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Security

Leading security firms train guards to be prepared to handle any crisis

BY ESTHER O. PEREZ

When it comes to training, New York City's leading security firms are leaving nothing to chance.

Although the state mandates security guards receive 8-16 hours of training, most firms operate well above those guidelines, some providing up to 60 hours of training in everything from CPR to anti-terrorism operations. "We live in a new America since 2001

and we need to differentiate ourselves as a leader, and that means being prepared for anything," said Richard A. Lifrieri, executive vice president of Guardian Security Services Inc. which employs 400 security guards, 99% of whom work in Class A properties in Manhattan.

At Guardian, officers take mandatory courses in CPR; AED (automatic external defibrillator) in case a client goes into cardiac arrest;

antiterrorism 16-hour bomb training; ROB (random observance training) to determine if anyone entering poses a threat, and 32 hours of onsite pandemic planning training.

"When our officers get selected, we are able to offer specialized training and are ahead of the curve with any threat and vulnerability we might have," added Lifrieri. Although there has been no

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major threat at any of their buildings in recent months, Guardian security guard Frank Woodrow credits the training he received with helping him spot a wrong-doer.

He explained how he had checked the identification of a visitor going up to the 5th floor but nevertheless, still found the person suspicious.

"After 30 minutes or so, I realized that he never came back down, so I went up to the 5th floor and realized he wasn't there," recalled Woodrow. "I informed the other officers and, in searching, we found that he had taken the elevator up to the 5th floor, only to take the stairs down to the basement and hide in a bathroom where he was waiting to vandalize the storefronts, once everyone had left.

"Because of my training I noticed all this and, he was apprehended, arrested and prosecuted."

On top of similar specialized training, Classic Security pays for a four-week Tai Kwon Do course for its guards and, if they decide to take it up full time, the company will discount the cost.

"We wanted to emphasize discipline, self-control and self-defense," said David Reiss, senior vice president of Classic Security. Reiss, a retired New York Police Department Captain who is responsible for the firm's control terrorism and crime prevention training performed along-side New York's finest.

Sharon Murphy said the self-control she learned during the martial arts classes has helped her perform

her duties better.

"I've worked in buildings where my training was helpful because sometimes unstable people have come into the building and I have never had to use physical techniques to eject them because I have learned self-control in the work place."

Classic — which provides security at such buildings as the Graybar at 420 Lexington Avenue and 1515 Broadway — also has an appreciation of the value of teamwork in a crisis and, as a result offers the same training courses to property managers, tenants and even their sister company's employees at First Quality Maintenance.

Another service they put into practice is the tenant-NYPD 'Operation Laptop,' where company laptops are given a marking that police can identify.

"We've gotten very positive responses and results from this training. In investing in our security officers we're getting a more experienced, capable and well-rounded security officer and it increases our morale with the clients," said Reiss.

Sometimes saving the day means having the right attitude. At Planned Security Services — which provides security and concierge services in the city and throughout New Jersey — the emphasis is on customer services. They provide a 40-hour customer service course training both guards and concierge on emergency procedures, company policy, appearance and having the right attitude on the job.

"We feel that a good concierge should have a security officers skills and vice versa," said Dino Iuliano, a former Marine and bodyguard, who trained with the secret service and is now vice president of Planned Security Services.

"We teach each officer not to have a 'No' mentality. If we don't have the ability to answer a question the tenant has, they will go an extra step to find the answer."

Iuliano added, "One of the main components of our office needs is to know how to diffuse a situation with someone in the lobby who is upset and is going to get more upset unless our people are trained to calm them down and make them feel better and not escalate the person's anger."

Planned employee Michael Grieco certainly agrees the training he received helped him cope on the job. "The training lets the staff know what customers expect from them and they're not going to be blind-sided. It puts their nerves at ease," said Grieco. ■