

# Security Support During the Pandemic

By Jen Boss

Casinos everywhere have shut their doors, as have most of our small businesses, restaurants and factories to help us, all battle the spread of Covid-19. No one alive has ever seen anything like this and certainly most of us have never seen a casino close. Casino resorts have always been open: during holidays, through weather and power issues, and emergencies of all kinds. You could always count on your local casino to be open. Sadly, not today.

Of course, deciding what to do to protect your guests and team members, as well as securing your property during a world pandemic that nobody knows anything about is a significant challenge for us all. Add to that, the situation changes daily, if not hourly, as local, state and national governments apply measures to control the virus that affect the livelihood of us all, and you begin to see the incredible size of this crisis.

## ***Working Through the Emergency***

That said, gaming properties are working through the emergency and are even preparing to reopen as soon as it's deemed safe to do so. Make no mistake about it, casino executives, including security and surveillance executives, have throughout this crisis worked together to protect their guests and team members, while they also do what's best for the business. They are very good at what they do!

During the shutdown, security and surveillance personnel have a huge role. In all casinos that I'm aware of, security officers and surveillance agents, as well as other essential departments, are considered critical personnel and must always be present on the property. Even, and especially, during a shutdown, to protect the property from theft, fire, vandalism, and assist in ensuring the property remains in good working order. That's only one of the ways a security team provides support during emergencies.

## ***Emergency Management for Casinos***

It is important for casinos to have the ability to secure their property, protect their guests and team members, and prepare for the future. In order to do so, casinos will depend upon the principles of emergency management that security teams are trained to apply.

These are:

- Preparedness
- Prevention
- Response
- Recovery
- Mitigation

The fact that this virus was unknown, and the sheer speed that it is able to spread, caught all of us unaware. I don't believe that we could have prepared for such a thing. In other words, we are already past preparedness.

We are now learning to prevent the virus personally, and as a nation. Most of, if not all of our response process, will be based upon what we are directed to do by our government.

## ***Recovery and Mitigation***

Where we are now, or what we should be considering, is the recovery and mitigation stages.

We will get through this, we will survive. Our casinos will open!

We need to consider what we will do when we reopen and what that will look like. For instance, it's very possible that casinos in some states, if not all, may reopen soon. Reducing restrictions on business is already a discussion at the highest levels of our government. To me, that means we will have to be prepared to respond and mitigate the possibilities that people, including team members, entering our property may have the virus and are contagious.

## ***Questions to Consider:***

- How do we identify infected individuals and what do we do about them? Can we detect them at our entry points, including team member entrances?
- Once in the property, what are the protocols for playing slot machines? Playing at a gaming table? Eating in a restaurant?
- How do we require and enforce social distancing?
- What about our theaters, convention areas, etc.? Can or should we allow people to use these facilities?
- How do we clean our equipment? Cards, dice, slot machines, kiosks, etc.? I'm sure there are many more that we haven't yet thought about.
- Will we allow guests and team members to wear masks? How does doing so affect the security of the property? How can we ensure we identify people wearing masks?
- Do you shuttle your team members from their parking area? How will that be done?
- Where will your team members take a break? How many can be in the room?
- What type of personal protective equipment will team members need to perform their daily duties? Do they need it?
- What about the use of elevators?
- What is your plan to communicate these new and arising protocols?
- Probably, one of the most important things to consider is how do you convince your team members and guests that your property is safe to visit?

I think when we come out this, we will be operating in ways we never thought that we would ever need to.

These questions are just some of the ones that strike me as we continue our national shutdown. I'm sure other questions will arise as the days go by. One thing I'm sure of: the

role of security and surveillance will continue to be critical to the success of every casino property during the recovery and mitigation process. A great deal of the identification of potential threats and enforcement responsibilities will naturally fall to your security and surveillance team. I believe that security and surveillance are already evolving to face the new threat. My advice is to make sure they are involved now and get them the tools they will need to help you protect their property. They are a force that will support you every step of the way through this emergency.

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