



2026

The Ultimate Guide to Multifamily Property Security

For Property Managers & Owners



Deep
Sentinel

As a property manager or owner, you're not just taking care of a building; you're looking after people's homes. Homes that house families, students, professionals, and retirees – a vibrant community that's a part of your property's DNA. When they choose your property as their home, they entrust you with their safety.

A safe and secure environment isn't just key for your residents' peace of mind; it's also essential to your property's reputation, tenant retention, and overall profitability.

When crime goes up, rents usually drop. And lower rents might lead to problems like unpaid bills, evictions, and higher maintenance costs.

On top of that, property managers can be held legally responsible for damages to residents caused by a crime on the property.

It's clear that a multilayered security plan is a wise investment. But how can you optimize your security plan and keep your tenants safe without hurting your bottom line?

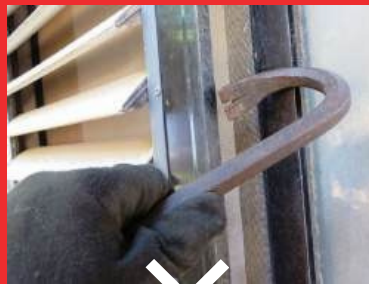
This guide takes you through everything you need to know to secure your multifamily property – from building security basics to advanced tech solutions. So you can protect your residents, boost your reputation, and maintain the safety and profitability of your multifamily investments.

85% burglary rate



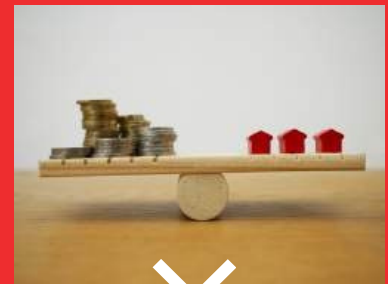
Rental properties are nearly **85% more likely to face burglary** than traditional homes.*

Burglary every 30s



In the US, a burglary happens every **30 seconds**.†

Avg. cost of \$2,661



Average cost per incident for homeowners and renters is **\$2,661**.‡

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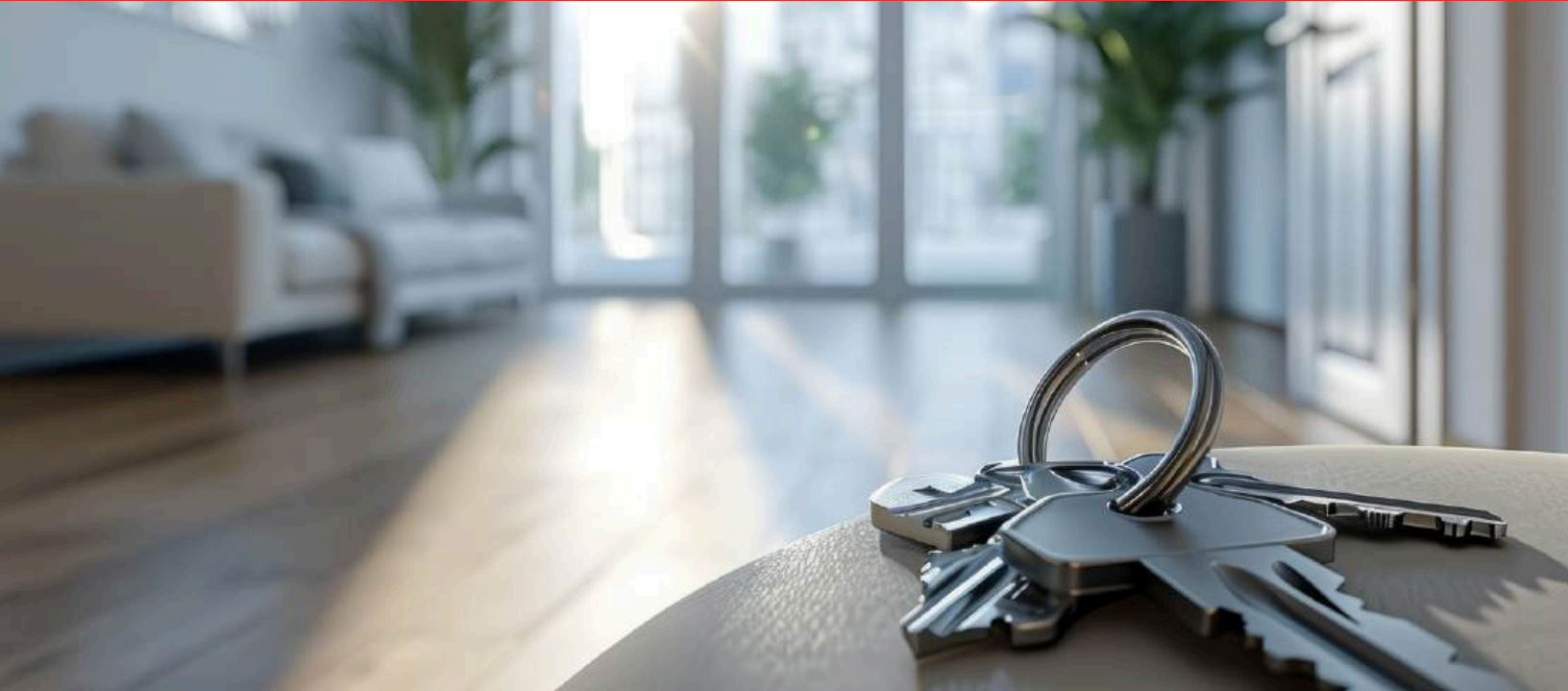
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II. The Basics of Property Managers' Legal Responsibilities



