

Do Your Part for Become a First

IPI partners with First Observer program to teach parking professionals how

The International Parking Institute's Safety and Security Committee has developed anti-terrorism training that addresses issues specific to parking professionals. After consulting with security and anti-terrorism professionals, a parking module was created to augment the respected First Observer training program. The First Observer program is an established anti-terrorism and security awareness program that supports the National Preparedness Guidelines, and is operated by Team HMS under a cooperative agreement with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

The training program will teach parking professionals to be aware of potential terrorist activities, and how to identify, evaluate and report unusual or suspicious activities. Unveiled at the 2010 IPI Conference & Expo in May, this essential program is now available to all parking professionals and IPI State & Regional Allied Associations.

William Arrington, general manager, TSNM/Highway and Motor Carrier Division at DHS, emphasized the importance of accepting responsibility for public safety:

*Security is everyone's responsibility, and **together** we can make a difference. As partners in transportation security, we must be prepared to go into battle every day, sometimes without warning and often times without a clue as to who our enemies might be. We need to be better prepared and expect the unexpected. Through the richness of communication, cooperation and collaboration, **together** we can be successful in our fight against those seeking to harm us by disrupting our quality of life as we know it and by crippling our transportation systems.*

National Security is Everyone's Business

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA), borne out of the 2001 Patriot Act, oversees the security of all modes of transportation. While airports are a high-profile component of national security, all surface transportation modes are critical to the safety of U.S. citizens, including parking facilities.



After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the nation was on high alert, and everyone was anxious to identify terrorists. Nearly a decade since those callous and unspeakable acts, not everyone is convinced that similar events could recur. But the United States is engaged in a battle of wills with the enemy. We cannot afford any areas of vulnerability.

In July 2008, DHS awarded a federal grant of \$15.5 million to the HMS Company to provide program management, support and training for its Trucking Security Program. HMS consulted with leaders in the parking community to develop a comprehensive training and awareness module

that will help parking professionals identify, assess and report activity that is potentially dangerous to their facility or even a U.S. security breach.

First Observer Trains Parking Professionals in Critical Areas

The International Parking Institute's members and partners are vital to the success of the "War on Terror." Parking and transportation professionals have five critical security awareness areas: on-street, surface lots, garages/decks, special events, and shuttle operations. Within these categories, thousands of vehicles enter your

National Security: Observer™

to protect the public from terror threats

Bridget Gorman Wendling



domain daily, and each one is potentially driven by either a domestic or international terrorist. How do you spot a terrorist? What does one look like? Who are the terrorist? What actions identify a terrorist? What contraband do they carry? Is your industry ready and, more pointedly, are your employees ready to confront a terrorist?

First Observer training arms participants with critical information about how to identify a potential threat, essential background information on different terrorist groups and their patterns of operation, an overview of weapons, and details case-studies of terror situations. First Observers become versed in the concise, accurate and simple ITALK format of reporting situations to the First Observer Call Center:

1. I= You IDENTIFY yourself and provide your First Observer ID number if you have it handy. Also provide a callback number; in case the call is dropped, the Call Center can make efforts to reach back to you and look out for your safety.
2. T= Provide the Call Center with the exact TIME of your incident observation. This is critical as it allows the Call Center to know if the event is happening right now or happened two days ago.
3. A= Provide the Call Center with a concise and accurate description of your observation(s), the ACTIVITY you are seeing. Give as accurate a description as you can ... make, model, color of vehicles, tag number ... size, shape, approximate age of people, what they were wearing, etc. ... nature of the activity — unloading hazardous materials, hooking up trailers in a vacant lot, breaking into truck cabs or buildings, etc.



4. L= Provide the Call Center with the location of the suspicious activity and also with your physical LOCATION
5. K= Attempt to KEEP observation without endangering your personal safety or anybody else's.

Even when calling 911, the ITALK format can be useful in effectively describing what was observed.

How First Observer Works

The First Observer program works like this: Once armed with the warning signs, you may observe something suspicious. You assess that it is unusual. You report it (Note: First Observer does not replace 911). The Call Center swiftly notifies the Information Sharing and Analysis Center (ISAC), which provides timely analysis and distributes the information to several stakeholders:

- Parking and transportation organizations.
- TSA and sections within Surface Transportation.
- Department of Homeland Security (Infrastructure Protection and Intelligence sections).
- The Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Joint Terrorism Task Forces.

- The Department of Transportation Crisis Management Center.
- State and Local Law Enforcement.

First Observer Training for You

With proper training, every citizen could be more able to provide a safe environment for securing our infrastructure and protecting property and life. First Observer is a national safety and security program that uses the skills, experiences and savvy of America's parking professionals to administer an anti-terrorism and security awareness program in support of the National Preparedness Guidelines. Be sure to take advantage of this parking-specific training module of the First Observer program. For more information on how you and your colleagues and staff can benefit from the First Observer training, contact Henry Wallmeyer, deputy director, International Parking Institute, at wallmeyer@parking.org or 540.371.7535. ■

Bridget Gorman Wendling is a contributor to *The Parking Professional*. She can be reached at bridget.wendling@yahoo.com.

IPI INTERNATIONAL PARKING INSTITUTE



First Observer™ is a highway security program, funded by FEMA, and administered by TSA.

www.FirstObserver.com
888.217.5902
www.tsa.gov

Reprints of this article can be ordered by e-mailing ipi@parking.org.