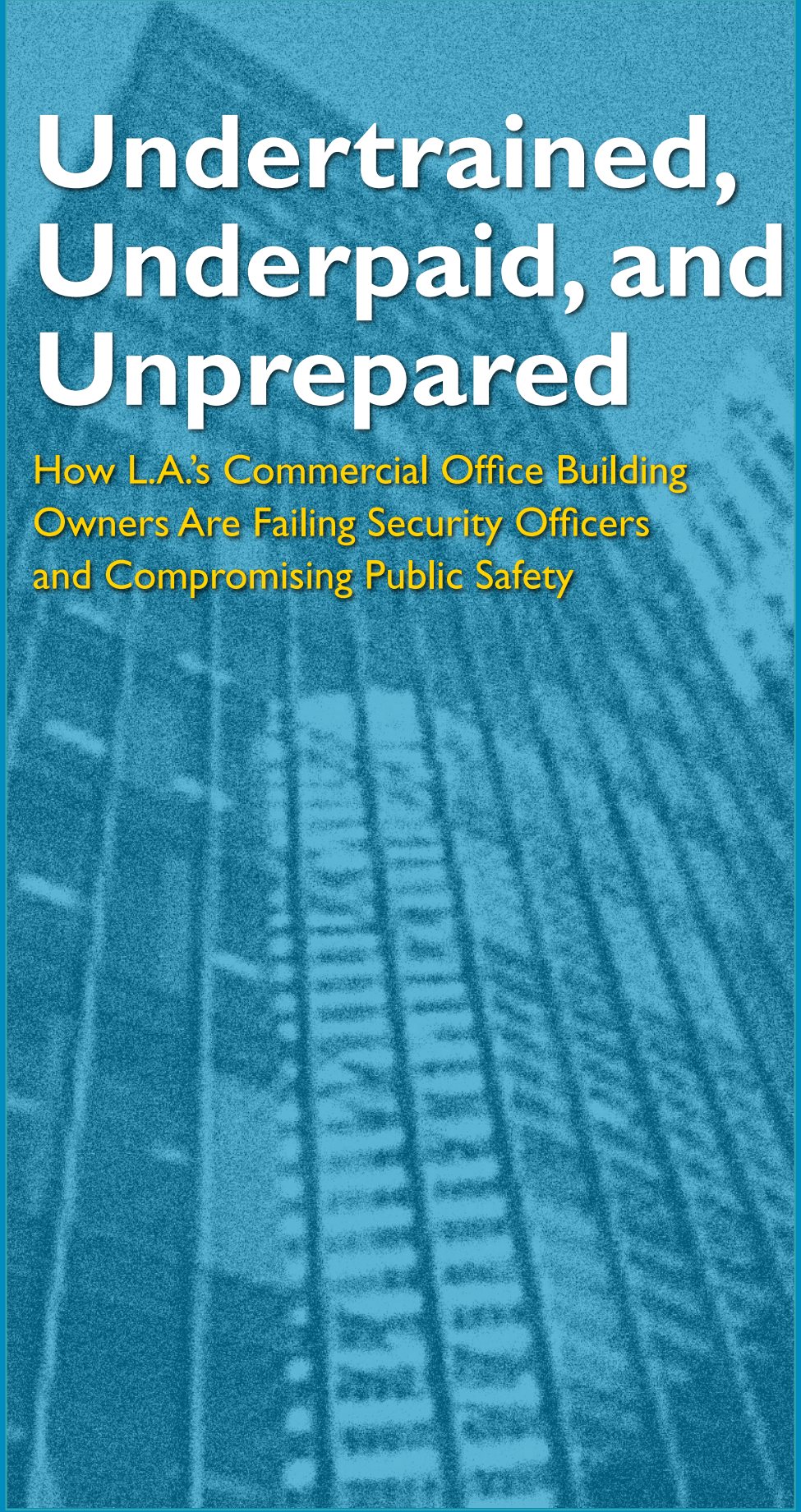

Undertrained, Underpaid, and Unprepared

How L.A.'s Commercial Office Building Owners Are Failing Security Officers and Compromising Public Safety

Prepared by the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy
for the Stand for Security Coalition
April 2006

LAANE
Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy

Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE) is a nonprofit organization that does research, policy and community organizing on issues of working poverty and economic development.

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The Stand for Security Coalition is a coalition of community organizations, clergy, and labor seeking to improve working conditions for security officers and enhance public safety.