Ensuring the safety and security of your residents isn't just good practice – it's a legal obligation. You read that right: **Property managers and owners can be held legally responsible for damages resulting from crimes committed on the premises.**

Understanding these responsibilities is crucial to protect both your residents and your business. This chapter will explain the concept of reasonable care and look at the legal consequences of not properly securing your property.

What is reasonable care?

Reasonable care is a legal standard that requires property managers and owners to exercise the same degree of caution or concern for others that an ordinarily prudent, rational person would use under similar circumstances.

Simply put, tenants have the right to expect a decent level of safety and security while on your property. For you, this means you're expected to take the necessary steps to prevent any crimes that could be anticipated on the property.



Why reasonable care matters

Following the standard of reasonable care isn't just about doing the right thing; it also comes with serious legal responsibilities.

If a property owner or manager knows about potential risks or a history of crime on the property, they must take action to address those risks. Not doing so can leave them legally exposed if something happens.

What is your legal responsibility to prevent crime on property?

A key principle of reasonable care is that property managers and owners need to take action when they know there are risks. This means:

- ✓ **Assessing risks:** Regularly evaluate the property for potential vulnerabilities, like poor lighting, broken locks, or inadequate surveillance.
- ✓ **Mitigating risks:** Implementing security measures like installing cameras, hiring security personnel, or organizing neighborhood watch programs can go a long way toward preventing crime.
- ✓ **Documenting efforts:** Keep records of all security measures undertaken, including maintenance schedules and communication with residents regarding safety practices.





When can you be held liable for security failures?

If a tenant is the victim of a crime on the property, and it is found that the property manager or owner did not take reasonable steps to mitigate known risks, they can be held liable in court.

This liability can include being responsible for medical costs, emotional distress, and other damages suffered by the victim.

Here are some examples of potential liabilities:



Neglected maintenance:

A property manager who ignores broken locks or faulty security systems could be found negligent if a break-in occurs.



Failure to warn:

If a property manager is aware of an uptick in local crime but fails to inform residents or implement additional security measures, they may be held liable for any resulting incidents.



Ineffective security measures:

Regularly reviewing security measures and upgrading ineffective or outdated equipment is essential to maintaining security and reducing liability risks. For example, relying on outdated security cameras with unclear footage can hinder crime prevention.

II. Your step-by-step guide to putting your security strategy into action

Step 1:

Conduct a security risk assessment

Before you can begin mitigating risks, first you need to understand what those risks are. To start, perform a security risk assessment of the property, ideally with a professional third-party service.

This risk assessment will:

- ✓ Identify hazards
- ✓ Assess the risks
- ✓ Control the risks
- ✓ Record the findings
- ✓ Review the controls

What is CPTED?

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a strategy that uses the design and management of physical environments to reduce crime and enhance public safety.

In other words, CPTED helps you prevent crime *before* it happens.

CPTED factors to assess:

- Property lighting
- Camera systems
- Signage
- Security personnel
- Past incidents
- Crime statistics

Your assessment should closely examine the building, the overall property, and the outermost perimeter. It should also assess any threats, risks, or vulnerabilities that could negatively impact your residents' safety.

