



The Value of Security Cameras

Security cameras offer benefits for community associations – especially when it comes to deterring crime, resolving incidents, and demonstrating a commitment to safety. While cameras are not a cure-all, they play a major role in proactive risk management and can help associations meet their legal obligation to keep common areas safe for residents and guests.

Association Use

For both security and safety reasons, associations may consider installing surveillance cameras in and around their common areas. It is a good idea for associations to hire a security professional to speak to their board and membership regarding trends in crime and new crime prevention techniques for the community. If your association opts to install security cameras, it is important that the Board: (a) clearly posts notices in locations where recording devices are in use, (b) does not misrepresent the quality or the level of security being provided, and (c) encourages residents to take additional measures to protect themselves. The following are some issues a board should consider when utilizing cameras in their association's common areas:

- Change the videotape (if applicable) frequently, perhaps daily.
- Keep each recording on file for at least one week.
- Do not misrepresent the quality or level of security.
- Review state laws and local ordinances, and know what security measures are required.
- Do not reduce security without allowing members to vote on such a reduction.
- If security is reduced, notify residents by newsletter, electronic communication, bulletin board, website, etc.
- Obtain adequate insurance for the association's common areas.

Homeowners' Rights

Due to the widespread availability of reasonably-priced home security devices, many homeowners, in both single family and condominium communities, are investing in their own security and surveillance cameras. Technology has made it extremely easy to manage these devices and access security footage through an individual's cell phone. For example, a "Ring" doorbell allows a homeowner to use their cell phone to communicate with a person at their door and capture video of that interaction on their phone. Many of these devices also capture general motion as well as doorbell usage, and will alert the owner and record video footage when any motion is detected.



It is our firm's opinion that individual homeowners and condo unit owners have a right to install security and surveillance cameras on their own property so long as the associations documents do not prohibit it and so long as cameras are not capturing footage of an adjacent owner's property or the association's common areas.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who can access surveillance footage?

Only authorized personnel such as the property manager, board members, security staff, or law enforcement. Clear policies should be in place.

Should we post signs about video surveillance?

Yes, clear and visible signage helps protect the association from liability, and also supports transparency and legal compliance.

What about privacy concerns?

Cameras should never be directed into private residences or anywhere there is a reasonable expectation of privacy (bathrooms, changing rooms, etc.). Only authorized personnel should access footage, and data should be stored securely.

Best Practices & Limiting Liability

As established in *Martinez v. Woodmar IV Condominium Association*, associations have a landlord-like duty to keep common areas safe from foreseeable dangers, including both physical hazards and criminal activity. Security cameras are a practical tool for fulfilling this duty, but should be part of a broader strategy that includes lighting, patrols, and resident education.

Security cameras are a valuable tool for community associations, but they must be used thoughtfully, legally, and transparently to maximize benefits and minimize risks.