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Why Is It Important to Maintain Visitor Records?

THREE BENEFITS FOR COMMUNITIES

BY BRIE SHOUPPE

Gone are the days of using a clipboard and pen to write down every visitor's name, where he or she is going, and possibly the license plate. Fewer and fewer residents are anticipating a phone call and pressing the number nine to grant access to a visitor. Instead, these methods are being replaced with visitor management systems.

Property managers, associations, and security providers are now referencing databases and transaction histories to see who is allowed into a community and when guests entered the property. They are pulling reports of visitor activity while residents receive notifications that a guest has arrived. Why is all of this necessary, though? How does record keeping in such detail improve a community? Here are three of the biggest benefits for communities:

- **Current Visitor Database**

An effective visitor management system allows residents to create and update their own guest lists. When residents have this control, it gives them the ability to keep their list up-to-date. Generally, residents want a simple method to register their guests, and they want entry to be just as easy for guests when they arrive.

With certain systems, residents can mark visitors

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as permanent, temporary, or one-time. Unwanted visitors can typically be marked as "deny" or "disallow." This gives the ability to manage planned and unplanned visitors in an efficient way.

When guests are pre-registered, they can be quickly processed. When a visitor who is not registered arrives, he or she must be manually verified by an onsite or virtual guard.

For communities that have vendors and other regular providers, this method allows the property manager and association to manage the community list. Again, when visitors or companies arrive that are pre-registered, the transaction process is quick and efficient. For unexpected guests, a community contact can be notified.

One of the most important results of a maintained visitor database is the increased security for a community. Resident and community officials know who is and is not allowed into the community, and all of that critical information is secure in a centralized database.

- **Visitor Reporting**

Another common feature that benefits communities is visitor reporting. With certain databases and systems, both residents and

community staff can generate reports regarding entrance activity.

For residents, this often means the ability to view their own visitor history. If a household has any questions about the day or time a visitor was allowed in, the report will show their guests that have entered or been denied.

Depending on the system, property managers and community staff may also have the ability to generate certain reports. Occasionally, communities need to know which guests entered the community during a certain time, and a visitor report can include authorized visitors, when they entered, and which resident they visited. With this reporting, there is a greater chance of noting suspicious activity and finding the corresponding video for any incidents.

With some types of visitor reporting, communities can also have the ability to view metrics. The metrics may show the number of visitors entering, how long the transactions take, and more. This helps a community better understand the activity at their entrance and how their current security system is functioning.

Once again, visitor reporting greatly enhances the security of a community by keeping records that can help provide information should it need to be submitted to law enforcement or insurance representatives.

• **Notifications**
Finally, a third benefit

for communities and residents is the notification when guests arrive. If the visitor management system includes these settings, residents can receive an email, text, or push notification on a mobile device when a guest has entered. Since many community security systems are automating entry for repeat and permitted guests, residents only receive phone calls from guards regarding visitors who are not registered. With this method, residents are able to still get a notice and prepare for a guest who has entered.

Overall, there are many benefits for communities that maintain visitor records. Plus, the specific methods or systems used to manage those records can often provide additional advantages. It comes down to a secure and simple way to give residents control over their guest lists, while providing community officials the access to view reports showing visitor activity for all. Notifications are a great feature that also provide an extra layer of security for residents to know in real-time who is entering the community to visit them.

Entire communities, including the residents and employees, can benefit from recordkeeping of visitor activity. While some may see these details as unnecessary, many communities are finding that it is better to have the information available and ready if and when the time comes. ■