

CIS Security offers diversified services

By Craig W. Anderson

CIS Security offers security services throughout the Central Valley from Lodi to Fresno.

The security business may be a good illustration of the old adage that one person's misfortune is another's gain, said Modesto manager Don Urquhart. But it has an interesting twist as well.

"When things go bad, we're busy, and when things go good, we're busy as well," Mr. Urquhart said.

He sees fluctuations and shifts in crime in Modesto and Stanislaus Counties creating more work for CIS Security. The company works for the most part with wineries and canneries in the area.

Mr. Urquhart explained that crime was on an upswing a few months ago, and despite a recent downward trend, Modesto is "still hot with car theft" and is experiencing a rise in metal theft that began last year. In that regard, Modesto is a member of the copper theft frenzy that has hammered most Central Valley communities.

In fact, Modesto Police Department statistics show that in 2006, Modesto enjoyed a 6 percent decrease in Part I crimes compared to 2005. Part I crimes are murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny and auto theft. The decline was driven by a 32.8 percent decrease in auto thefts in 2006. Countywide auto theft was down 29 percent in 2006.

Bail increases, the D.A.'s commitment to prosecution, Crime Analysis information, public education and awareness, and support from the private sector and the community have combined to topple auto theft from its No. 1 crime perch.

In the metal theft sector, the Modesto Police Department and the Stanislaus County Sheriff's Department have teamed up in the "Copper Alert" system. Technology already in place allows citizens and business owners to report metal theft to salvage companies within 24 hours.

Mr. Urquhart sees reporting of any crime as perhaps the most important aspect of deterrence, though victims often don't agree. Many people don't report theft for a number of reasons, he said. These include fear of appearing vulnerable, fear of embarrassment, and unwillingness to endure "the hassle of the entire situation."

He added that drugs in the workplace—and the violence associated with them—sometimes prompts employers to ask for coverage by CIS Security personnel to discourage potential violence when terminating an employee.

Whatever the type of crime, he said, people have to remember that reporting a crime gives law enforcement important information toward tracking trends and making arrests.

CIS Security provides services for areas including industrial, commercial, parks and recreation, airport, parking management, residential, distribution, manufacturing, government, health care and retail.

The company was founded in 1986 by Steve and Eileen Geil and diversified with security and alarm systems. The couple also added business divisions such as Janitorial Inc., Valley Sanitary Supply and Amaz cleaning products.

Modesto and the other CIS offices provide on-site security officers and mobile patrols. Personnel must pass pre-employment proficiency and drug tests, complete a state-mandated 40-hour training program and finish CIS Security's specific eight hours of in-office training. All of which is enhanced by training in the specific duties required by their assigned site. Training conducted by site supervisors continues throughout their tenure on site.

"Our job is to recruit, train and manage professional security personnel," Mr. Urquhart said. "Each client is different, with a unique need. Hospitals and canneries, warehousing and wineries, we cover them all."

Technological advances help CIS Security do its job, with improvements in cameras, metal detectors, monitoring devices, equipment for officers and alarm devices.

CIS's Valley Security and Alarm is "a local team of alarm specialists who are right here," Mr. Urquhart said. They are ready to install access control systems (electronic doors and gates, Redikey, card-proximity systems and photo ID badge systems) along with fire and burglar alarms (commercial and residential, fire sprinkler monitoring, guard response, 24-hour local monitoring and radio backup transmission). Closed circuit TV systems include off-site monitoring and Internet connections.

With all this technology and expertise available to customers, Mr. Urquhart puzzles over the attitude displayed by some potential clients.

"A lot of technology isn't used as it should be due to potential customers putting price considerations ahead of what it costs to do what's necessary to protect themselves," he said. "However, we're selective and we tend more toward upper-end clients who understand what's needed."

Providing excellent customer service is vital, as is communicating with clients, he said. Some businesses feel there is no need to talk to their security firm, and that just paying the bill is enough.

"I'm convinced the lines of communication between us and the customer must be open so we'll know what the client wants and needs at all times," Mr. Urquhart said. "We believe our employees should have a responsive relation-

ship with our customers."

CIS Security faces the same challenges as any other business, including workers' comp, regulations, the cost of labor, and hiring and retaining employees in "one of the lowest-paid industries."

But Mr. Urquhart, an 18-year veteran of the security services business, said that's just the way the business world works. Despite the hurdles, he said, "the work gets in your blood because it's a multifaceted business that keeps you moving all the time."

He pointed out that the largest security forces in Stanislaus County could well be those in place at Gallo and Foster Farms.

Someone may be watching the wine and the chickens, but Mr. Urquhart and CIS Security cover the entire Central Valley whether crime is up or down.

And whether crime is up or down on the statistical board, companies like CIS Security will always be busy.




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