION:** Lighting Control devices are not present in the Judge's Chambers.

DISCUSSION: Hostile or unauthorized personnel can significantly reduce the safety of each Judge by controlling the light switches in the Chambers.

RECOMMENDATION: The Judge's Chambers should have key controlled lights.

E. OBSERVATION: The present Key Control System should be improved.

DISCUSSION: The Police Department controls all of the outer door keys to the Courthouse facility. The interior door keys are controlled by the heads of each respective department.

RECOMMENDATION: The following system should be instituted at the Courthouse Facility:

Key Hardware Control System. This system, though not as sophisticated as an Electronic Key Card System, will substantially improve the existing security at the Courthouse Facility. The following steps are necessary to establish this system:

- (1) A Key Control Officer should be appointed for the entire facility.
- (2) A manufacturer or distributor of Security Door Locks should be contacted for the purpose of replacing all existing exterior and interior door locks.
- (3) Special Locks should be selected to ensure the keys cannot be reproduced locally by unauthorized personnel.
- (4) Each key should be numbered.
- (5) A Key Control Log should be established and maintained by the Key Control Officer containing the following information:
 - (a) The total number of keys in the system.
 - (b) The number of keys issued.
 - (c) The names of individuals to whom the keys were issued, the number of the key, and the date issued.
 - (d) A signed receipt from the employee receiving the key.

(6) The Key Control Officer should keep a separate Key Control Log for individuals issued Master Keys or Grand Master Keys.

(7) Each individual issued a key should be required to show it to the Key Control Officer every six months. This verification should be annotated in the Key Control Log.

(8) The Key Control Officer should keep all keys in a secure area in a locked container.

(9) The current policy of not issuing exterior door keys on a permanent basis is excellent and should be continued.

F. OBSERVATION: Courthouse units which receive or collect monies from members of the general public are not protected.

DISCUSSION: Secure collection areas substantially reduce the possibility of armed robbery or theft of funds.

RECOMMENDATION: All Courthouse facility offices which engage in the collection or receipt of monies should be completely enclosed at the counter areas and the entry doors should be secured. The areas should be fitted with bullet proof teller windows, voice boxes, and cash tray drawers to pass currency. The areas requiring secure collection modification are as follows:

- (1) County Clerk's Information Office, First Floor
- (2) County Treasurer's Office, First Floor
- (3) Register of Deeds Office, First Floor
- (4) City Treasurer's Office, First Floor
- (5) City Clerk's Office, First Floor
- (6) Clerk of the Court's Office, Second Floor

- (7) Any other area where monies are received or collected should be secured in the same manner.

G. OBSERVATION: An Emergency Response Plan is not available to the Judiciary and staff personnel.

DISCUSSION: An Emergency Response Plan defines the role of each Court member and explains what action each member should take in the event of a hostage situation, building fire, weather emergency, bomb threat, etc.

RECOMMENDATION: The following actions should be accomplished:

- a. Develop a written Emergency Response Plan and distribute it to each member of the Judiciary and their respective staff members.
- b. Provide training for members of the Court regarding their specific role in an emergency.
- c. Test the Emergency Response Plan and train key personnel through practice situations.

H. OBSERVATION: Judges park in a Public Lot adjacent to the Courthouse.

DISCUSSION: The personal safety and security of a Judge is substantially reduced when a public parking area is utilized on a reoccurring basis. The Judge's use of unsecured parking areas can be easily observed by defendants or their associates. The Judge is subjected to the possibility of intimidation or physical violence.

RECOMMENDATION: A parking facility should be constructed near the Courthouse Facility for use by Judges and Sheriff Department Officials. The parking area should be controlled and secure from members of the general public. It should be well lighted. Spaces designated for use by Judge's should be numbered and the names of the Judges should not appear on any sign.

I. OBSERVATION: Criminal History or Background Investigations are not completed on Courthouse Building employees.

DISCUSSION: Criminal History or Background Investigations serve to enhance overall security for the Judiciary. The process can identify individuals who have felony convictions or mental disorders that could affect safety and security.