Look at assets that need to be protected – including tenants and their units, of course, but also onsite office equipment, electronics, and other valuable items in common areas – through the lens of crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED).

The 5 pillars of CPTED:

01

Natural surveillance:

Increase the chances of an intruder being seen



02

Natural access control:

Reduce the chances an intruder will enter the property



03

Territorial reinforcement:

Make it clear that someone owns the property



04

Activity support:

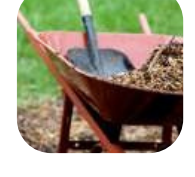
Encourage legitimate use of the property by the appropriate people



05

Maintenance:

Keep the property in good shape, warning intruders that you pay attention to the premises



Step 2:

Create your security plan

Based on what you found in your security assessment, the next step is to put together a solid security plan. This should be a physical or digital document that's accessible to all stakeholders and residents.

Here's what it should include:

- The security measures in place
- Procedures and checklists
- What residents are responsible for
- How mail and packages are handled
- Fire and safety systems
- CCTV coverage areas
- Contact info for key individuals
- Incident reporting processes
- And anything else related to the building's security and its residents.



Step 3:

Put your plan into action

Once you've put together your security plan, it's time to put those solutions into action. Here are some common security measures for multifamily residences that you can consider beyond video monitoring, which we'll dive into later in this guide.

Improve your lighting

Proper lighting on the property – especially in isolated locations like parking garages and service hallways – can immediately improve safety for tenants. Try installing always-on floodlights in high-traffic areas, as well as motion-activated lights in lesser-used spaces, to save money on electric costs.

Install or tighten access control

Most multifamily residential properties have some sort of access control at the points of entry. (If yours doesn't, this should be your next step.)

Here's where to start:

- **Keys, keypads, or keycards** for entry doors
- **Keycards or codes** for the elevator to restrict access to higher floors.
- **Locks** for storage areas and maintenance rooms
- **Additional access control measures** for loading docks, package rooms, or move-in spaces
- **Smart locks and mobile apps** are a modern and convenient way to not only control access but also keep a detailed log of who went where in the building. This is a great help in the event of theft, vandalism, or other crime.

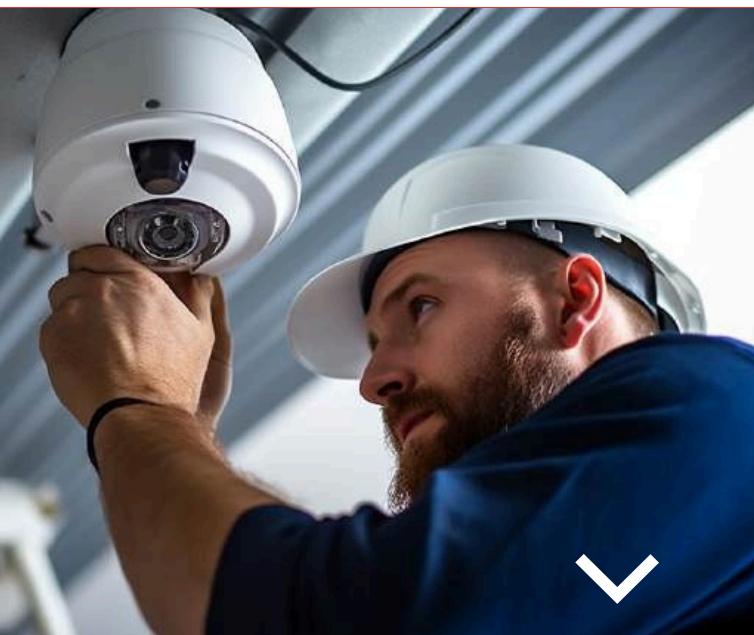
If it's in your budget, a doorman — or remote doorman — can be a great help. This person can accept deliveries, log in visitors, and keep an eye on the property and lobby.

If that's not a viable option, consider an intercom system that allows residents to buzz in guests and deliveries. Encourage your residents to allow someone access only when they expect the visitor. If your intercom system includes a camera so that they can see who is trying to gain access, even better. A recording feature is also helpful for investigating past issues.

Install a security system

A building is 300% more likely to be targeted without a security system[†]. That's because security devices or systems give intruders a clear reason to pause.

The good news: There are tons of options out there. For every setup, there's a mix of systems and sensors you can use to keep your building safe.



