

# Self-Storage News

May/June 2019



OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE TEXAS SELF STORAGE ASSOCIATION

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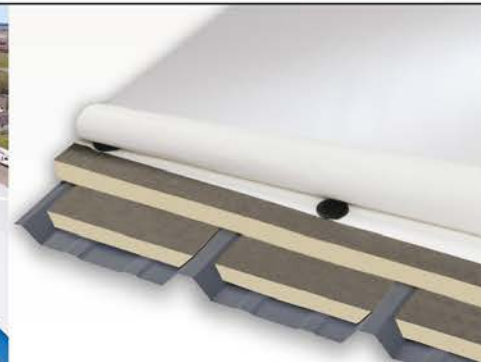
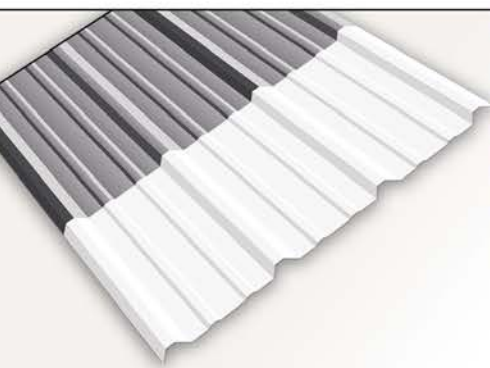
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## A Safe Place

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## Spring Into Security

**Routine audits and lock checks can fall to the wayside during the hustle of trying to rent your vacant units. Create and implement procedures that won't let that happen at your facility, and you may sniff something out that could prevent potential security issues down the road.**



**N**ow that spring has sprung, you probably find yourself waist deep in our industry's busiest season, which is also one of my favorite times of the year. It's a great time to stop and smell the flowers; our Texas highways have been decorated with bluebonnets and Texas Indian paintbrushes. While it is easy to get bogged down with work, I hope everyone is able to have a quality work-life balance, since it's one of the perks of operating a self-storage business. I have to remind myself to make it a priority and not lose sight of spending time with family and friends.

The topic for this issue of *Self-Storage News* is security, one that I always enjoy, as it is constantly evolving with new technology that can be deployed in our business. Investing in access control systems, secure gates and door alarms can go a long way in letting customers store their valuables with peace of mind. Additionally, the ROI for the higher-end security features is reflected in your bottom line. I have leaned towards aesthetically pleasing perimeter security, such as 6-foot spear-tipped ornamental fence panels versus the prison-type constantine wire with easily snapped chain link. With the addition of an electronic keypad smart access system, you are headed in the right direction in taking the steps to safeguard your tenants' treasures.

Routine audits and lock checks can fall to the wayside during the hustle of trying to rent your vacant units. Create and implement procedures that won't

let that happen at your facility, and you may sniff something out that could prevent potential security issues down the road.

I realize that not all facilities have the operational budget for high-end security features, but there are creative ways of thinking outside the box to prevent theft. Last week, I met with one of our members who had experienced several break-ins in their market, including at his facility. With his being a smaller rural facility, cost was a big factor that weighed in on his security budget. He came up with a rather clever idea of purchasing a retired police cruiser at a deep discount. He pulls it out of the end unit each evening to give the impression of an officer being present. No more break-ins! I enjoy hearing creative stories like that from our members.

The TSSA staff has been diligently working on the forms software licensing process and we are in the final stages of rolling it out to members. Thank you for your patience on this issue; there is light at the end of the tunnel.

And, don't forget! The TSSA Execu-

tive Retreat is just around the corner on May 15–16 at the Hyatt Regency Hill Country Resort in San Antonio.

Join us for two days of high-level learning and strategic thinking about the future of the self-storage industry and your business, with programs designed to facilitate connections between forward-thinking facility owners and developers. Network exclusively with other self-storage operators from across the state. Staying engaged and getting up-to-date information for our industry always pays off, and I would highly encourage you to attend.

As always, feel free to reach out to TSSA staff and the board of directors if you should ever need anything, as we are just a quick phone call or email away. ■

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Martin".





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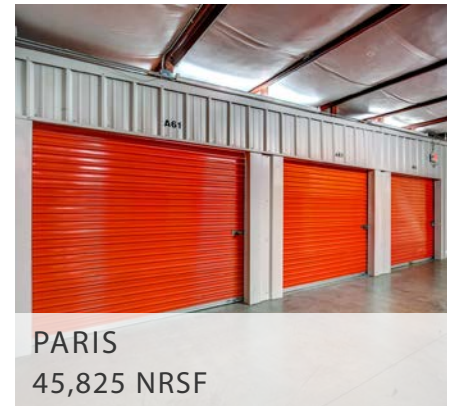
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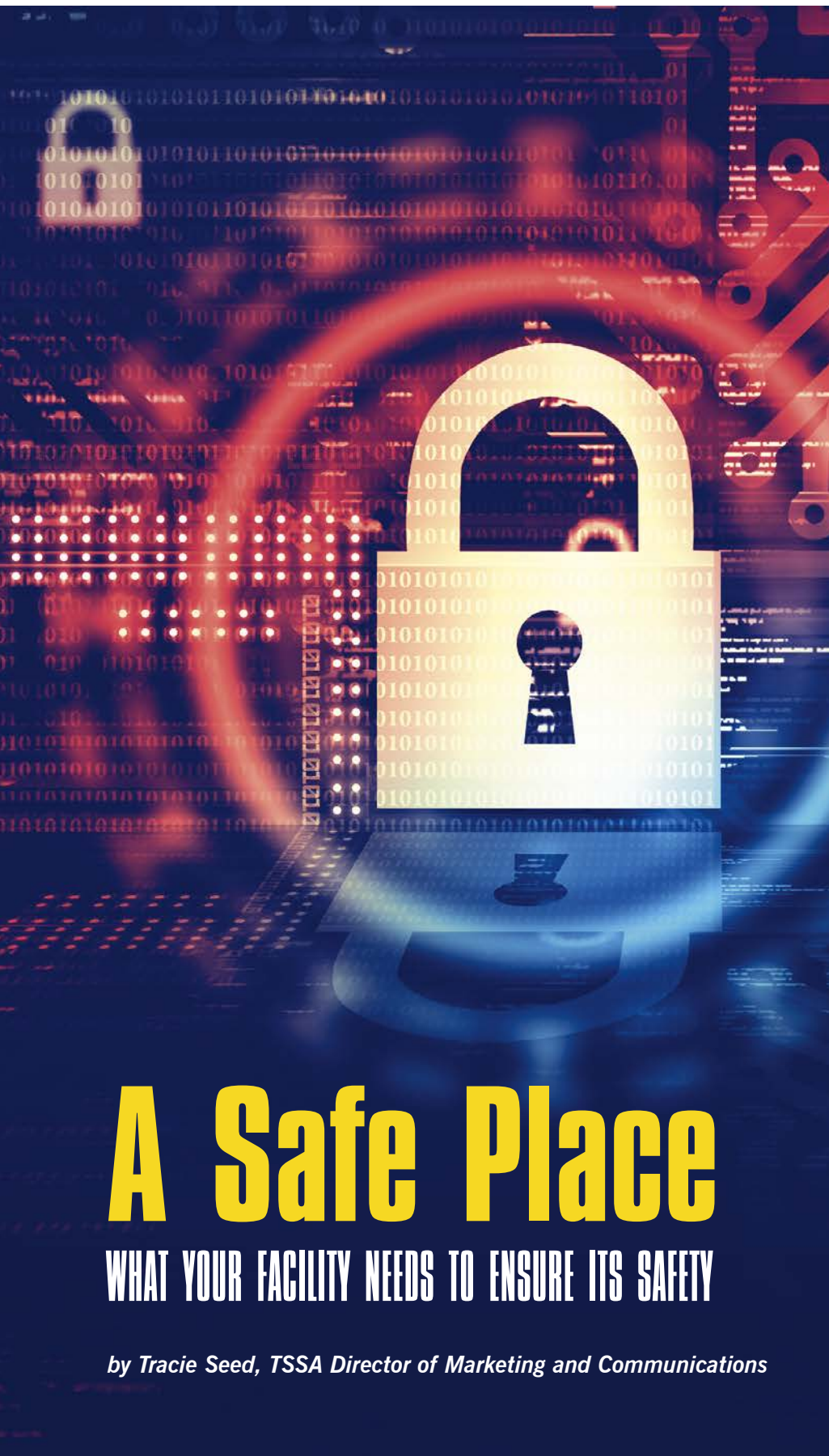
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# A Safe Place

## WHAT YOUR FACILITY NEEDS TO ENSURE ITS SAFETY

by Tracie Seed, TSSA Director of Marketing and Communications

Injury. Vandalism. Theft. Drugs. Prostitution. Aggravated assault. Rape. And even murder. While you may think this is a recap of an episode from *NCIS*, it is actually a list of things that can, and have, happened at self-storage facilities across the country. So how can you keep yourself, your employees and your property safe? It's a matter of proactively utilizing safety equipment, tailoring business policies to your facility's needs and taking a common-sense approach to thwart, or even prevent, unsafe or criminal activity.

### SURVEILLANCE

Video systems installed inside and outside the facility, including parking lots, can help monitor suspicious activity from tenants and the public as well as employees. In addition, the video system can record instances of any physical or verbal abuse or harassment towards employees or visitors. If an angry customer denies yelling at and threatening a manager, you will have undeniable proof of the incident. The same is said for an out-of-control manager who treats your customers poorly.

Stanley Crossman, owner of five facilities with the name The Attic Self Storage in Dallas and surrounding areas, says burglary often happens in broad daylight by employees of companies storing items at his facility. "For instance, a guy who worked for a pool company was coming in and stealing things out of his employer's unit," he explains. "Once the business owner realized he'd been robbed, it was obvious that it was an inside job, since the lock wasn't broken." Crossman states that initially his facility was blamed for the theft, but after reviewing video footage, it was clear that the pool company's employee was the culprit.

Both Crossman and Michael Postar, owner of 13 facilities in Lubbock and Wolfforth, including Michael Postar's Affordable Storage and Michael Postar's A-Plus Super Storage, strongly suggest having one or more cameras as well as monitors in the office to provide a broad scope of the property. Managers can watch the property as a whole and the cameras dissuade both visitors and employees from engaging in criminal behavior. "If something happens, you



**Controlling Access:** In addition to limiting unwanted access, an automated gate system allows for a timestamp on who is entering and exiting the facility. If a tenant comes in several times a day or is coming in late and staying longer than usual, these behaviors are red flags.



can pull up various sections of the video and look at the timestamps. You'll know who has come and gone," says Crossman. Reviewing video footage on a regular basis will also help you catch undesirable activity early before it gets out of control. Crossman says that if he notices an access code being used more than normal, it is a red flag to check out what's going on during that time and monitor activity more closely.

Postar has audio recording equipment in his facilities as well as panic buttons under the desks. "We display signs saying that there are cameras on the property and monitors in our office. These act as a deterrent to criminals," he explains. Postar says that he has used both audio and video footage to protect his staff from aggressive police officers looking for information or wanting to enter a unit without a search warrant. "First thing I tell my employees to do is to call the corporate office and not engage with the police," Postar says. "Once we get them on the phone, we let the officers know that they are being videoed and audio taped, and that usually calms them down."

