



# EVERY SECOND COUNTS

**Richard Hilson** argues that while every effort can be made to prevent attacks on business property, it's easier said than done when intruders are intent on causing harm or entry

**A**ccording to the most recent figures published by the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), burglaries, theft, and criminal damage cost UK businesses a staggering £12.9-million in 2023.

Fortifying your premises with security that delays an intruder significantly improves the chances of protecting the assets inside and apprehending or even deterring the culprit altogether. This isn't rocket science, I'm aware, but it's surprising how just often we witness the contrary as we go about our days in the security industry, with levels of

protection for buildings and businesses not always matching the value of their assets.

While the previously mentioned figures don't take into account motives for wider potential break ins, such as vandalism or indeed crimes committed against larger businesses or critical national infrastructure (CNI), the costs alone indicate huge repercussions upon the bottom lines of UK businesses and further impact upon employee welfare, safety and our insurance premiums.

It seems no sector is safe from attack. Construction, for example, has always been a target with tools, plant

machinery and materials at risk of theft from intruders. In fact it's estimated the UK construction industry loses £800-million annually, while a Chartered Institute of Building survey revealed 92 percent of respondents had experienced theft on their sites.

Construction is not alone and intruders will always look to find compromises to gain access to items of value or to cause harm across myriad industries from government buildings and CNI, through to retail, warehousing and storage facilities.

## ATTEMPTING TO STOP THE PROBLEM AT THE SOURCE

If we can't prevent the attack, what can we do? One solution is to catch perpetrators at the source of the crime, as they attempt entry and the best way to achieve this is to make entry tougher. Slowing criminals down either means they give up and move on, or they get caught because every second's delay is a second closer to security personnel arriving on site.

In one high-profile case in June 2024, £2-million worth of Mulberry designer bags were stolen following a raid at a company's South-West depot. While raiders cut a hole in the side of the storage facility to access stock, the most surprising part of the whole affair to me was that to gain entry to the site, it appears robbers removed bolts from the security gate. This emphasises how vital security-rated (SR) gates are – not just for protection, but for buying critical time.

## GETTING IT WRONG

Similarly, in August 2023, a warehouse in Peterborough's Orton Southgate industrial estate was targeted in two significant burglaries. In the first incident, on 23 July, four men forced open the warehouse gates around 11:00 PM, broke in through a window and loaded approximately £500,000 worth of power tools into a lorry by 4:00 AM. In the second incident, overnight on 4 August, thieves smashed a hole in the side of the building and stole an additional £200,000 worth of power tools.

Another instance of perimeter fencing not being secure enough happened in March 2023, when a gang targeted an Argos store in Pontardawe, Wales. They cut through the perimeter fence at the rear of the shop and then made a hole in the warehouse wall, stealing more than £25,000 worth of electrical items, including laptops, tablets, phones, watches and PlayStation consoles. The same group had previously carried out a similar raid on an Argos store in South Yorkshire, taking over £50,000 worth of goods.

These incidents highlight the vulnerability of warehouses to break-ins involving breaches of perimeter security, resulting in substantial losses.

## SLOWING INTRUDERS DOWN

Loss Prevention Standard (LPS) 1175-rated gates are designed to do just that – slow intruders down. Unlike flimsy barriers that can be breached in seconds, SR gates undergo rigorous testing to resist attacks using a variety of tools, from bolt cutters to power saws. They are engineered to withstand forced entry long enough for authorities to respond, making them essential for security strategy.

High-security gates are an investment. The cost of a single break-in, whether it's stolen property, vandalism, or insurance claims often far exceeds the price of proper security measures and can prevent millions in losses.

When it comes to security, choosing the right gate is just as important as the decision to install one in the first place, and I'd always endorse selecting an LPS 1175-certified gate with a rating that matches your risk level. For instance, an SR2 gate might be sufficient for low-risk areas, while high-risk facilities should consider SR4 or SR5 models, which can withstand sustained attacks from professional criminals using heavy-duty tools.

It's not just about theft, either. SR gates play an increasingly important role in preventing violent attacks and protecting lives. In March of 2025, a 17-year-old male entered Australia's Avalon Airport by cutting through the perimeter fence. He boarded a Jetstar flight armed with a shotgun and claimed to have bombs in his bags, leading to a bomb scare. Fortunately, passengers and crew detained him before departure.