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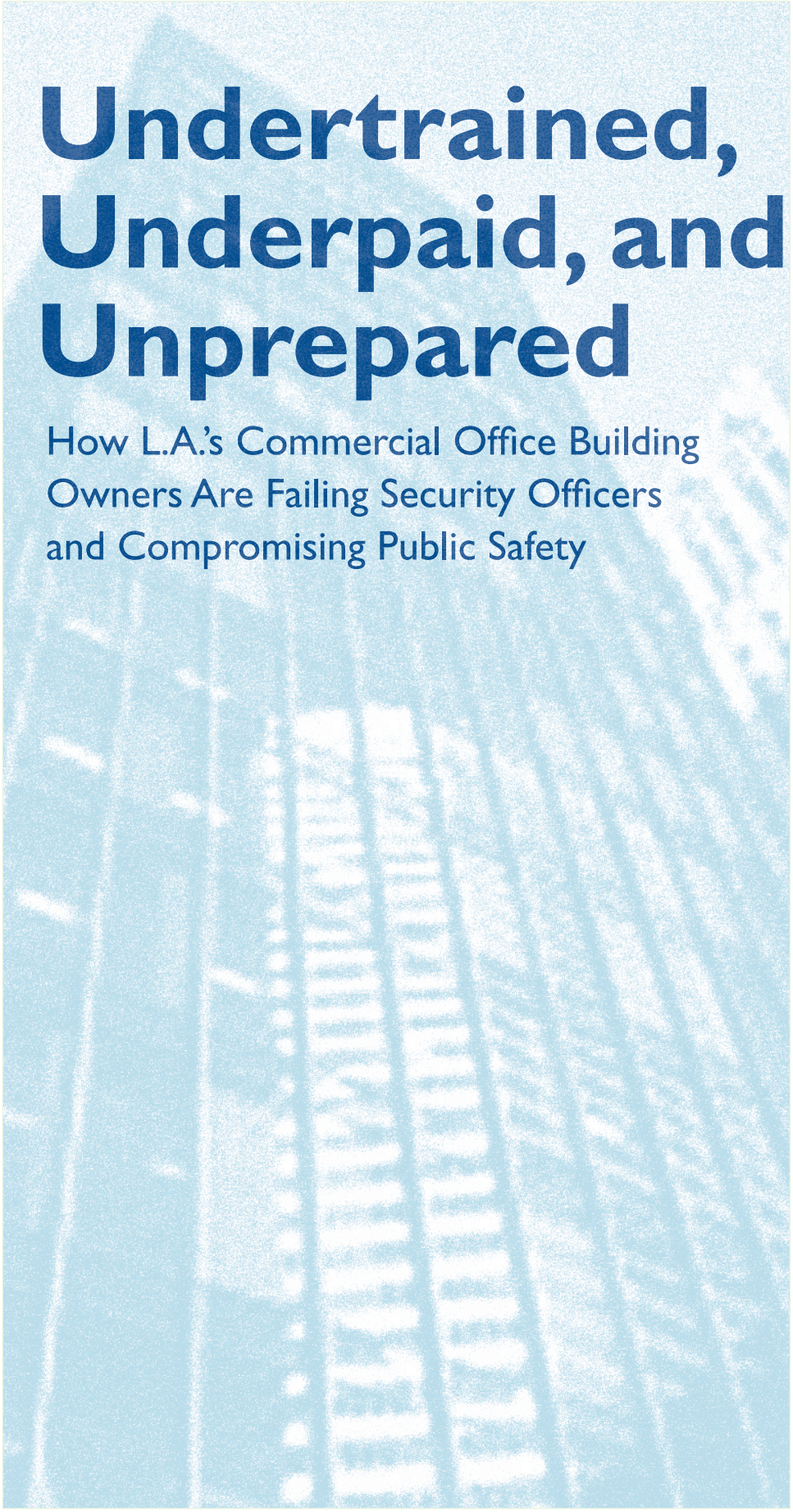

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Since the tragic events of 9/11, and the more recent devastation of Hurricane Katrina, terrorism and emergency preparedness have been major issues for American cities. In Los Angeles, the U.S. Bank Tower downtown remains a top terrorist target, and the ever-present threat of a major earthquake underlines the need for an effective and well-prepared emergency response network.