In addition to these safety measures, it's important for onsite managers and staff to keep their eyes and ears open. Get to know customers. Greet them at their units when they are moving in. Walk the property

daily and look for signs of intrusion or questionable items left outside units, in the parking lot or near the dumpster. For example, look for cut locks, drug paraphernalia or lights and sounds coming from a closed unit. Monitoring surveillance footage on a regular basis can help you prevent further crime or uncover the source of criminal behavior.

### LIGHTING AND ACCESS

Today's self-storage customer, especially in the larger markets, expects a tech-based security system. Not only do owners who don't have a solid system in place risk the occurrence of criminal activity, they also risk losing customers to another facility that has these features in place.

Both Postar and Crossman point to security lighting as an important and necessary feature a facility should have. "Most of the time, people break into a unit at night," Postar points out. "Ample lighting serves as a deterrent because the last thing criminals want is to be seen." Crossman uses LED lights, which he sets on a timer from sundown to sunup to illuminate his facilities, focusing on the perimeter and hallways. Crossman says that while the initial investment to replace all his lights with LED bulbs was a bit pricey, he believes it was a worthy investment. "I can't express enough how much better LED

lights are than my old system," he says. "They are much brighter and they last longer." Motion-sensor lighting has the added benefit of turning on the second someone crosses its path. For added protection, install these devices in areas where criminals may try to hide—in bushes, dark alleys, entrances, parking lots and dumpsters. Once exposed by an unexpected illumination, most criminals will immediately leave the scene.

Crossman says a secure gate system is a self-storage facility must. "When I started in the business in 1974, the best gate security system available was a chain link fence with a lock," he recalls. "Now, gates are automatic and you can prevent people from entering." In addition to limiting unwanted access, an automated gate system allows for a timestamp on who is entering and exiting the facility. If a tenant comes in several times a day or is coming in late and staying longer than usual, these behaviors are red flags. "You want to know who's coming and going and how often," he advises. "Someone might be coming in periodically throughout the day, which means they might be making meth or engaging in prostitution. You'll need to keep a close eye on them!"

"I also require my tenants to use the round Chateau locks, which are made of hard steel that's difficult to cut or grind down," he explains. "Criminals want to quickly clip a lock, grab and go. This type of lock slows them down or they might decide it isn't worth the risk to try." As another defense, Postar locks each unused storage unit with regular locks. These locks prevent easy access of empty units to criminals. Also, if any of these locks are cut, this serves as a red flag that someone is trying to break in.

Advanced technology plays a big role in today's controlled access security options. In late 2018, Janus International announced a new Nokē® Smart Entry System. This system is a Bluetooth electronic lock that allows customers to easily access your facility and their unit all from using a smart device. In addition, the Nokē® Smart Entry System incorporates digital key sharing, where tenants can go into an app on their phone and grant anyone temporary access to their unit. The digital key can be revoked at any time,

and an activity log keeps track of exactly when the unit was accessed during the key-sharing time frame.

In addition, the system allows managers to set custom access hours for individuals and grant access to maintenance crews or other staff. There are a number of property management software companies that are fully integrated with the Smart Entry System, including TSSA members Easy Storage Solutions, SiteLink, Storelocal and storEDGE.

“Our Smart Entry System offers self-storage facility owners and operators unprecedented levels of security and access control,” says Terry Bagley, President of the Door Entry and Facility Automation division, “The natural next step was to integrate with a wide variety of property management systems, and in doing so, streamline the rental process to allow site managers, as well as customers, the opportunity to interact with their sites and units in an elevated way the industry has never seen before.”

## **POLICIES ON CASH AND GATE HOURS**

While you may have your safety devices in place, in order to secure your facility, it is imperative to implement some policies and procedures as well.

Postar, like many facility owners and managers, requires staff to keep no more than \$200 in accessible cash. “If you have a lot of tenants who pay in cash, you need to make bank deposits on a daily basis to get it off property,” he says. “You don’t want several thousand dollars coming in over the course of a few days and holding onto that in the office.” If it is widely known that you are a cash facility, you are putting yourself at risk.

Rather than being open 24 hours a day, both Crossman’s and Postar’s facilities have set gate access hours. Crossman has a strict 9:00 p.m. lockdown, while Postar’s gates are open from 6:00 a.m. to midnight. “Anything happening after 1:00 a.m. is just trouble. Most break-ins are at 3:00 a.m., right in the middle of the night,” says Postar. While Postar typically gives 24-hour access to a reputable business that needs it, Crossman has a policy to not work with limousine companies and delivery trucks. “If anyone wants in after

9:00 p.m., I have to wake up the manager, who lives onsite,” he explains.

Postar suggests more safety policies to consider. He doesn’t put his staff members’ last names on their badges or business cards. In addition, the business cards list several employees’ names on them rather than a specific person. “We don’t want tenants or criminals tracking down our managers via the Internet and finding out where they live,” Postar explains. He also asks his managers to carry cell phones and to make copies of customers’ IDs before showing them a unit. Another option would be to keep a customer’s ID in a locked drawer to be returned to them after a unit tour.

## **COMMON SENSE**

For the general safety of your property, tenants and employees, Crossman says to take a common-sense approach. “Repair driveways as needed and have fire extinguishers throughout the property,” he says. Postar concurs that a clean, well-appointed facility doesn’t attract people of questionable character. Thieves know what to look for in a vulnerable property—a broken fence, neglected repairs or darkened areas. “A nice outside appearance says that you run a reputable facility,” Postar says. “Criminals will want to stay away.”

In addition, if your property is kept up to standards, anything out of sorts will be more readily discovered.

If you feel uneasy, both facility owners say that you need to follow your gut and keep calm.

“You can get a vibe really quickly if something is wrong and you have to pay attention,” Postar says. “Managers typically know who the regular customers are. If someone new comes in asking strange questions that a regular self-storage customer wouldn’t, like about the facility’s structure or staff’s schedule, that’s a red flag that something is going on.” At this point, quickly end the conversation. Postar says that for this and other safety reasons, it is good to always have a manager and assistant manager on duty, so there is backup if something goes wrong.

Choose what features fit your facility’s needs, implement them and use them to their fullest capability. If you can’t have a gate system, have the best video surveillance you can afford. If your facility is in a high-crime area, up the restrictions on access and add additional motion-sensored lighting. While unexpected safety issues occur on a weekly, even daily, basis, you can be proactive to ensure that your facility is a safe place. ■

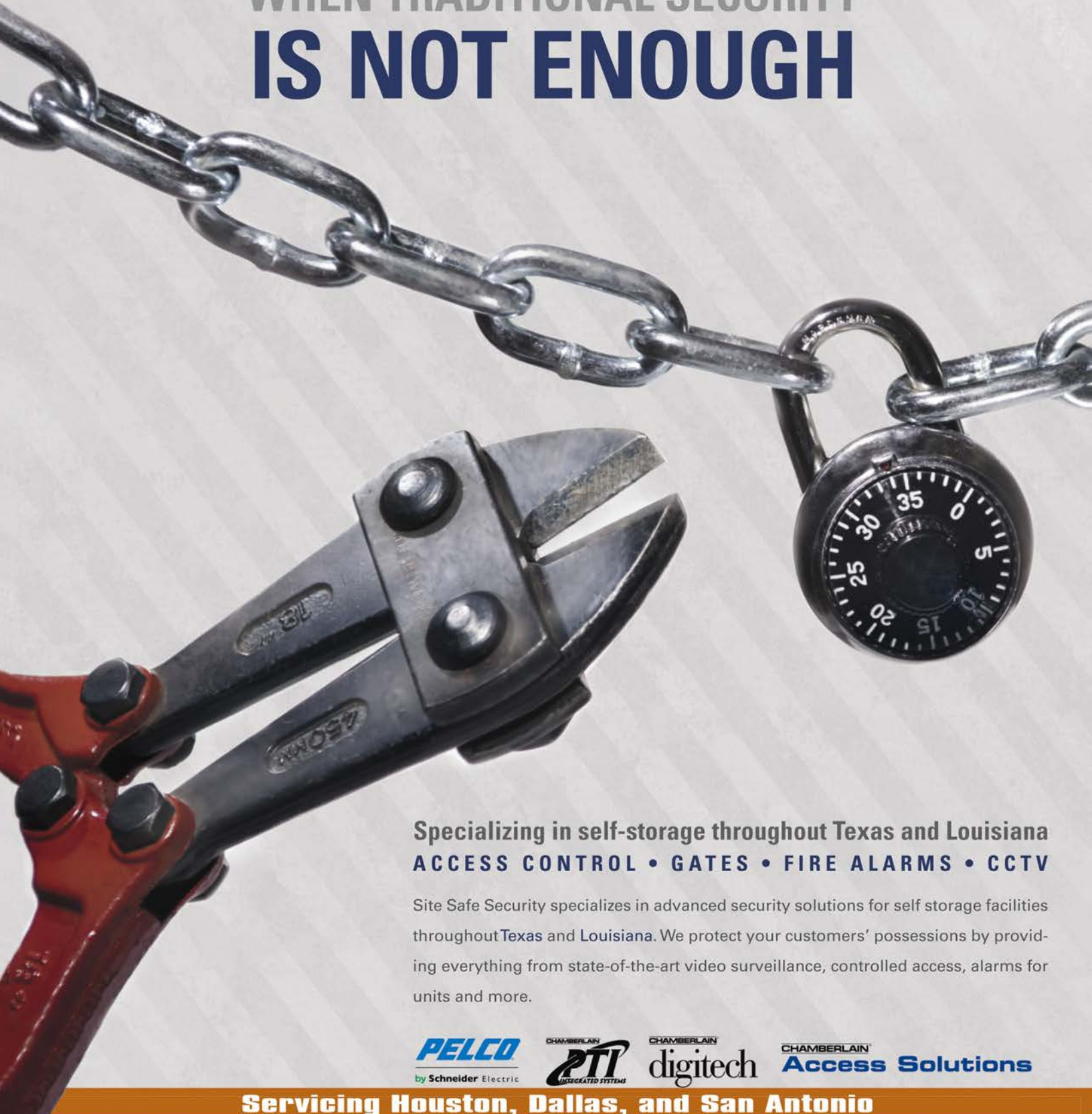






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# Is Your Data Secure?

by Jennifer Jones

## Finding Your Way Through the Maze of Cybersecurity

**W**hen it comes to data security, most self-storage owners believe that with basic firewall protection, their data and their tenants' data are secure. Some use third-party systems that have security protections in place when transmitting data. However, most owners believe that they will not be targeted by a cybersecurity attack. But that isn't just self-storage owners; small-to-medium-sized businesses share the belief that they're too small for cybercriminals to target them.