Here are some systems to consider:

- **Window and door sensors** on the ground floor protect against someone quietly slipping in. **Glass break sensors** help catch the most brazen burglars.
- **Keypad access panels** for maintenance rooms or site offices combat unauthorized access.
- **Motion detectors** alert personnel when someone is in a restricted area. Most of all, **security cameras** can often deter crime with their mere presence.
-



A building is 300% more likely to be targeted without a security system[†]

[†]Source: <https://staysafe.org/homesecurity/>



Set up security cameras

Perhaps the most important tool in your security setup: A range of modern security cameras.

A study by UNC Charlotte discovered that 83% of burglars check for security cameras before attempting a break-in.[†] And if it doesn't stop intruders, it will still capture incriminating footage.

Consider installing cameras in various locations in and around the property, including but not limited to:

- Front door
- Parking lot or garage
- Service entrances
- Storage locker room
- Bike storage
- Package or mail room
- Outdoor amenities like a playground, pool, or barbeque pit
- Lobby
- Party room
- Games room

As you make a plan to install cameras, first check your local surveillance camera laws and building codes to confirm that you're in compliance. Also, make sure you inform residents of camera locations and hang signage in those areas.

Security cameras are a great way to help keep an eye on your property, protecting against things like vandalism, package theft, and other unwanted activities. High-quality cameras can improve photo clarity and give you (and your tenants) peace of mind.

But having a plan and all these measures in place is only part of the battle. You also need to get buy-in from your residents.

[†]Source: <https://inside.charlotte.edu/news-features/2013-05-15/through-eyes-burglar-study-provides-insights-habits-and-motivations/>

III. How to incentivize residents to do their part



Having a solid multi-layered security plan is important, but your tenant community should also play a role in keeping the building secure.

Here are a few friendly suggestions that can motivate residents to help keep your property safe.

Foster a sense of community

Living in an apartment complex can sometimes feel isolating, but there are simple ways to bring people together – and create a safer place to live. Hosting resident parties, barbecues, or movie nights can help turn a group of individuals into a friendly community.

How does this help improve safety? When neighbors know each other, it's easier to spot unfamiliar faces, and they can look out for one another, especially when someone is away. Plus, feeling connected encourages everyone to watch out for each other and report anything odd.

Investing a little time and effort into building those connections now can make your building a friendlier and more inviting place to live in the long run.

