More Physical Insecurity Cases

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A senior security consultant who prefers not to be identified sent me the following cases in response to the ongoing physical-security series. I think readers will enjoy his stories and his points and I thank him for permission to print them. This is the second in a mini-series.

*The Case of the Open-Door Data Center *

The taxi was waved through the gate when one of the occupants told the guard that the review team was visiting Mr. Smith in Building X. When arriving at building X, the team exited the taxi and walked into the building, which lacked any visitor control. Within 20 seconds, they were outside the computer room door that was propped open as it was during a previous visit. The computer room was located in an old warehouse with no fire suppression system outside the computer room. The backup tapes were stored in a metal cabinet next to the computer room in an open office area. Several organizations used systems at this center.

Lessons learned:
(1) Use visitor control at the perimeter and at the building.
(2) Verify appointments and escort visitors.
(3) Use alarms to indicated when doors to critical facilities have been open too long.
(4) Don't put critical facilities in old warehouses.
(5) Do have fire suppression through out the building.
(6) Store backup tapes safely and away from primary facility.

* The Case of the Neighborly Data Centers *

Twenty-five years ago, three buildings were acquired for the data centers of three different organizations. A common alley separated them in the rear. For years, the three organizations attempted to have the building management company to provide some type of access control over the alley that was open 24/7. Finally, after the Oklahoma City bombing, one of the organizations took the initiative to control the alley. Before this control was in place, a carefully placed truck bomb could have incapacitated all three centers.

Lessons learned:
(7) Do not "co-locate" critical facilities.
(8) Protect all perimeters.
(9) Work with your neighbors for comprehensive protection.

More from our anonymous field-agent next week.

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Mich Kabay can be reached by e-mail at <mkabay@atomictangerine.com>. He invites inquiries about a wide range of information security courses he would be delighted to deliver to your employees at your site and at your convenience.

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