According to a study by Ponemon Institute and Keeper Security, "Fifty-eight percent of respondents believe ransomware is a serious financial threat and are concerned that negligent employees put their company at risk, but only half (50 percent) say prevention of such attacks is a priority. Many are not confident that their current anti-virus software will protect their company from ransomware." The businesses in the study employ between 100 and

**Ransomware can be unleashed in a variety of ways: phishing/social engineering, insecure or spoofed website, social media, malvertisements and more.**

1,000 people. Most of the companies that participated in the study experienced a cyberattack or data breach with severe financial consequences losing an average of 9,350 individual records as a result of data breach.

### TYPES OF ATTACKS

According to the study, cybercriminals varied their methods between 2016 and 2017. "Phishing/social engineering has replaced web-based attacks (48 percent and 43 percent of respondents, respectively) as the most frequent type of attack. Compromised/stolen devices and denial of services attacks increased from last year's study (30 percent and 26 percent, respectively)."

Ransomware is one of the most common I've heard about hitting the self-storage industry. There are two types of ransomware attacks:

- Encrypting ransomware, which incorporates advanced encryption algorithms. It's designed to block system files and demand payment to provide the victim with the key that can decrypt the blocked content.
- Locker ransomware locks the victim out of the operating system, making it impossible to access the desktop, applications or files. The files are not encrypted in this case, but the attackers still ask for a ransom to unlock the infected computer.



Ransomware can be unleashed in a variety of ways: phishing/social engineering, insecure or spoofed website, social media, malvertisements and more.

Cybercriminals typically encrypt your data and hold it ransom, leaving the self-storage owner to ask themselves, "Do I pay or not?"

Among the participants in the study, of those that didn't have full backups, about 60 percent paid, with the average ransom being \$2,157. If they didn't pay, it was because they had a full backup or didn't trust that the criminals would release the data.

## WHERE ARE YOU VULNERABLE?

According to the study, "data breaches due to negligent employees or contractors (54 percent of respondents) increased significantly from 48 percent in 2016. This is followed by third-party mistakes (43 percent of respondents) and errors in system or operating processes (34 percent of respondents). However, almost one-third of respondents say their companies could not determine what caused the incident."

The main points of vulnerabilities are mobile/Internet of Things (IoT) devices, laptops, smart phones, cloud systems, Intranet server, Web server, desktops, tablets, portable storage devices and routers.

IoT vulnerabilities include in-office wireless-based printers and other devices. Use of cell phones and tablets to access business-critical applications and IT infrastructure are also vulnerabilities.

## EASY SECURITY FIXES

Company information isn't just vulnerable to cybercriminals; it's also vulnerable to employees and anyone else walking into your facility. There are several things you can do that cost little to no money.

1. Have and enforce a password policy. It's the easiest and most affordable security measure there is.
2. Ensure that everyone logs out of the computer and locks up any filing cabinets before walking away from the desk.
3. If you have multiple employees, ensure that they all have their own passwords.
4. Install a firewall.

## If you use a third-party solution to take online payments, most have some sort of encryption protection before the sensitive tenant information is sent through the system.

5. Install anti-malware.
6. Back up everything to an external device or to the cloud.

## USING A THIRD-PARTY

If you use a third-party solution to take online payments, most have some sort of encryption protection before the sensitive tenant information is sent through the system.

Easy Storage Solutions co-founder Jimmy Sorenson says, "Credit card numbers and social security numbers (if collected by the facility) are encrypted before the data hits our servers." The Storage Unit software servers have their own security and host through Amazon's AWS, which is a cloud-based solution.

"Our software also allows for different people to have different access levels so a regional manager can have different access than a store manager.

"We also carry access control products and keypad entry, which integrates with our software. People get excited to be able to offer pay options where a tenant can swipe their credit card at the gate. However, we've never done that because people can install skimming devices and it's another vulnerability, which would create a breach."

## BEST SECURITY PRACTICES

- Don't write down credit card or social security numbers and store locally in filing cabinets or on a computer. (Against PCI regulations.)
- If a lease asks for a credit card, don't include the card numbers on a lease.
- Don't store credit card numbers in random places (including in an email), even in your database, if the field isn't encrypted.
- Don't use repeating numbers for gate entry codes (ex: 1111).
- Don't browse questionable websites. Some facilities provide tablets for employees to use for browsing.
- Back up your data to something that is offsite at night. Backing up to a USB and leaving it in the computer isn't a secure backup, or backing

up to a hard drive and leaving it in the facility risks it being burned in the case of a fire, or stolen during a break-in. The most secure backup is with a third-party service such as Carbonite or Backblaze which back up your whole computer.

- Educate employees about not opening questionable emails, clicking on links when they don't know who an email is from, surfing unknown or questionable sites, or downloading things from unknown origins.
- Install spamware.
- Install a firewall.
- Minimize the amount of personally identifiable information (PII) that is collected from customers to reduce the impact to customers in the event of a data breach (which reduces liability).
- Use a web-based software to minimize the amount of customer information that is stored locally on a PC.
- Work towards a paper-free office environment where all paper files are scanned and stored on a secure server.
  - Existing paper files should be kept in locking cabinets.
- Conduct regular user audits of your systems to ensure that all user access levels are correct and that ex-employees have been removed in a timely manner.

Questions you should ask your third-party provider:

- Are you PCI compliant?
- Do you encrypt data?
- Do you use tokenization?
- Do you offer SSL certification (if the vendor provides your website)?

While some software is sold as Software as a Service (SaaS), some third-party software is installed on your computer. QuikStor Security & Software offers a one-time purchase PC version. "The whole database is password protected, so a criminal would have to hack into the database to capture the

tenant information like address, date of birth, etc., but the credit card fields are encrypted,” says April Lee, business development consultant for QuikStor. “The encryption means that a tech agent who can get in and help troubleshoot information on your database wouldn’t be able to see the encrypted information in those fields. We also don’t store credit card information. We use a tokenized system, which means that once the software sends the card number to the credit card processor, the credit card company responds with a token that is specific to that facility and uses that instead.”

While each company will have their own security measures in place, QuikStor has a hybrid of both onsite and cloud-based servers. Even though their physical servers are in an offsite server location, only two people at QuikStor have access to enter where their servers are stored. “Everything is backed up offsite,” says Lee. “We have one server for cloud and one for offsite backup.” The duplication strategies

that many technology companies have is so they are able to retrieve data if it’s compromised or if something crashes. Multiple backups and being able to fully restore from a backup is critical for business continuity.

Lee says that during her time with QuikStor as a tech, she talked to customers who had their software on their own computers. However, they didn’t have a backup and didn’t always subscribe to a backup service and then lost the data.


“We do have a feature on our software that logs people out during overnight processing,” says Lee. “So if someone breaks in during the night, they won’t be able to walk over to the computer and easily have access to the data. Except with the basic version of our software, you’re able to create individual passwords so every employee has their own log in. We also have audit reports to monitor and prevent employee theft. You can set the software to rent the oldest unit first to keep employees from taking cash from

friends and allowing them to rent units off the books. There are also extensive unit controls so your employees can’t see reports and can customize what an employee can and can’t do.”

## SECURITY YOU CAN’T SEE

Criminals continue to use ever-changing methods to make a quick buck. A survey of cybercriminals showed that they are looking for easy “typical” IT security that takes less than 24 hours to access. While we hear about the big data breaches of Uber, Yahoo, Marriott and others, most of the attacks are on regular businesses. But even basic security measures, policies and procedures can help protect your business and data from employee theft, a break-in, natural disaster and cybercriminals. ■

*Jennifer Jones is managing editor of Self-Storage News and owner of JKJ Marketing in Austin.*





**NEIGHBORHOOD GETTING CROWDED?**

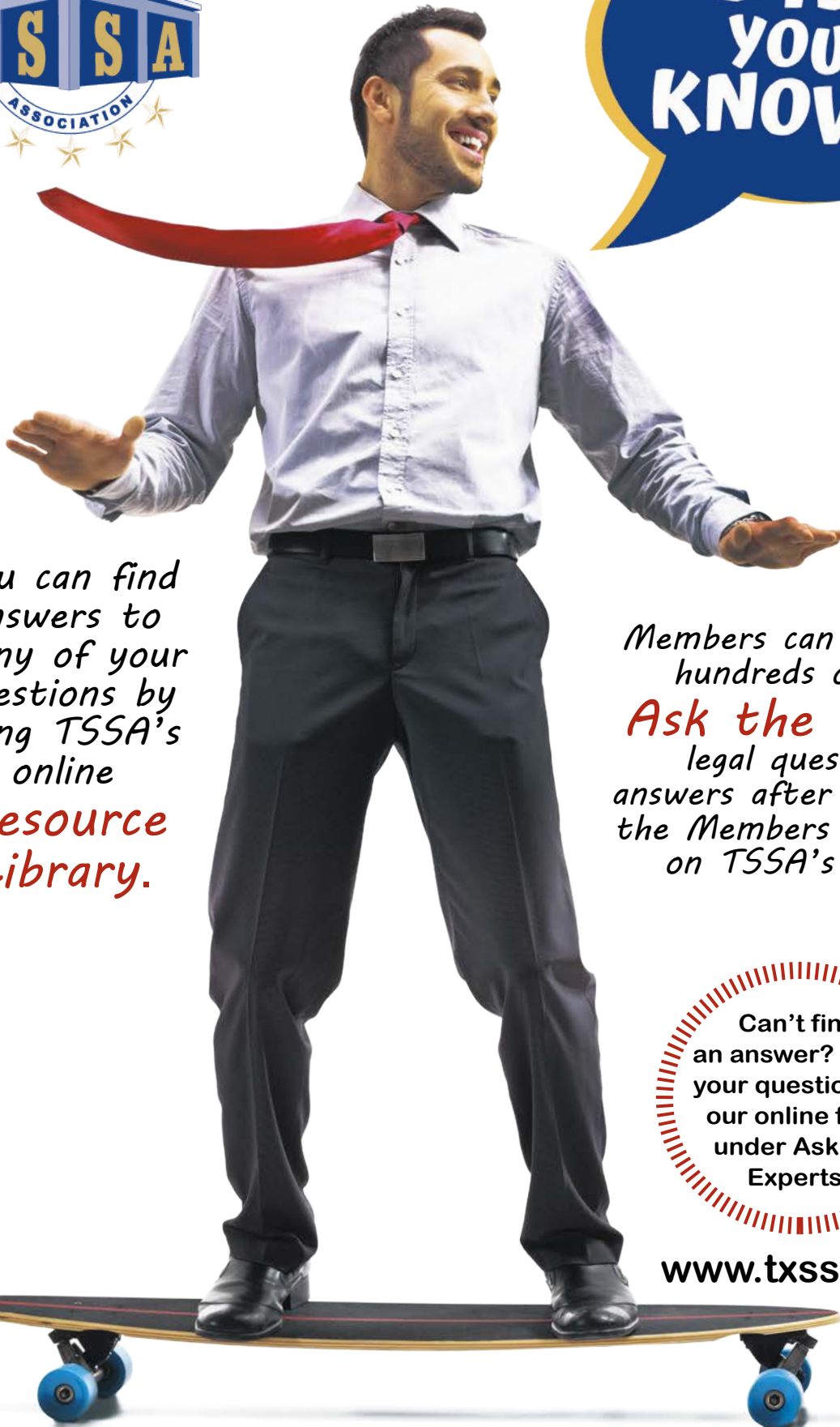
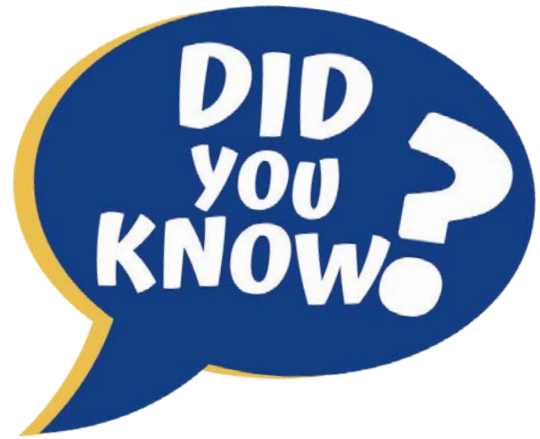
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# INSURING AGAINST THE UNEXPECTED

*By John Ledyard, Higginbotham Insurance*

**M**ost people have a love-hate relationship with insurance. They hate paying the monthly premiums, but love having it when something happens and they need it. When it comes down to it, insurance is about managing risk and cash flow. Here are some important coverages that storage facility owners need to consider when buying insurance:

## **CUSTOMER GOODS LEGAL LIABILITY**

Most owners just automatically assume they're protected from anything related to the goods stored in their facility. This isn't necessarily true. The customer can always sue and there are legal costs incurred by the owner when this happens. There are also plenty of scenarios that can be argued that the owner was "negligent" and incur a loss.