## THIEVES IDENTIFY WEAK POINTS, EXPLOIT SURVEILLANCE AND USE TOOLS TO FORCE ENTRY

### THREATS FROM VEHICLES

For locations that are facing vehicle-based threats, impact-resistant gates tested to PAS 68 or IWA 14-1 standards are absolutely essential. Vehicles are being increasingly used more as weapons of terror, such as the 2018 attack at Westminster, London, when Salih Khater crashed his Ford Fiesta into, and stopped at the security gates at Old Palace Yard after hitting and injuring three civilians.

This is a subject that's hit the headlines in recent years with worrying frequency (highlighted as we go to press by the nine people that were killed when an SUV mounted the pavement at a street festival in Vancouver, Canada), and not something I need to elaborate upon, but the security standards required for such attacks are now being incorporated into more mainstream security, especially within sites requiring protection such as CNI.

### MAXIMUM SECURITY

I can not over emphasise the security significance of SR gates. They provide maximum protection through their high-tech locking mechanisms, durable construction and resistance to physical force. And that they are built from high-grade materials, means they are designed to withstand not only wear and tear, but also harsh environmental conditions, ensuring long-lasting performance across multiple industries including warehouses, factories, commercial properties, CNI and even private estates.

### DELAY TACTICS

While traditional perimeter protections such as fences, locks and alarm systems remain essential, they are no longer sufficient on their own. Criminals are becoming more sophisticated, using power tools, vehicles and even drones to breach security barriers. This is why companies must integrate the ability to delay intruders into their security planning, particularly when the risk and costs require it.

**In 2018 a Ford Fiesta crashed into security gates at Old Palace Yard, Westminster, after hitting and injuring civilians**

The primary goal of any security system is to protect assets and, more importantly, people. However, no security measure can completely prevent an intrusion. Instead, the focus should be on slowing down attackers, giving security personnel and law enforcement critical response time. Whether the threat is theft, sabotage or even physical harm, creating layers of delay increases the chance of detection and intervention before significant damage is done.

## THE COST OF A BREAK-IN OFTEN FAR EXCEEDS THE PRICE OF PROPER SECURITY MEASURES

Businesses should consider reinforced fencing, security-rated doors, bollards and barriers that take longer to breach. Intruder detection systems should not only alert security teams, but also trigger active deterrents, such as lighting, alarms or security fog. Access control systems, CCTV monitoring and on-site security personnel all play a role in maximising the effectiveness of physical barriers.

### DESIGNS THAT DETER

A well-designed security system doesn't just react to threats, it actively deters them. Investing in delay measures is not just about preventing loss; it is about risk mitigation and business continuity. A well-planned delay strategy can mean the difference between a minor

incident and a catastrophic security breach. As threats become more aggressive and targeted, buying time is now just as critical as blocking access.

### FIRST LINE OF DEFENCE

Unfortunately, many businesses only invest in sufficient security after falling victim to crime or an attack. The reality is that criminals are always looking for vulnerabilities, and a weak entry point can make all the difference in whether a business is targeted or bypassed. Proactive security measures – especially high-quality, certified SR gates – serve as the first and best line of defence, especially given intruder delay technology is specifically engineered to slow down unauthorised entry, allowing security personnel valuable time to respond.

Crime rates will always fluctuate, but professional criminals and opportunistic thieves are always adapting – as businesses strengthen their security, criminals adapt, using more sophisticated tools and better planning. Likewise, they identify weak points in security, exploit gaps in surveillance and use power tools or vehicles to force entry. They often work in organised groups with clear roles and escape plans. Opportunistic thieves, on the other hand, react quickly to vulnerabilities, such as an unlocked door or a distracted security guard. They exploit moments of weakness rather than premeditated plans.

If businesses and property owners want to stay ahead of threats, the delaying of intruders should be a priority. Security gates that meet certified standards are not just a precaution; they are a necessity. The longer an intruder is delayed, the less likely they are to succeed. And in the world of security, every second counts ●

**Richard Hilson** is sales & marketing director for access management specialist Parking Facilities.

**It's estimated the UK construction industry loses £800-million annually to theft**

