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Solar protection safety film improves safety and security while reducing a building's carbon footprint

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As a security professional, justifying budget for a product that may never be needed is a constant bugbear. So, when you find a solution that will deliver on safety as well as save you money, you know you're onto a good thing.

As surprising as it may sound, we are talking about safety window film. Known for its ability to hold glass together in the event of breakage, its safety benefits are non-negotiable. But despite being considered a reliable solution to secure glass in a building, it is often seen as a hefty expenditure to prevent a problem that may never happen.

However, what if you could also get the benefits of solar protection film, including reduced energy bills and decreased carbon emissions, in the same product?

Solar protection safety film is a proposition that does just that, and suddenly turns a business expense into a cost saving opportunity.

We all know that broken glass poses a major threat to safety. Not just for occupants of the building, but sometimes even for general passers-by.

For example, in a bomb blast, flying broken glass causes 90 per cent of injuries, rather than the actual explosion itself. We have all seen the damage caused by the riots that took place in London recently, which resulted in hundreds of buildings being smashed and looted. Not only does safety window film make the process of breaking and entering a lot more difficult, it significantly reduces the risks of being injured.

Whether it is the result of a riot, bomb blast or just a genuine accident, the danger of broken glass (and sometimes flying broken glass) can pose a very grave risk of injury and even fatality. Without a doubt, it's a risk that needs to be addressed.

Like standard safety film, solar protection safety film works by holding the pieces of glass together when a window is smashed, preventing it from breaking into dangerous shards and causing injury.

By keeping the glass shards together as one pane, it also gives windows a certain degree of flexibility. This means that in event of a blast, rather than the glass breaking and blowing inwards, the film will flex, keeping all the fragments together and within the window frame.

The safety benefits of solar protection safety film speak for themselves. The real surprise is in the additional advantages and cost savings found in the solar properties of the product.

All you have to do is think about getting into your car on a hot summer's day to know that standard glass doesn't block heat. The same applies to a building. Un-filmed windows allow the area around them to heat up quickly, increasing the internal temperature dramatically and making it very difficult to control.

Most facilities managers address this issue by ramping up the air conditioning, which is a very easy short-term solution, but a long-term headache. Air conditioning is expensive to run and unkind to our environment. On average, a building using air conditioning to cool its rooms can increase its carbon emissions by 100 per cent.

Worse still, air conditioning units normally create cold spots, forcing people to either open windows or even turn on the heating to try and stay warm, creating a self-defeating cycle of heating and cooling. When you take into account the fact that most of the energy used in air

conditioning goes to waste, you begin to understand what a massive drain on resources it is for a business.

Solar protection safety film prevents up to 80 per cent of heat from entering the building in the first place. This creates a stable and consistent climate throughout the entire building and typically reduces temperatures by between five and ten degrees. This not only helps to improve staff comfort and productivity, but more importantly, it can cut a building's cooling load by as much as 30 per cent.

In many cases solar protection safety film can have such a dramatic effect on reducing a building's carbon footprint that it can become carbon neutral within one year of installation.

Obviously, any reduction in the reliance on air conditioning has a significant impact on energy bills, helping to contribute towards return on investment (ROI). But when you take into account that solar protection safety film can also improve a business's green credentials, the case for installation becomes even more compelling.

So there you have it, the benefits are as clear as the film itself. Although we don't like to consider the risks, the unfortunate truth is that riots are becoming more and more prevalent and terrorism is a constant threat to our buildings. With high profile events such as the London Olympics 2012 approaching us, there is a very real cause for concern.

Justifying costs at a time when budgets have been cut will continue to be an obstacle for security professionals. However, any investment that can slash energy bills and carbon emissions, at the same time as securing a building and keeping occupants and the general public safe, is a no brainer. Especially when it offers the benefits of two products for the price of one.

Opinion piece submitted by Peter Staelens, EMEA regional manager at Solar Gard



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