Either way, Customer Goods Legal Liability can help limit that gap. For example, let's say the facility owner is doing some work on the lighting of the facility.

## **DO YOU CARRY BUSINESS INTERRUPTION INSURANCE?**

You might feel safe that your facility is properly covered for the property and have a plan in place to rebuild from catastrophe, but contractors can be hard to come by in a region affected by a natural disaster. It's strongly suggested to carry Business Interruption insurance to help cover lost revenue, rent or lease payments, relocation, employee wages, taxes, loans, etc.

They are halfway done with the project and decide to call it a day. That night, the electricity to the half-finished lights is turned on, sparking a fire. That fire proceeds to burn down that section of the facility and, in turn, destroys the customers' goods in the nearby units. In this scenario, the negligence of the owner can be argued, leaving them exposed to legal liability resulting from the damage.

## **EMPLOYEE THEFT**

When an employee steals from a business, the average amount stolen exceeds \$100,000 more than 60

percent of the time. Employee theft coverage applies to money, securities or other property lost because of theft committed by an employee. This coverage can be included in a Commercial Package Policy or Business Owners Policy, but the standard limits for these policies are typically less than the average amount above. Buying a stand-alone policy or increasing your limits would be beneficial.

## **CATASTROPHIC CLAIMS**

There are several claims that can completely cripple a business (e.g.,



Hurricane Harvey). You might feel safe that your facility is properly covered and have a plan in place to rebuild from catastrophe, but contractors can be hard to come by in a region affected by a natural disaster. Meaning, the timeline to rebuild can be much longer than anticipated. So, what do you do about the loss of revenue during this time? It's strongly suggested to carry Business Interruption insurance. This can cover some of the following: lost revenue, rent or lease payments, relocation, employee wages, taxes, loan payments and more.

## CYBER INSURANCE

Contrary to most storage owners' beliefs, your business is at risk online. "But I'm too small to worry about a cyberattack...right?" Unfortunately, this couldn't be further from the truth. In fact, a recent report on the state of "Cyber Security in Small and Medium Sized Businesses" by Keeper Security and The Ponemon Institute found:

"More than half of all malware attacks in 2017 were perpetrated against small or medium-sized businesses."

According to the study, the average SMB cyberattack victim spent \$879,582 on repairing damage and recovering from the theft of IT assets alone. Adding the average operational disruption cost of \$955,429 to the equation, the importance of cybersecurity comes into focus.

If you use email to conduct business, you could already be a victim. Whether you're the founder of a Silicon Valley startup or own a small self-storage facility in Weatherford, Texas, every business owner shares the same risks.

## FLOOD INSURANCE

Even if you're not in a flood-prone area, you should still consider it. Just because you're not required to have it by not being in a flood plain doesn't mean floods can't happen. Also, it's highly likely to be catastrophic if you are affected by a flood. The premium can be a minimal cost for a potentially devastating event.

What's right for your business:

### Small Versus Large

- The insurance you purchase shouldn't really be dependent on the size of your business. What's more important are your business operations (liability) and assets you hold (property).

- Property examples: If you own the facility, you need property insurance to cover the buildings and business personal property to cover the items stored in your office. If you own a vehicle, you need an auto policy, etc. Calculate your limits on these coverages by the cost it would be to replace the items/property in the event of a total disaster. Understand that prices during a natural disaster can surge up to 50 percent.
- Liability examples: The standard liability coverages you need are determined based on your business operations. For example, an architect would need to carry a Professional Liability policy to cover mistakes they make while drafting blueprints, but they likely wouldn't need a Customer Goods Legal Liability policy because they are not storing or handling the customers property. The size of the storage facility should only determine the amount of insurance to purchase and not whether they should purchase it.
- It is beneficial to know the structure and operations of business. If your business is incorporated and you obey all the rules of running your business as a corporation, you can probably get away with buying insurance with lower limits. In the event you're sued and lose, only the assets of the corporation may be seized to satisfy a judgment. On the other hand, if you are a sole proprietorship, you generally need more liability insurance because you can be held personally responsible for judgments against your business. Knowing your business also means accurately assessing how likely it is that you, someone else, or someone else's property could be damaged in the routine course of your business.

### Choosing a Deductible

- Deductibles are used by insurance companies and companies alike to adjust the cost of insurance (i.e., the premium). A larger deductible allows you to self-insure smaller claims and, more than likely, pay a lesser premium. It also allows facility owners to carry the insurance limits that might be required by a third party (i.e., lender), without overwhelming your cash flow. However, it's impor-



tant to note that a large deductible may also cripple your cash reserves in the event of a large loss. Really, it's a matter of cash on hand versus perceived liability. If you can weather the storm of a high deductible payment, it may be more cost effective to go with a higher deductible.

At the end of the day, the unexpected is always right around the corner and it's difficult to predict what the future looks like. We advise our clients to go with the lowest deductible they find comfortable. ■

*John Ledyard is the Director, M&A Operations & Corporate Marketing at Higginbotham Insurance. He started with the company five years ago and began an internal division specializing in storage facilities four years ago. Ledyard handles program development for commercial lines as well as corporate marketing and mergers and acquisition for the agency. He can be reached at 817-349-2228 or [jlledyard@higginbotham.net](mailto:jlledyard@higginbotham.net).*

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# WHAT A WASTE!

**Q&A WITH RON HINES,  
OWNER/MANAGER SIXTH  
STREET MINI STORAGE,  
IRVING**

*by Tracie Seed,  
TSSA Director of Marketing  
and Communications*

In early March 2019, Ron Hines opened a storage unit to find not only a hazardous discovery but also a costly one.

**TSSA: Why did you open the unit and what did you find?**

**HINES:** One of our tenants stopped paying his rent around September 2018. We are a small, family-owned business, so we like to work with people to try to get them to pay before we do anything. This guy kept leading us on, so, finally, after the first of the year, we decided to cut the lock. When I opened the door, biohazardous medical waste boxes and bags fell into the parking lot. The unit was filled with them floor to ceiling, wall to wall. And there were needles. Lots of needles.

**TSSA: What did you do?**

**HINES:** We tried to track down the owner. The kid who rented the unit was 19 years old, so someone must have paid him to go around the area to rent units. There were similar issues at two other places near me. The company was called MedClean Management Solutions. We checked everything—web-site, phone, email. The website didn't exist, the address was for a vacant home and the phone numbers were for companies other than MedClean.



**TSSA: Did you contact the authorities?**

**HINES:** I did. I reported it to several state and federal agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency, but the government was no help. I contacted the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) hoping they would come to my rescue, clean it up and prosecute him. But, they told me that it was my problem since it was on my property. They said I would have to dispose of the items properly by a certain date or I would be liable and cited for illegal disposal.

"I contacted the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) hoping they would come to my rescue, clean it up and prosecute him. But, they told me that it was my problem since it was on my property. They said I would have to dispose of the items properly by a certain date or I would be liable and cited for illegal disposal."

**TSSA: How did you get it cleaned up?**

**HINES:** My insurance wouldn't cover the removal. TCEQ gave me a list of companies to call. I got all kinds of quotes from \$300-\$400 per bag or box to a turnkey price of \$56,000. I finally called all the local news stations, and Channel 11 came out to do a story. The story was picked up in San Antonio. From that, I got a call from a guy named Bill Jewett in San Antonio with a company called Medsharps, which specializes in biohazardous waste removal. He said that he's been trying to get the law changed through



## PREVENTION STRATEGIES

We have security cameras that we mainly use if there is a break-in, but we are going to start reviewing those on a regular basis, not just when something happens.

TCEQ so that companies like mine aren't liable. In the end, he was willing to come clean it all up for \$5,000.

**TSSA: Have you changed any of your business practices because of this experience?**

**HINES:** Well, I just had a guy call who wanted to rent a unit in the very back, and I said no. I don't want to rent to someone who is obviously trying to hide something! We have security cameras that we mainly use if there is a break-in, but we are going to start reviewing those on a regular basis, not just when something happens. We are

also looking more closely at what our insurance covers to see if there are any riders we should add. ■

*Tracie Seed is director of marketing and communications for TSSA and joined the team in September 2018.*

OPPOSITE PAGE AND RIGHT: Medical waste bags and boxes filled a unit at Sixth Street Mini Storage in Irving, TX. Photos courtesy of facility owner Ron Hines.



## BIOHAZARDOUS MEDICAL WASTE

Biohazardous medical waste contains discarded blood, sharps, human tissue, used bandages and dressings, discarded gloves and other medical supplies. Cleanup on your own is not recommended because it is very dangerous. You can expose yourself and your environment to harmful bacteria and other contaminants. Talk to your insurance provider about special coverage for biohazard removal.



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# Happy Tails of Hope

*Therapy and Service Dogs Change Lives With the Help of Two TSSA Members*

by Jennifer Jones

All dogs may go to heaven, as the saying says, but some start earning their spots early by lending a furry paw while still here on Earth.

Canines, with their penchant for unconditional love and devotion, can bring joy not just to dog lovers, but sometimes even to those on the fence about pooches. Two TSSA members have elevated their furry family members to new heights. Deans & Homer/Universal Insurance Programs President Randy Tipton and Sara Morgan (wife of Dave Morgan with SBS Construction) joined up with organizations to bring the love of animals to people in need. Morgan found a French bulldog to raise as a therapy dog to help hospitalized children, while Tipton worked with Canine Companions for Independence (CCI) to train service dogs.