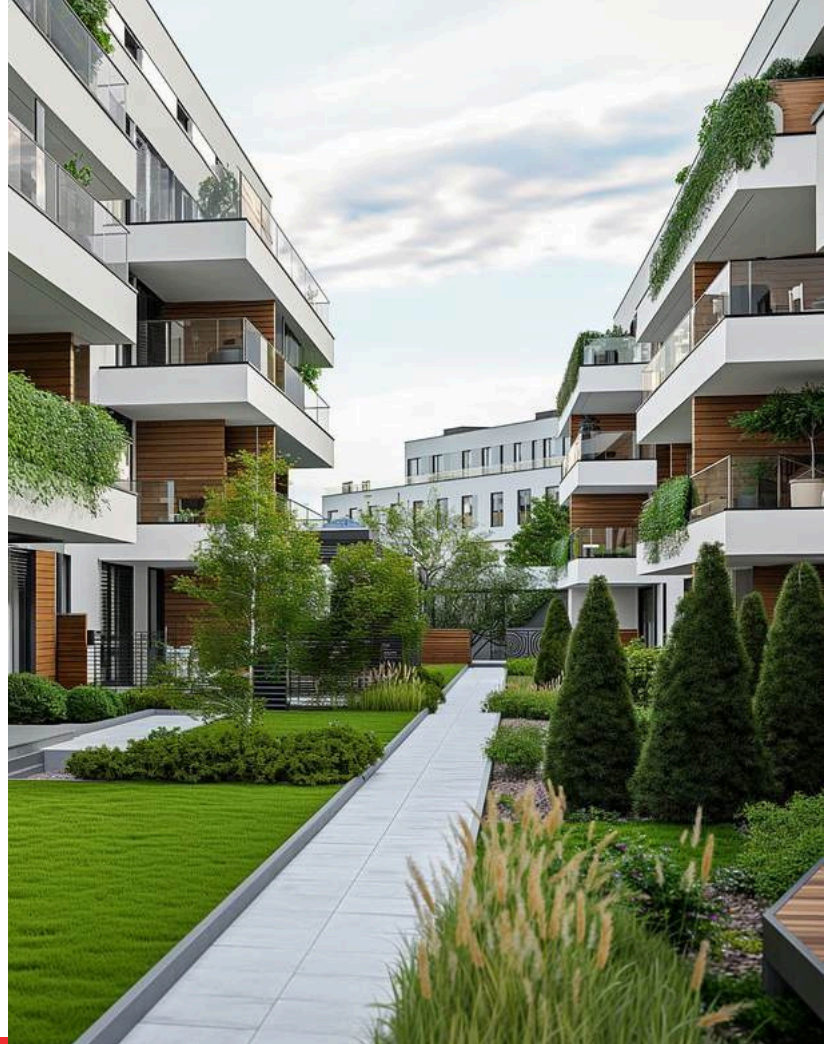


Take care of the property

When a property looks well-cared-for, people are more likely to treat it with respect. It sends a message that someone values the space – and those spaces are more likely to have security measures in place.

To create a welcoming environment, keep the property and shared areas tidy, remove any litter, touch up graffiti, replace burnt-out lightbulbs, and fix any broken windows or doors. Posting gentle reminders about loitering or restricted areas can also help.

Encouraging residents to take care of their units, both inside and out, goes a long way. A well-maintained property not only keeps things safe but also attracts great tenants!



III. Common problems with traditional multifamily security (and how to solve them)

Multifamily security plans can sometimes be a bit ad hoc, especially at smaller properties. To make a place more inviting for tenants and reduce potential issues, having a thoughtful strategy is definitely a good move.

Common options like security guards, alarm systems, and CCTV can work well, especially when combined for a layered approach. However, they do come with their own challenges. That's why it's important for landlords and managers to consider the best ways to keep their properties and residents safe.

Problem #1: Balancing cost vs. effectiveness

Managing multifamily properties can come with various expenses, and sometimes those margins can get tight. Investing in pricey security options may level up security, but it could also potentially affect the profitability of your apartment complex.

Take on-site security guards, for instance. Having a security team to patrol the property and staff the front desk can run over \$100/hour per guard when you factor in salary, benefits, and training. Plus, a guard can only be in one spot at a time, so they can't monitor every corner of the property simultaneously.



Security Guards can run over \$100/hour!

How to solve this problem:

- ✓ **Integrate technology-driven security measures** that can enhance safety without breaking the bank. Implementing surveillance cameras, motion detectors, and access control systems can provide comprehensive coverage of the property at a fraction of the cost of full-time security personnel.
- ✓ **Utilize remote monitoring services** that allow for real-time surveillance without the need for constant on-site personnel. Modern security systems like Deep Sentinel offer cloud-based monitoring, enabling live guards to keep an eye on the premises.
- ✓ **Find a combination of security measures** that makes sense for your unique property. Security isn't one-size-fits-all — what works for some properties may not be the best for yours.

Problem #2: Balancing crime deterrence vs. prevention

Common misconception alert: “crime deterrence” and “crime prevention” are actually two different things.

- **Crime deterrence discourages criminal activity through fear of consequences.**
- **Crime prevention addresses root causes and promotes community engagement to effectively reduce crime rates.**

Security solutions like alarms and deadbolted doors are examples of crime deterrence. Some folks might hesitate to swipe packages from the mail room when they know they're on camera. But they might still find ways to hide their faces, open lock boxes, and grab a couple of packages before help arrives.

You could say that these solutions are only somewhat effective once a crime begins. While the system operates as intended, there's still a chance that a thief could take personal belongings and cause some property damage, which might end up being your responsibility to cover.



Studies show that cameras can reduce crime by 50% or more.

How to solve this problem:

- ✓ A great security strategy will **combine aspects of both crime deterrence and crime prevention**. For example, you might consider installing community watch programs alongside advanced security measures. Community engagement fosters stronger relationships among neighbors, making it less likely for criminal activities to occur.
- ✓ **Pairing this with physical deterrents**, such as motion-sensor lights or visible security cameras, can create an environment where potential criminals feel too exposed to act.

Problem #3: Alarms ≠ help on the way

It is a common misconception that traditional security systems are your property's safeguard against any type of intrusion. Even though having a security system is better than none, typical systems might not be providing the level of protection you think.

