

HIGH-VISIBILITY VS. LOW-VISIBILITY PATROLS

There are two types of patrols, high-visibility and low-visibility. Both types are used at different times depending on the situation.

High-visibility, or proactive patrol, involves security personnel wearing a uniform and driving a clearly marked patrol vehicle. The purpose of proactive patrols is to be seen, to be visible and serve to deter would-be criminals and other disturbances. While on a proactive patrol, the security officer should be as conspicuous as possible. Proactive patrol supports the security officer's primary role of preventing crime. If he is observant and curious and appear to be everywhere at once, he will: detect more fires, water damage, intruders, thieves, vandals, and other dangers to his client.

Low-visibility, or reactive patrol involves the security officer trying to draw as little attention to himself as possible. If a vehicle is used it will not be clearly marked. While conducting a patrol on foot, the security officer should use shadows and darkness to his advantage, to be as inconspicuous as possible. If he notices something suspicious, he should allow the suspicious party to make the first move. Reactive patrol is used to observe without directly influencing a situation or the actions of individuals.

Every security patrol, no matter the pattern or method, should allow for 'cover and retreat.'

A security officer should always be prepared to seek cover to reduce a potential threat, especially when the possibility exists for physical confrontation with a suspect. Unarmed security officers in particular must always consider the use of cover to prevent capture. While on routine patrol, security personnel should identify cover that will provide safety, because when a threat occurs, it may be too late to look for cover. This is an excellent mental exercise for all officers.

An additional consideration in any patrol is retreat. The security officer should always prepare a line of retreat to be used in the event of a threat that may occur while he

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is on patrol. This is also an excellent mental exercise for all officers. Retreat should be avoided when possible, but some circumstances may require that the security officer avoid a threat by the direct approach.

For instance, an armed security officer is stationed in a retail store where the client's staff and the public are present. The primary goal is to deter unlawful or other unauthorized activity. The idea is to prevent an armed robbery from occurring on the premises. The armed officer does this by serving as a visual deterrent and in the event that an armed robbery does occur, he may limit the impact of the threat by taking direct action to neutralize it. However, suppose that armed robbers enter the store before the officer can react and they have not seen him. The officer would better serve the mission by taking cover and retreating before he is discovered by the robbers. This allows the security officer to avoid an armed encounter in which he or innocent people may be injured. By retreating, he may even be able to observe the situation or to call law enforcement to respond. The officer may even be able to set up a blockade outside of the store that will allow him to take effective action when the suspects attempt to flee the scene. In this scenario, cover and retreat are the officer's most effective action.