## SERVICE DOGS

Service dogs are trained specifically to help their owners who have some form of disability. People with physical disabilities may need help turning on lights, picking things up off the floor, opening doors, pushing elevator buttons and much more. There are some service dogs who do guide work for the blind or detect seizures and other medical symptoms.

Tipton, who had been involved with various dog rescues for years, found out about CCI, a non-profit dedicated



to providing service dogs across the country. "I thought, 'What an amazing organization,' and how much I would love to raise a dog who could help a veteran or even a child with autism," says Tipton. "I reached out to CCI, which has been in business for 44 years and provides the dogs free of charge to people with disabilities so they may gain some independence from others."

Tipton went through a lengthy interview process that included home visits to see if she would be a suitable trainer. "I was so pleased that they chose me to be a puppy raiser. My job was to raise the dog to be able to be someone's service dog. I chose a female dog named Morgan who arrived in a crate on an airplane from California at 8 weeks old. I remember she had a green ear because they tattoo service dogs. CCI then trained me to train her."

Tipton trained Morgan for a year

and a half and went to classes with her. When she was six months old and potty-trained, she travelled with Tipton to the self-storage trade shows and stood onstage during Tipton's talks. "She was virtually tethered to me because the whole idea is to be with a person and bond, even at work. We also went on walks three times a day."

CCI requires certain phrases among the 40 commands that trainers have to learn to teach their dogs. "We have to use the word 'hurry' for potty. The dogs are only allowed to go potty when you say 'hurry.' When it's a service dog who could potentially be with a disabled person, they can't stop everywhere to go 'hurry.' She did very well except that she doesn't like to bark. I actually had to train her to bark which is important if the disabled person needs help.

"It was a spectacular experience, and the day I had to drive her to Cali-





LEFT: Randy Tipton works a trade show booth while training Morgan to become a service dog. CENTER: SBS Construction's Dave Morgan and wife Sara pose with Hazel as she is crowned El Rey Fido XVII for San Antonio Fiesta as the top fundraiser for the San Antonio Humane Society. The event raised more than \$100,000. TOP RIGHT: Hazel at the Ronald McDonald House. BOTTOM RIGHT: Morgan on Tipton's company Christmas giving trip.

fornia for advanced training was tough. I had to say goodbye so she could start her six-month class with about 40 other dogs. The graduation rate is around 10 dogs. I thought she would make it. However, after four months, she failed out because she was too timid and didn't make the cut. CCI's first call is to the puppy raiser to see if they want to adopt." Tipton jokes that she was in her car to go get Morgan before she got off the call.

"At the end of the day she came back to my family and she's almost 9-years-old now. She's so gentle and intuitive. She can tell how people feel and if you're sad, she crawls into your lap and puts her head on your shoulder. I'm so happy she came back to us.

"I will train another dog. It was a wonderful opportunity. It would be such an amazing thing to be able to help someone who is disabled or a veteran."

Tipton continues to help CCI in other ways such as sponsoring golf outings and serving on the board.

## THERAPY DOGS

While service dogs are trained to help their owners, therapy dogs are trained to help others. Owners of French bulldogs for years, Sarah decided to raise one as a therapy dog.

"I started training Hazel the first week we got her, which was on September 11, 2017. We completed basic, intermediate and canine good

citizen training within 10 months. She passed her exam when she was about a year old. She's now a registered therapy dog."

Sara also went through an eight-hour course to learn how to be a trainer/handler. She and Hazel went through the evaluation together to become a therapy-dog team. Hazel is working to reach her next level of the AKC Therapy Dog certifications.

Hazel is registered with two therapy groups: Pet Partners and Therapy Animals of San Antonio. Currently, they work in a children's bereavement center while last semester they worked with children who had lost loved ones to terminal illnesses like cancer. Currently their team is working with children who have lost loved ones through violent crime or drugs. They also work at Ronald McDonald House and get requests for special visits. "Happy Happy Hazel," as she is called, was recently accepted to work at the children's hospital too.

Like other therapy dogs, Hazel is limited to two hours at a time because they take in all of the emotions of the people they are with, which can be exhausting. Sara isn't allowed to divulge specific information about their visits to maintain privacy for those they are helping, but she admits, "The visits can be very emotional. We're working with children who have been through a lot and have a lot of emotions around either the loss of a loved one or major surgery or illness."

## LITTLE PAWS FOR A BIG CAUSE

Not content to rest on her rump, Hazel recently helped raise funds for the San Antonio Humane Society (SAHS) as part of the El Rey Fido. The pun "El Rey Fido" is based on the long-standing San Antonio tradition of El Rey Feo, a program which raises scholarship funds. The El Rey Fido competition has become one of SAHS's major fundraising campaigns and the dog whose fans contribute the most money is awarded the title of "El Rey Fido." Happy Hazel was crowned El Rey Fido XVII on April 20, after raising the most money, with SBS Construction and their partners some of the most significant donors. This year the total amount raised surpassed \$100,000, with all funds used for sheltering, caring for and medically treating the dogs and cats at SAHS. In addition to soliciting direct donations, Sara hosted fundraising events and solicited donation items. "Every dollar counts," says Sara. "We go to different locations and introduce Hazel. Some people give \$1 and some give \$100. After one event, we had 253 \$1 bills while some people have donated \$1,000. Everyone just gives what they can afford and we are very grateful for whatever that is."

Canines may bring out the best in people, but caring people and canines training and working together create miracles in the lives of others. ■

## You Can Listen to Legal Seminar Recordings



Connie Heyer delivered the final legal seminar of 2019 in late April to a lively crowd at the Hilton San Antonio Hill Country. The attendees ranged from long-time members who came for a refresher to brand-new members who had just joined the day before. Several company owners brought most of their management team with them.

In case you missed the legal seminars this year, log-on to our website and check out our resource library, where you will find recordings from previous legal seminars. Save the date for our Annual Conference on October 13-15 in The Woodlands where you can hear more from Connie about the most pressing legal issues.

Thank you to our sponsors for allowing us to keep our registration costs low: **Bellomy & Co., CAPCO Steel, Global Roofing, and StorageAuctions.com.** ■



1. TSSA Legal Counsel Connie Heyer. 2. Once again the legal seminar meeting room was filled with TSSA members eager to learn correct legal processes and avoid lawsuits. 3. Sponsors Nick Bergmann and Charles Plunkett of Capco (back to camera) visit with Guadalupe and Humberto Ramirez of Robray Properties in Laredo. 4. Sponsor Kevan Cox with Global Roofing visits with Kay Swan of Longhorn Storages of Monahans. 5. Mark and Sherri Skeans (right) of Skeans and Associates of San Antonio brought their whole team, including Frankie and Yvonne Hernandez, long-time managers, pictured at left.





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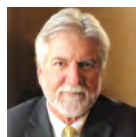


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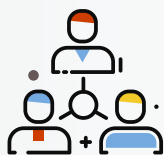
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## MANAGEMENT

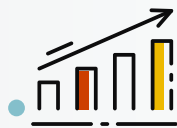


### Five Precautions You Might Not Be Taking, But Should Be

**Ensure your safety with tried-and-true tips for managers.**

- › **Maintain your facility.** A clean, well-kept facility (inside and out) will deter unsavory people from entering or loitering.
- › **Check your surveillance.** For 24-hour video security to work, you've got to check it on a regular basis to catch any questionable behavior.
- › **Create an emergency plan. Keep an easily-accessible record of emergency contacts.** Invest in an undercounter panic button. Establish a distress code word or phrase that will allow staff members to contact the authorities.
- › **Watch your back.** When showing a unit to a customer, always let them walk ahead of you and enter first.
- › **Trust your gut.** If you feel uneasy with a potential renter, chances are there is a reason. Use tactics to shut down the interaction, from greatly inflating the price to getting a pretend emergency text instructing you to immediately close shop.

## MARKETING



### Five Marketable Amenities To Help Customers Feel Safe

**Explain your facility's safety and security programs throughout your marketing plan. Add amenities and detailed descriptions to your website. Post about them on your blog and in social media, use them in ads, and display signage in the facility.**

- › **Gated access.** The added security of electronic-entry gates that only open with a passcode or security card, gives you a record of who's coming in and out.
- › **Video surveillance.** 24/7 video surveillance with a camera and security monitors in the main office reinforces the message that you aren't taking any chances.
- › **Light and motion detectors.** There is no place to hide.
- › **Individually alarmed units.** Individually alarmed units serve as a deterrent for criminal activity.
- › **Enhanced cybersecurity.** Security at your facility doesn't stop at the door or gate; it continues with your software system by protecting your customers' personal information.

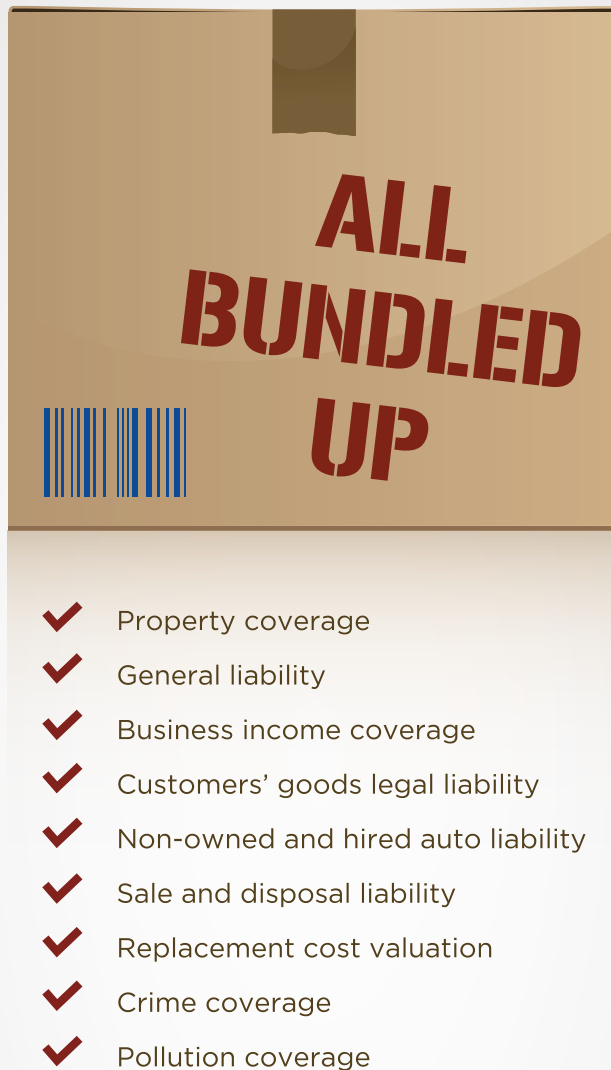
## OPERATIONS



### Seven Practical Password Policies To Protect All Business Assets

**Create a password policy.**

- › Require passwords to be a combination of letters and numbers but nothing so simple as Password123.
- › Don't use the same password on multiple sites or devices.
- › Don't leave passwords on your desk. Lock your computer when you have to step away. Power off computers at night after backups have run.
- › Make your password something memorable that someone else can't guess. Avoid children's names.
- › Require each employee to have different passwords.
- › If an employee leaves, make sure they no longer have access to your system.
- › April Lee with QuikStor Security & Software and Storage Unit Software co-founder Jimmy Sorenson recommend using LastPass to create and secure your passwords. It's an extension on your computer and a secure way to store all of your passwords instead of having to remember various ones. ■



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## Answers to Your Self-Storage Legal Questions

by *Connie N. Heyer, TSSA Legal Counsel*

**QUESTION:** What are the steps to evict an onsite manager immediately once he is fired? He lives in the office apartment on the facility.

