

Balancing Hospital Security Needs and Costs



Maintaining hospital security has become increasingly difficult over the past two years, according to 75 percent of executives who were [surveyed](#) by Health Facilities Management and the American Society for Healthcare Engineering.

Respondents indicated that, while security incidents were on the increase, tighter overall budgets were making it harder to prepare for and address threats, such as assaults and violence against staff, trespassing, vandalism, and supply thefts.

Despite costs, over 50 percent of the hospitals surveyed had had to increase security budgets in the previous year. Most indicated that their focus was on staff and systems upgrades, but as 69 percent did not anticipate hiring new personnel in the coming year, they instead looked towards investing in the training of existing staff - clinical and non-clinical - and towards new technologies.

"With our society today and incidents of violence at places like schools, movie theaters and malls, hospitals are certainly not exempt. Other hospitals are also taking this step," said Gary B. Weinstein, president and CEO of Washington Hospital. At his hospital, security staff underwent new training, which included instruction in criminal law and guidance on testifying in court.

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Other hospitals are choosing instead to concentrate on new technology to increase security, while freeing-up time for existing guards. The most common systems/capabilities used among the surveyed hospitals were:

- Electronic access control
- Digital IP-video surveillance systems
- Vendor management systems

And over a quarter of hospitals had plans to implement a visitor management system in the near future. Some hospitals have also begun looking to robotics to help with security issues. In order to patrol parking areas, Bakersfield Memorial Hospital in California has invested in a security robot, which can alert staff to an emergency, as well as record video.

Hospitals that cannot afford to increase security budgets still have other recourses at their disposal. "There are always things that can be done to improve security that don't require additional resources," said Tom Smith, president of Healthcare Security Consultants Inc. He advocated the prevention of security threats, particularly through educating hospital staff and clients about reporting unusual activity or concerns.

A free online resource was also created by [The Joint Commission](#) in order to better equip healthcare organisations to deal with workplace violence and other security issues. The guides included toolkits, case studies, and research, on a variety of security situations.

Source: [Fierce HealthCare](#)

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Published on : Mon, 10 Oct 2016