RECOMMENDATION: The Sheriff's Office should perform all Criminal History and Background Investigations on all potential Courthouse personnel prior to employment.

J. OBSERVATION: Courthouse Electrical and Light Panels are not locked.

DISCUSSION: Unlocked electrical and lighting panels reduce Courthouse Security. Any individual can enter the facility, access the service panels, and turn off the lights in the building.

RECOMMENDATION: Lock all electrical and lighting panels in the Courthouse.

K. OBSERVATION: Rooms in the Courthouse are not numbered.

DISCUSSION: Numbered rooms eliminate confusion during an emergency. Room numbers are essential to ensure an accurate and timely response by Law Enforcement Officers when a problem occurs.

RECOMMENDATION: Number all rooms in the Courthouse. Large numbers should be placed above the doors to every room.

L. **OBSERVATION:** Only one Holding Cell is available in the Courthouse. The Cell is not equipped with bathroom facilities.

DISCUSSION: Holding Cells provide essential security for Law Enforcement Officers when they are assigned to transport prisoners or produce prisoners in Court. At present, Sheriff Officers must escort prisoners to the Public Rest Rooms in the Courthouse prior to trials or during recesses. This practice substantially increases the opportunity for an escape incident and/or may allow the prisoner to intimidate a witness or juror while waiting in a rest room.

RECOMMENDATION: Construct one male and one female holding cell in the Courthouse complete with bathroom facilities.

M. **OBSERVATION:** A unsecured driveway, open to the general public, runs under the Courthouse facility.

DISCUSSION: An unsecured driveway, located beneath a Courthouse, can be used by criminals as a staging point to place explosive or incendiary devices to disrupt judicial proceedings.

RECOMMENDATION: Wheeled gates should be installed at the North and South sides of the driveway. The gates should be locked at all times and entry controlled by law enforcement officers to ensure limited access.

N. **OBSERVATION:** Protective observation devices and locks are not present at the Chambers-Courtroom doors.

DISCUSSION: Courtroom observation devices improve the personal safety of Judicial Officers and allows them to detect a dangerous situation prior to entering a Courtroom. Locks on the Courtroom-Chamber doors are essential in the event a Judge must make an emergency exit from the Courtroom.

RECOMMENDATION: A "peep hole" should be installed on each door from the Judge's Chambers to the Courtroom. This will allow the Judge to observe the occupants and activities in the Courtroom before entering. "Throw Locks" should be installed on each Courtroom-Chamber door so the Judge can quickly lock the door in an emergency.

O. OBSERVATION: The County Board holds meetings in the Branch Three Courtroom.

DISCUSSION: The security of a Courtroom is substantially reduced whenever non-judicial personnel are allowed to utilize the facilities for other purposes. Weapons or other contraband can be concealed by individuals who intend to disrupt the judicial process.

RECOMMENDATION: The Branch Three Courtroom should be used exclusively for judicial proceedings. The County Board should hold their meetings at another location in the building.

IV. COMMENTS

Providing physical security to a public facility which houses the Judiciary is a very difficult task. The building serves as a center and a site for criminal trials, domestic hearings, traffic offenders, and visits from members of the general public who have strong personal concerns about various issues.

Security requirements increase significantly in this type of environment. It becomes important for all affected parties to recognize the importance of sound physical security procedures and the overall personal safety benefits to be derived from them.

A recommendation for entry screening stations is often viewed as a procedure which will restrict the general public. However, screening stations do not restrict entry but control entry. Every individual occupying the facility would feel more assured of their safety.

A complete duress alarm system would network all building occupants with the Sheriff's Office and immediately summon help to the specific area where a problem was occurring in case of an emergency.

Security in a Courthouse facility can become more functional with input from all affected sources. Portage County has established a Court Security Committee which can meet on a regular basis and each member can provide information regarding security needs and concerns.