**ANSWER:** Hopefully you have used the TSSA manager dwelling lease. This lease allows you to terminate the manager's right to the apartment immediately if employment is terminated for any reason. Paragraph 3 of this lease defines the terms of the lease, and notes that the terms end on the date the manager's employment terminates for any reason. If the manager does not move out as of the date of employment termination, then he is holding over beyond the term of the lease, and you may evict by giving a three-day notice to vacate, and then filing an eviction suit. You can follow the step-by-step eviction protocol in the *TSSA Gold-book®*. In the meantime, change the locks on the office doors.

If you have not used the TSSA manager dwelling lease, you will need to look at the terms of your lease and give whatever notice the lease terms call for. If you have no written lease, you will likely be presumed to have an

oral month-to-month lease. In this case you will need to give a 30-day notice of lease termination. If the manager doesn't vacate at the end of 30 days, then you will give a three-day notice to vacate and then file the eviction suit.

**QUESTION:** We have a boat on a trailer stored at our facility. I can get the owner information on the boat from Texas Parks and Wildlife, but the trailer has no license plate nor can we locate a VIN stamped into the frame of the trailer. There was a paper sticker on the side that has completely faded out (cannot be read). How do we find out the owner information without the VIN or plate number, so that it can be auctioned?

**ANSWER:** Many members have luck contacting local law enforcement and asking for assistance in locating a vehicle identification number (VIN) number. Law enforcement maintains records about various unknown locations of these numbers to assist in curtailing vehicle theft/chop-shop activity.

If law enforcement cannot help, and if you can identify the brand, try a Google search with the brand name of

the trailer and "where to find the VIN number".

If all else fails, and there is no VIN to be found, you can consider making a business decision to send your notice to the boat owner and hope for the best. The statute requires you to send notice to the owner of record, but you may decide that the upside of clearing the unit with a sale is worth the risk that the boat and trailer may not be owned by the same person.

If the trailer is 4,000 pounds or less (gross vehicle weight), it is not considered a "vehicle" for purposes of the special foreclosure process under Chapter 59 of the Texas Property Code (the self-storage lien statute) and your buyer should be able to re-register it if you give him/her a bill of sale and other required documentation. You might "arm" your buyer, so to speak, with information in case he runs up against questions at TDMV. Texas Transportation Code Section 501.002(17) makes clear that a trailer with a gross vehicle weight of 4,000 pounds or less is not a "vehicle," and thus per Chapter 59, (Section 59.044(a)), it is not required to go through the special foreclosure process to pass title.

# SELF-STORAGE SOLUTIONS

continued from page 29

**QUESTION:** One of my tenants passed away. I have tried to reach his children to find out what they want to do about the unit. The charges are due, and I cannot get a response. What should I do?

**ANSWER:** You might check the obituary for other relatives and try to contact them. You might also try calling the local probate court to see if a will has been probated (this might take a few weeks after the death) to determine who is the executor of the estate. The executor is most likely to have additional family contacts who would be able to help. Worst case scenario, you can evict or foreclose on the unit if rent is unpaid, sending the required notice of claim or notice to vacate to either the tenant's name or "The Estate of [Tenant's Name]" at the last address provided in writing by the tenant.

**QUESTION:** After having an auction, the person who bought the unit brought us back a container of cremated remains that he found in the unit. We have tried multiple times to reach the tenant under the lease, but they do not respond. What can we legally do with these cremated remains?

**ANSWER:** Texas law (Section 716.302, Texas Health and Safety Code) outlines the permissible ways to dispose of cremated remains. There are three legal ways to dispose of remains:

- (1) in a crypt, niche, grave, or scattering area of a dedicated cemetery;
- (2) by scattering the remains over uninhabited public land, sea, or other public waterways; or
- (3) on private property with the consent of the property owner

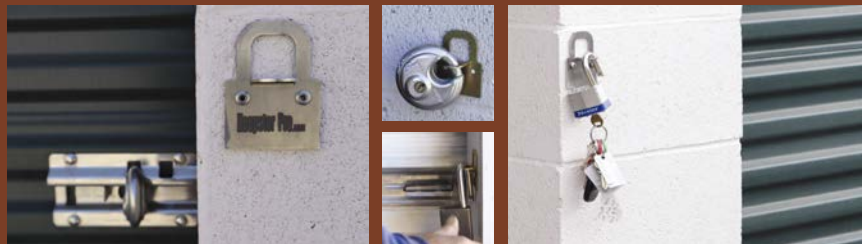
Most ashes are disposed of by scattering, such as in a public park or lake; this is likely your best bet. Some members report having luck simply contact-

ing a local funeral home, explaining that they have abandoned ashes, and the funeral home has disposed of the ashes for them as a courtesy. ■

*Connie Heyer is considered to be the leading legal expert on self-storage law in Texas. A partner in the law firm of Niemann & Heyer, LLP in Austin, Heyer serves as legal counsel for the Texas Self Storage Association. Self-Storage Solutions, her question and answer column, can be seen in the bi-monthly publication of Self-Storage News. She is co-author of the TSSA Goldbook®, a comprehensive guide to laws and regulations affecting self-storage owners and managers in Texas. Niemann & Heyer, LLP is also the author of the current TSSA rental agreement and official forms.*

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## Safety First

by **Tracie Seed**, TSSA Director of Communications and Marketing

From stay-at-home mom to self-storage professional, Suzan Bullock began working part-time at Security Storage in Cuero more than 12 years ago to get back into the job market. “I did marketing for a local hospital before I had children,” she explains. “Once my kids were school-age, I began looking for a job. I was hired by my current boss because he met my old boss at a party, and she told him about me!”

Now in her 13th year with the facility, Bullock is a full-time property manager. She says that during her time there, she has only had one experience when she felt unsafe.

“It was a domestic dispute over a unit when a tenant passed away at a young age,” Bullock recalls. “The girlfriend was recently put on the lease, so she was the only one who had legal access. She wouldn’t let the father have some of his deceased son’s personal items.” Bullock says that she wasn’t



comfortable with the situation, so she called the authorities. In the end, the dispute was resolved, and the father was given the items. “I learned that once you feel the little hairs on the back of your neck stand up, heed that fight-or-flight warning and seek help.”

A difficult type of safety incident happened before she was employed by Security Storage. A gentleman was injured after tripping on a raised surface and sued the facility. “The lesson there was to ensure everything is well maintained and appropriately marked,” she says. “We paint all raised areas with caution paint, so they are easily seen.” Bullock says that she does regular safety checks and keeps her eyes open for any needed repairs. “The owner is meticulous about keeping the property clean and in top shape; it sends a message that we care.”

She attributes the facility’s safe-haven atmosphere to its location as well as how she treats her customers.

Other attributes Security Storage has going for it is a location near the police station and its community involvement. “Our facility takes up about three city blocks downtown. We are not gated, so being close to the authorities is a definite plus,” she says. “A few of the officers are tenants, and I maintain a good relationship with them. We are lucky because the police drive by regularly to do checks.” Bullock points out that Cuero has a population of about 6,000 people, and her boss is well known and involved in the community. “We are in a small town, and we have around 600 units as well as rentable office suites. Our town knows us, and I think that is one of the reasons why we stay safe.”

Around three years ago, the facility installed several surveillance cameras, including one at the entrance, one in the lobby and one at the drop box. They posted signs throughout the property to let the public know that they have 24/7/365 video coverage. “We have plaques throughout the facility offering a \$1,000 reward to anyone who shares information that leads to a conviction. I’m also very proactive when I see anyone around the property on the monitors,” Bullock states. “I get in a golf cart and drive around talking to people and handing out cold water. I’ve found that if you give them that personal attention up front, they are less likely to leave junk behind or cause trouble.”

Bullock explains that there are some policies and procedures she likes to fol-



### **SUZAN BULLOCK**

Property Manager, Security Storage, Cuero, TX

Suzan Bullock is a lover of music and all things 80s. She enjoys trying new recipes with herbs that she grows in her garden. She says that once she started working in the self-storage industry, she fell in love with it. She enjoys interacting with customers and her boss gives her a lot of autonomy.

## Getting to know...



low as well. The facility recently earned its PCI compliancy, so Bullock can process online payments through a brand-new secure website. "I easily do about \$25,000 on credit card payments on autopay per month. We get the money on time, the customers don't incur late fees, and I don't have a ton of clients coming into the office at the beginning of each month." In addition, Bullock keeps a minimal amount of petty cash and makes daily deposits.

The facility issues a circular lock, which the tenant keeps, with each new rental unit. These are paid for via an administrative fee. Bullock says that she places green locks on all the empty units. "We once had someone try to break into some units. They couldn't cut the circular locks, so they went after the green ones. It took them four locks to figure out that the units were empty!"

When it comes down to the nitty gritty, Bullock's main defense is safety first. Stay proactive. Stay involved. Stay visible. ■

### Bullock's Safety Tips:

1. "Send a welcome letter to new tenants to see if they've given you the correct address and to clearly outline facility rules and regulations."
2. Educate customers on how to safely pack their belongings. "I tell them NOT to put a box marked 'Mamma's Jewels' at the front of their unit. Place valuables in the very back in an inconspicuous container."
3. Stay customer-driven. "Get to know your tenants and let them feel your presence on the property. If you get them invested, then they will care about what happens there."

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TSSA's Holly Barr interacting with new members joining at the ISS Expo in Las Vegas.

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# TSSA NETWORKING LUNCHEONS

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Details about future luncheons are available on the calendar at [txssa.org](http://txssa.org).

## JUNE

**11 ABILENE**  
**Cotton Patch Cafe**  
3302 S. Clack St., Abilene, TX 79606  
**Topic:** Revenue Management  
**Sponsor:** Bedrock Contracting

**25 FORT WORTH**  
**Fortuna Italian Restaurant**  
5837 Camp Bowie Blvd., Fort Worth, TX 76107  
**Topic:** Competing Online in a Crowded Market  
**Speaker:** Christina Alvino, FineView Marketing  
**Sponsor:** Independent Bank

## JULY

**9 DALLAS**  
**El Fenix**  
1601 McKinney Ave., Dallas, TX 75202  
**Topic:** Lending & Finance Panel  
**Panelists:** Dana Deason, Deason Financial;  
Neal Gussis, CCM Commercial Mortgage;  
James Parker, Inwood National Bank  
**Sponsor:** On The Move

**17 SAN ANTONIO**  
**The Barn Door Restaurant**  
8400 North New Braunfels Avenue  
San Antonio, Texas 78209  
**Topic:** Competing Online in a Crowded Market  
**Speaker:** Christina Alvino, FineView Marketing  
**Sponsor:** CAPCO Steel

**23 CORPUS CHRISTI**  
**Nolan's Restaurant**  
4117 S. Staples #100  
Corpus Christi, TX 78413  
**Topic:** TBD  
**Sponsor:** On The Move

## NETWORKING LUNCHEON RECAPS



**DALLAS** – John Manes from Pinnacle Storage Properties, LLC and Mike Gately from Trusted Self Storage Professionals spoke to guests about revenue management. Thank you to sponsor Independent Bank for their support.



