

Security Spotlight

An informational Guide for Securitas Canada Clients and Employees



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How Weather Affects Security



With the country beginning the transition from fall to winter, we must understand that the weather has a direct and powerful impact on the administration of effective security. This statement may seem obvious, but there are seemingly insignificant factors of good and bad weather that can and do unknowingly make the guard's role more difficult.

Fortunately, if one is aware of these potential pitfalls, then accommodations can be made during all types of weather to combat its negative effects on security. Of the three core Securitas values, Vigilance, is specifically addressed when concerned with this topic. A guard must be vigilant in his or her duties to ensure the successful execution of the mission. By proactively addressing any and all issues related to weather, it will make the performance of the job easier to fulfill.

Good Weather's Impact

One may be wondering how good weather actually affects and impacts security. It can come in many distinct forms, so knowing them will aid a guard in successfully fulfilling the mission. One common problem that might be encountered is the brightness of the

sun. Whether it is a sunny warm summer day or a clear cold winter afternoon, the sun can and does reflect off of many surfaces. In warmer weather a guard should realize that the amount and types of clothing being worn can have an impact upon them. If you are in extreme conditions, like desert settings, then you must be aware that you have a greater potential for dehydration. Remember to stay properly hydrated and be on the lookout for persons who might exhibit symptoms of dehydration. Those can include: dizziness, confusion, fainting, or inability to sweat.

Temperature can directly affect a guard's successful mission. Again, depending on one's geographic location, thieves can and do strike by taking advantage of mother-nature. How many times have you gone out to your car, on a hot morning, and started it? Then after starting it you returned to your house, while it 'cooled down'. As a guard you should be aware of clients and visitors who leave their cars unattended. Thieves often search businesses, parking lots, and crowded areas for these easy targets. If you do discover an idling vehicle make note, report it to your supervisor, and follow your post orders on the next steps to take. This could potentially reduce crime or stop a person who means to do harm.

Bad Weather's Impact

Variations in the winter weather's temperature can have a definite impact on the effectiveness of a guard. It is important to layer up in the winter months and stay dry in the wet season*. If you are too cold, too warm, or too wet you will lose focus and reduce your ability to properly execute your mission. This lack of proper clothing can result in significant negative medical side effects such as: frostbite, fever, fatigue, or even dehydration.

Another misjudged situation is if thunderstorms are off in the distance. For guard and client safety, realize that lightning can travel up to ten miles and strike the ground with clear skies overhead. So being aware of the forecast allows you, as a guard, to both warn those you come into contact with, while at the same time protecting yourself from possible extreme weather.

When inclement weather occurs, like rain, storms, or snow, it can have direct impact on many aspects of the security mission. One primary feature is in terms of guard safety. When weather deteriorates to an unsafe level, a guard must recognize the signs to secure their person, while maintaining the post orders associated with the position. This is especially true in lightning storms, hurricanes, and tornadoes. As an example, Environment Canada states to go into the lowest level of a building during a tornado. Realize that this will directly impact service, so do what one can to maintain the integrity of the site as directed by your post orders, while protecting oneself from harm.

An important aspect of the weather's impact on security is in terms of what it can bring to the site. Specifically, one must know if your site location is in a geographic area prone to flooding, snow drifts, tornadoes, high winds, or hurricanes. If so, how would a storm or other weather related event affect your site? For example, do you know where the backup generator is located for your building (if there is one), and how do you ensure it is in working order? Also, if you, as a guard, are forced to seek shelter off site or in a shielded location, would outside persons have the opportunity to exploit it after said event? Finally, how would several feet of snow affect the site's parking lot and employee egress from the location?

Crime and Weather

It is argued that crime rates are affected by weather. Experts in the Criminal Justice field have generally accepted that higher.

temperatures increase the likelihood of violent crime. It is documented that violent crime rates dramatically increase in the summer months, due to the combination of unfavorable temperatures mixed in many instances with alcohol.

Whereas, in the colder portions of the year there is a drop off of steady violent activity. So one must be vigilant and understand that tempers will flare in the scorching heat of summer. As a guard it is your duty to remain professional when interacting with distressed or irate persons regardless of the weather.

It is widely known that residential homes are broken into during daylight hours, but it is the complete opposite for businesses. There is a greater chance that thieves will attempt to break into a business location during the winter months, because the sun sets at an earlier time. It is prudent to remind clients to park in well-lit areas and that their buildings and walkways should be properly lit to deter would be thieves. Lastly, as a guard, remember that many times your visible presence during patrols may deter someone from attempting an illegal act, such as robbery.

Where to Turn

As with most security related items it is all about planning and effective communication. When conducting your job it is important for you to understand how weather related events could potentially affect your mission. By having an understanding of the client's goals, the post orders, and the areas for potential exploit, you can organize and plan an effective response at your site location. You should proactively know the anticipated weather forecast throughout the day and be prepared based on this information. Additionally, be aware of signs of persons that may be negatively affected by the weather, regardless of the type of climate. Finally, ensure that you communicate with fellow coworkers to confirm all guard's know how to respond to varying types of weather incidents.

For Further Information on Safety Tips

- Environment Canada: <http://www.ec.gc.ca/meteo-weather/default.asp?lang=En&n=15E59C08-1>
- Canadian Security Intelligence Service: <https://www.csis.gc.ca/index-en.php>

**If an employee requires an additional uniform pieces and/or equipment due to weather conditions they are to reach out to their Branch Office and/or Branch Manager.*