Traditional security systems like ADT and Ring rely heavily on video recorders, signage, and alarms, sometimes complemented with 24/7 'monitoring'. While these measures may potentially deter a criminal, they serve more in recording evidence of the crime after the fact. **The fundamental flaw with these types of systems is that action is taken only after the break-in has occurred.**

You may be shocked to learn that these systems only notify your security provider after an alarm has been triggered – when the intruder is already inside the property. The sequence of events that follows can vary greatly between different security providers, but generally, the response time is worryingly lengthy.

Consequently, by the time the security provider notifies the monitoring center, confirms the break-in with the homeowner, and finally alerts the relevant authorities, the average home burglary – which lasts between 8-10 minutes – may have already been successfully executed.



**With traditional alarms,
you're only able to take
action AFTER a crime has
been committed**

How to solve this problem:

- ✓ **Consider incorporating human intervention through real-time surveillance** using tech-enabled security tools like Deep Sentinel. This sort of verification can reduce false alarms by 95% and significantly decrease response time.
- ✓ Additionally, ensuring that **security measures not only detect but also engage** with the perpetrators can serve to deter crime before it occurs.

Problem #4: False Alarms

One of the challenges with traditional security systems is dealing with false alarms. This can be especially tricky for multifamily properties, where the hustle and bustle of residents can easily be mistaken for suspicious activity.

Things like a resident walking by at night, a couple of squirrels, a gust of wind, or nearby construction can easily trigger motion alarms or outdated video detection. While false alarms can be frustrating for property owners, it's not just the temporary disruption or anxiety that's bothersome.

Over time, frequent false alarms can lead to slower police responses when there's a real crime. If local authorities get too many false alerts, your building might start to develop a reputation, meaning it could take longer for them to respond when something serious happens.

Additionally, many cities have rising fees for false alarms, which can turn into unexpected costs and impact your budget.



Many cities have rising fees for false alarms.

How to solve this problem:

- ✓ Add a layer of smart video monitoring. Read on in the next chapter to learn more.



V. The future of security

AI-enabled video monitoring with live surveillance

Crime deterrence alone won't keep your residents safe. What multifamily properties really need is a smart, budget-friendly crime prevention solution to ensure safety and reduce liability.

The most effective solution to prevent crime? AI-enabled video monitoring with live surveillance.

Modern video monitoring solutions are using AI-powered image analysis, two-way audio, and live guards to assess potential threats, engage actual intruders, and if necessary, alert local law enforcement—all in the ensuing seconds after a suspicious person is detected before committing a crime.

And this isn't some far-off futuristic tech, or something only used by big companies. These tools are currently in place in multifamily properties of all sizes across the nation.

Here's how AI technology paired with trained, remote guards, and two-way audio can help prevent crime before it starts.



0 Seconds

Smart camera detects motion

Motion wakes the camera, and it immediately starts to record. That video is sent over a secure private connection to be analyzed.

2 Seconds

AI assesses the situation

Artificial Intelligence separates potential threats like humans from harmless events, such as cars driving by.

10 Seconds

Guard evaluation & intervention

If the AI detect sa threat, it sends the footage to a live guard. That guard assesses the threat and intervenes directly using the camera's two-way audio or built-in siren.

30 Seconds

Law enforcement is called

After intervening, that guard calls local law enforcement with a "verified" active situation, providing a description of the suspect and their behavior, prompting an immediate response from law enforcement.



How to get AI-enabled video monitoring for your property

Deep Sentinel offers cutting-edge security cameras with unparalleled live monitoring, response times, and crime prevention. Our camera and video monitoring solutions are a cost-effective way to ensure your residents are safe and your reputation is protected.

They come with high-quality two-way audio, alarm sirens, night vision, and after-hours live surveillance. Using a proprietary combination of custom AI—to differentiate between potential threats and benign motion—and live security personnel, we provide real eyes on your multifamily property in real time whenever someone comes near your property.

Guards quickly assess the situation, intervene as necessary, and notify the authorities within 30 seconds if required.

Want to get set up with your system? Here's what you need.

- The ability to store video footage
- A redundant power source in case of an outage
- Deep Sentinel's on-site AI hub
- For the PoE system, ethernet wiring
- The ability to post cameras where needed along the perimeter of the building and at every entrance and common area.

**Secure your property with the
smartest surveillance on the market.**

Get in touch with **Deep Sentinel** today.
Call **1-833-983-6006** to get quoted for your system
or visit www.deepsentinel.com