**FORT WORTH** – JD Blacklock of Blacklock Self Storage and Chris Martin of Ideal Self Storage. Attendees engage in a lively discussion about best practices for independent operators with speaker April Young of Ultimate Properties. Thank you to sponsor A-Lert Building Systems.



**SAN ANTONIO** – Trey Weaver of the Ryan tax consulting firm spoke to the group about effective property tax strategies. Thank you to Peter Mako from Marsh Wortham for the sponsorship!



**HOUSTON** – Bill Brownfield moderated a panel with tax experts David Trahan, CRE of CSSI; Todd Mason, CRE of Avison Young; and Kelly Murphy, CPA with Weinstein Spira Tax Advisors. The panel covered tax management, cost segregation and opportunity zones. Thank you for StorageAuctions.com for sponsoring this event!





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# MEMBERS IN THE NEWS



## Award-Winning Facilities

CAPCO Steel, Inc., was named the recipient of *Mini Storage Messenger's* Facility of the Year Award for the 12th time.

McGee Lane Self Storage in Lewisville was voted Best Self Storage in Denton County in 2018 in Murray Media Group's Best of Denton County awards.

For the 10th year in a row, Amazing Spaces snagged the number-one spot as the best storage facility in the Best of The Woodlands awards. Big Tex Storage was also awarded a third-place distinction.

## Metro Storage Announces New Director of Revenue Management



Metro Storage LLC announced the promotion of Steve Tserkezis to the newly-created position of Director of Revenue Management. Tserkezis has

been with Metro Storage LLC since 2015 and previously served as Revenue Manager.

"Steve has added tremendous depth and sophistication to our revenue management processes and intro-

duced new ideas to our operations. His cross-functional involvement with all levels within the organization provides him great insight and aids in the development of new strategies. Steve's role has a direct impact on the performance of our properties and contributes to our success," says Martin Gallagher, President & COO of Metro Storage LLC.

Prior to joining the company, Tserkezis worked in multiple industries at various publicly-traded Fortune 500 companies and has extensive experience in statistical process improvement, data science and revenue management.

## In Memoriam



Long-time Dallas-area member Steve Sullivan, owner of Sullivan Architecture, passed away on March 17,

2019, after a tragic auto accident.

Funeral services with Masonic Rites were held on March 23, 2019, in Pineville, Louisiana with burial in nearby Deville.

Sullivan, 64, was a regular attendee at the Dallas-area luncheons for almost 20 years. His family says he was a loving husband, step-father, brother, uncle, great uncle and friend who will be missed dearly.

Sullivan is survived by his wife of 25 years, Renee M. Sullivan, step-daughter Tiffany R. Bellino and brothers, Richard J. Sullivan II and Clifford C. Sullivan, as well as a host of other family and friends.

## The Jenkins Organization Hires New Chief Financial Officer



The Jenkins Organization, Inc., a Houston based self-storage and RV park owner, developer and management company operating more than 60 properties

throughout Texas, Oklahoma, Virginia, Missouri, Minnesota and Louisiana announces the hiring of Chief Financial Officer, Jon Nordan.

Nordan, who is a Certified Public Accountant, comes to The Jenkins Organization (TJO) with more than 25

years of experience in many finance-related roles. He held leadership roles with a Fortune 250 company, managed his own start-up construction firm, and was most recently the CFO of a mid-sized industrial services firm.

Nordan will partner with the president and COO in order to develop and execute on the company's strategy of growth and profitability to maintain its position as a leading organization in the industry.

"We are very excited that Jon is joining our team," said Ricky Jenkins, President of TJO. "His past experience and expertise will help us tremendously as we continue to grow as a company."



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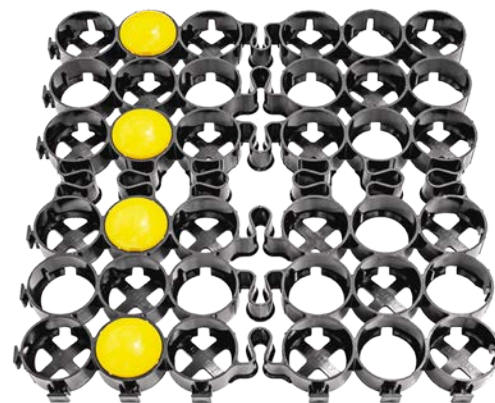
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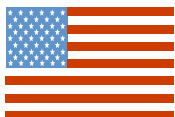
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## NEW DEVELOPMENTS, ACQUISITIONS & EXPANSIONS

**TOMBALL GRAND STORAGE** in Tomball is slated to complete the expansion of its location on Boudreaux in April 2019 with the addition of 400 storage units. The facility offers both climate-controlled and ambient units, office spaces and a full line of packing and moving supplies.



**THE JENKINS ORGANIZATION, INC.**, a Houston-based self-storage and RV park owner, developer and management company announces the purchase of land for development in West Austin where it will build a new self-storage facility. This development is a part of The Jenkins Organizations' continual growth in 2019, consisting of 12 new development projects, two new acquisition properties, and expansions of two existing facilities. The new state-of-the-art facility will consist of 123,000 square feet with 728 units. The facility will provide climate controlled and non-climate controlled units, covered loading zones, gated security entry, and electronic security monitoring throughout. Oak Hill is estimated to open its doors in September of 2019.

Self-storage business **MY ATTIC** is now open on Kuykendahl Road in Tomball after a soft opening earlier in the year. The business offers units that are both climate-controlled and not-climate-controlled, two freight elevators, WiFi throughout the building, 12- to 15-foot ceilings, moving and storage supplies, and month-to-month rentals.

**MUSTANG STORAGE** in Round Rock was sold to GYS Development, LLC, a construction and development firm. The site is comprised of 161,590 square feet of traditional self-storage in 723 units and 236,912 square feet in 509 covered vehicle-storage spaces. The buyer and the seller, a limited-liability company (LLC), were represented in the transaction by Gabriel Coe, Brett R. Hatcher and Brian Kelly, investment specialists for Marcus & Millichap, a commercial-property investment firm with more than 1,500 investment professionals in offices throughout Canada and the United States.

**SPENCER MINI STORAGE** in La Porte was sold in January. The 9.05-acre property includes 11 single-story buildings comprising 56,875 square feet in 595 units. The seller, a California-based family trust, was represented in the transaction by Charles "Chico" LeClaire, executive managing director of investments, and Dave Knobler, first vice president of investments, for Marcus & Millichap.

The two-property **SAFE HARBOR BOAT & RV STORAGE** portfolio in Cypress and Tomball reported its sale in January. The 12.34-acre property in Cypress includes 17 single-story buildings comprising 128,026 net rentable square feet in 477 traditional units and vehicle-storage spaces. The second facility sits on 8.36 acres. It contains 15 single-story buildings comprising 132,901 net rentable square feet in 251 drive-up units and 17 vehicle-storage spaces.

**MCKINNEY SELF STORAGE** on South Ridge Road in McKinney was acquired by an unidentified California-based operator. The 4-acre

property comprises 72,485 square feet in 402 climate-controlled and 184 drive-up units. Karr Self-Storage brokers Danny Cunningham and Brandon Karr represented the seller, a private investor. They also procured the buyer. Both agents are part of the Marcus & Millichap National Self Storage Group and are based in Fort Worth.



**MOVE IT SELF STORAGE** in Liberty Hill recently sold to an Austin-based buyer. The property on TX-29 sits on 5.1 acres and contains 67,980 net rentable square feet in 451 units, plus outdoor vehicle storage and office warehouses. The buyer was represented in the transaction by Neil Stokes of real estate firm Special Agent Group in Austin. The Dallas-based seller was represented by Bill Bellomy and Michael Johnson, brokers with the commercial real estate firm Bellomy & Co.

**PREFERRED SELF STORAGE** in Dallas was sold to CH SS Fund/Dallas Frankford, a private real estate fund advised by Crow Holdings Capital, an asset manager of private-equity real estate funds. The Frankford Road property was completed in 2018 and comprises 57,825 net rentable square feet in 541 units. The buyer and the seller, MEMC II LLC, were represented in the transaction by Bellomy and Johnson.



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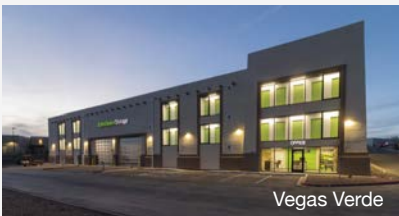
## NEW DEVELOPMENTS, ACQUISITIONS & EXPANSIONS



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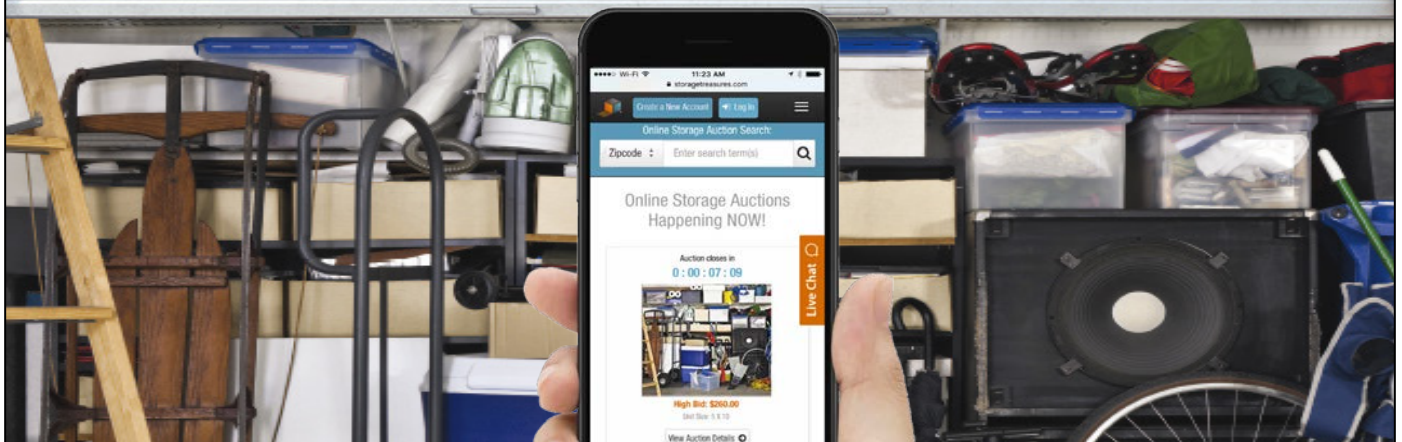
Vegas Verde

**ARCO/MURRAY** architecture firm recently completed a 116,000-square-foot self-storage facility for The Jenkins Organization in Frisco. The new facility consists of two buildings, including 5,000 square-feet of climate-controlled wine storage. It also has two vaulted, covered loading areas and a 1,300-square-foot office space complete with a US Postal Service and FedEx shipping center. They also completed Ladera Storage in Albuquerque, NM. This 103,350-square-foot self-storage facility is 100 percent climate-controlled. In addition, they produced Vegas Verde Storage in Santa Fe, NM, a four-story, 88,184-square-foot facility with full climate-control.

**BELLOMY & CO.** announced the sale of Bear Branch Boat & RV Storage in Magnolia. The class-A facility is 40 miles north of downtown Houston and sits on 6.1 acres. It has 256 enclosed and partially opened boat & RV units in 96,810 NRSF. The facility was 98 percent occupied at the time of closing.

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## Right Move Storage Adds 1,052-Unit Self-Storage Portfolio



Right Move Storage, LLC, headquartered in Houston announced it was awarded the management and leasing of a 1,052-unit Class “A” self-storage portfolio consisting of two properties located in Galveston and Texas City. LandPark Advisors, LLC, an affiliate of Right Move Storage, will oversee operations and provide advisory services. The properties are owned and developed by Jerome M. Karam, owner of JMK5 Holdings.

The portfolio features two proper-

ties. The first one in Galveston is a 436-unit property consisting of all climate-controlled storage units. Karam converted a section of Galveston’s historic Falstaff Brewery into a world-class storage property. In Texas City, there is a 616-unit property consisting of all climate-controlled storage units. The conversion property is part of Karam’s repositioning of the former Mall of The Mainland which features World Gym and Cinemark Movies 12, among other successful businesses.

## Storage Star and FollettUSA Announces Key Change



Storage Star, which currently operates 20 properties with more than 12,000 units and 1.6 million rentable square feet, announces Matt Garibaldi’s promotion to President of Storage Star and President of FollettUSA, Inc., Storage Star’s parent company based in northern California. Prior to these promotions, Matt acted as FollettUSA’s co-head of acquisitions and he established the firm’s in-house self-storage management company by leading more than \$200 million self-storage transactions in 2017 and 2018. Before joining FollettUSA in 2017, Matt served as a principal for the private equity firm American Infrastructure Funds. He has also served as Senior Associate at NGP Energy Capital Management and an Analyst at Goldman Sachs. Matt earned his MBA from the Stanford Graduate School of Business.

Under Garibaldi’s leadership, Storage Star’s current investment strategy will continue, which is to build a best-in-class management platform while offering high-quality investment opportunities to current and future investment partners. Storage Star is focused on developing, acquiring and managing high quality self-storage facilities with an initial focus on the Western U.S., Rocky Mountain Region and Texas.

*Do you have industry news to share with TSSA members? Please email your news release to [magazine@txssa.org](mailto:magazine@txssa.org).*

## StorageTreasures Boosts Lien-Loss Recovery for Client

StorageTreasures, LLC, an online storage auction platform, helped one of its clients, Graham Investments, maximize lien-loss recovery efforts to the tune of an 80 percent increase over live auctions at their self-storage facilities in Colorado, Texas and Nevada. Graham Investments just celebrated the one-year anniversary of its first auction on StorageTreasures.com—and isn’t turning back.

“We are always working to maximize profits,” states Hank Thomas, Graham Investments district manager. “I go facility to facility and turn them over [to StorageTreasures] one-by-one.”

With a reputation that attracts high-quality buyers, strict policies that terminate auction winners for no-shows, and a pool of backup bidders on standby should a no-show occur, StorageTreasures eliminates many of the concerns that typically accompany a move to online auctions.

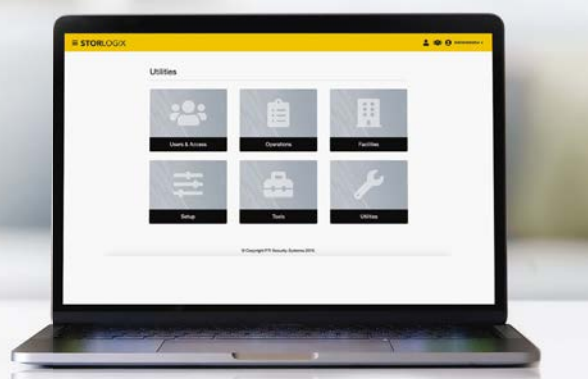
StorageTreasures makes the auction listing process easier, faster and gives facilities more flexibility while bringing a built-in buyer clientele. In addition, it helps bridge the gap between bidders and sellers, with dedicated customer service managers that prepare both parties for a successful auction. StorageTreasures provides best practices for online auctions, lien law resources and hands-on training for sellers, and works with bidders to ensure they understand the commitment involved in bidding on, buying and cleaning out units.

“Our ever-evolving platform is the vendor of choice for over 10,000 storage facilities transitioning from live to online storage auctions,” states Chelsea Horne, Product Owner of StorageTreasures. “Working together is key in our ability to provide innovative solutions to property owners and storage customers.”



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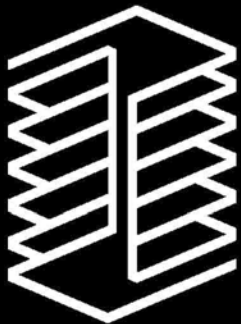
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# MY PERSPECTIVE

## CURTIS LINDSEY

Owner of Tall Pines Storage, Houston

by Goldie Nourian

### Technology and Security Grow Stronger Together

**“The customers today are educated and want to feel the people they are doing business with are doing everything possible to look out for their best interests.”**

**F**rom commercial real estate to a booming construction company, Curtis Lindsey has hit all the stops on his way to owning his Tall Pines self-storage facilities. “We have been in the commercial real estate business for more than 20 years, including industrial for the past 10 years. We ventured into the storage business four years ago.” With three facilities currently in the Montgomery County area, Lindsey is a forward-moving, quick-thinking business owner with much ahead of him and his legacy following close behind.

Although his roots are in the civil construction business with Lindsey Construction, he kept a close eye on the market, and ended up “visiting a TSSA luncheon along with other trade shows” that piqued his interest in the self-storage industry. Lindsey’s branching out paid off, and Tall Pines takes pride in the way they run their businesses.

“Loyalty, commitment to excellence, and a good culture are at the core of who we are. Creating a culture of family is intentional. We have had some employees say before, ‘This is the best place I’ve ever worked.’ We try to cultivate that connected atmosphere so everyone feels at home.”

Lindsey’s past is laden with business success, but what does he feel is the key? “We believe that offering the cleanest facility and best value for the money, coupled with excellent customer service, will win out over time. It’s simply how you build credibility. We

have learned good customers want to do business with good people.” This clean-cut logic and authenticity shines through in Lindsey’s storage businesses, positively impacting not only his employees and tenants, but also the reputation of his business.

Lindsey is quick to recognize all the hard work those around him put in to make his businesses a success. “I am the owner and visionary, but the credit for our success goes to our whole team. We build, develop, own and manage our properties. Our construction team is involved in value engineering each site for the most value for the dollars spent. Our management team is headed by my brother Joe and his wife Vicky. They and their team handle all of the day-to-day operations.” Currently, Tall Pines likes to communicate with their staff and tenants through email, phone and text. “The ability for mass email through SiteLink allows us to reach our tenants and send information quickly and efficiently. The personal touch is always appreciated from our customers.”

Tall Pines implements data security as well as physical security to protect their facilities and stay one step ahead of any potential incidents. “Data security is of utmost importance to our team. We chose to partner with SiteLink for our operational software; they’re the leader in this field. For physical security, we chose to spend the bulk of our security budget on cameras and tenant-specific gate code access. The



## 3 LESSONS LEARNED IN SECURITY

**“Our team runs a gate access report and does a lock check every morning to look for who has been on site and look for anything suspicious.”**

technology out today allows us to view each customer as they enter the facility and also view the majority of our properties from the office. Utilizing this, along with walking the facilities and doing lock checks, allows us to spot any irregularities pretty quickly. We like to say when a person walks into our office and sees all the views available on camera it says to the bad guys, ‘We’re watching you,’ and to our customers, ‘We’re watching your stuff.’ The customers today are educated and want to feel the people they are doing business with are doing everything possible to look out for their best interests.”

“Basically, the ability to see who has entered a facility after hours and view the camera angles remotely allows us to keep tabs on who is on site or has been on site at any given time. They really do an efficient and quick job of helping us keep track of our facilities. I’m sure we



1. The bad guys usually look for an easy target or easy entrance like a neighboring property that does not have good lighting, fencing or a unit that a tenant did not lock properly. That's the reason we do lock checks and after-hour gate access codes.
2. Train the onsite managers to be aware of those entering and leaving the property. Get to know your customers and their habits. This may allow them to spot something suspicious. The ability to view a facility from different camera angles can help this process.
3. Choose a good partner for operational software and merchant services. The protection of our customers' data is of utmost importance to us.



Two of the five Tall Pines Storage facilities owned by Curtis Lindsey in Houston.

**“In the world we live in today, we believe that data security is the biggest risk. . . That’s not just money gone but a customer’s personal information and livelihood; the thieves take the company’s reputation and trust with them. ”**

have some stories of things caught on camera that would not be appropriate for print but will make a great round-table story at the conference!” Lindsey joked. Tall Pines doesn't just rely on technology, they train their employees to perform manual checks as well. “Our team runs a gate access report and does a lock check every morning to look for who has been on site and look for anything suspicious.”

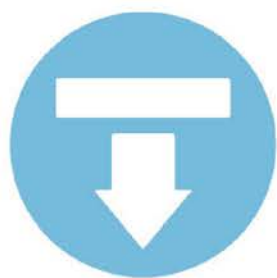
However, Lindsey finds that the biggest security threat remains digital. “In the world we live in today, we believe that data security is the biggest risk. You

hear stories everyday about data being compromised. That's not just money gone but a customer's personal information and livelihood; the thieves take the company's reputation and trust with them. This is the reason we chose to partner with SiteLink for our operations software and merchant services and are always proud of our decision to be in business with them. After the protection of personal data though, we believe cameras and gate security would be a close second contender. The quality of cameras on the market today, and their ability to identify license numbers and

have a crystal-clear picture of people entering our facilities, is better than ever which is infinitely helpful.”

Lindsey and his team credit TSSA's annual conferences with many opportunities. “We have learned a tremendous amount at the conferences. From financing options to construction practices and from legal issues to good management skills, they are always informative. It has been a pleasure to see how open other owners are to share information and help each other in their businesses.”

Looking to the future, Lindsey is excited to expand his business ventures and self-storage facilities. “We have focused on building larger facilities that include boat and RV (along with the traditional) self storage. Having both business models on site allows us to have a larger staff to go above and beyond for our customers' needs.” ■



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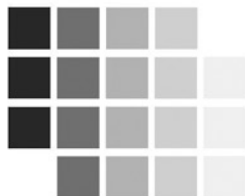
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