In Los Angeles' commercial office buildings, hundreds of thousands of people work and visit every day. More than 10,000 private security officers in these buildings are on the front lines in an emergency, frequently making important decisions before police, fire, or any other emergency personnel arrive. Their responsibilities are varied and often critical—including securing entrances, leading tenants to safety during high-rise evacuations, monitoring activity inside and outside of the building, and coordinating with the city's emergency personnel.

Yet despite these essential duties, private security officers are undertrained, underpaid and unprepared—putting the safety and security of tenants and the general public at unnecessary risk. This report, based on an original LAANE survey of security officers in commercial office buildings and other research, reaches the following conclusions:

Findings

High turnover rates among security officers lead to understaffing and a lack of experienced and trained personnel

Due to fierce competition and cost cutting among security contractors, security officers typically receive low wages and few benefits. As a result, security contractors have difficulty attracting and retaining employees, leading to high rates of employee turnover.

- At the U.S. Bank Tower, the annual turnover rate is 60 percent. At least 10 of the recently hired officers in the building had not received any training on terrorism prevention at the time of this study.
- In the other high-rise office buildings surveyed, turnover rates range from 90 percent to 243 percent annually. In the same buildings, turnover among janitors—who earn higher wages and receive free family health benefits—is 5 percent or lower.
- Twenty-seven buildings—75 percent of the buildings surveyed—have security positions that are unfilled or filled by temporary "rovers" who are often unfamiliar with the buildings they are working in.
- Officers report that building entry points are unguarded and security procedures are not performed.

Training for officers is minimal, leaving them unprepared for emergencies and threatening public safety

Lack of training, combined with high turnover rates, leads to an ill-equipped and largely inexperienced security workforce. This hampers efforts to coordinate with police,

fire, and emergency personnel and leaves Los Angeles ill-prepared in the event of a crisis.

- Security officers report that security contractors fail to provide the minimum hours of training required by state law.
- Officers report that if they do receive training, it consists largely of open book tests and on-the-job training, rather than formal, classroom-based training that measures comprehension of the subject matter.
- Under state law, training on emergency procedures—such as evacuation routes, CPR, and first aid—is optional, and training on counter-terrorism is minimal. These requirements are inadequate for office buildings housing hundreds of thousands of tenants and visitors in a major metropolitan area like Los Angeles.

BOMA's training program offers little substance and no accountability

Instead of working cooperatively with the city to make comprehensive improvements to security, the Building Owners and Managers Association of Greater L.A. (BOMA) has introduced its own training program, the Accredited Security Organization (ASO) program.

- Officers report they have been given pins to wear that say "BOMA Security Accredited Training" without receiving any additional training.
- Training components that are vital for the improvement of building safety such as "arrest, search and seizure," "bomb/terrorist threats," "emergency preparedness," and "evacuation procedures" are merely electives—offering no guarantee that Los Angeles officers will undergo training in these critical areas.
- The required training outlined in the ASO program is extremely vague, including "coaching," "on-the-job-training," and "informal supervisor-based training."

Recommendations

Reduce turnover by improving wages and benefits: In order to attract and retain employees, wages should be increased and benefits should be provided, such as employer-paid family health care, paid sick leave, and paid vacation.

Increase training requirements and improve coordination with emergency personnel: Training requirements should be strengthened, including mandatory training on emergency procedures, CPR and first aid, and counter-terrorism.

Strengthen enforcement of training requirements and ensure that contractors and building owners are accountable: Increasing training requirements alone will be unsuccessful without mechanisms to ensure that contractors are complying with the law.

Provide a career ladder for advancement: Linking pay increases to the completion of specified training programs and experience on the job will help to professionalize the workforce and ensure stability.

Security Officers Play a Crucial Role in Protecting Public Safety

Since the tragic events of 9/11, and the more recent devastation of Hurricane Katrina, terrorism and emergency preparedness have been major issues for American cities. In Los Angeles, the U.S. Bank Tower downtown remains a top terrorist target, since the 2002 Al Qaeda plot to target the building in a 9/11-style attack.[1] Since 9/11, according to a recent Rand Corporation study, the risk of terrorist attacks on "soft targets"—including office buildings—has increased.[2] Moreover, the ever-present threat of a major earthquake in the Los Angeles region underlines the need for an effective and well-prepared emergency response network.

In Los Angeles' commercial office buildings, hundreds of thousands of people work and visit every day. More than 10,000 private security officers who work at commercial buildings are on the front lines in an emergency, frequently making important decisions before police, fire, or any other emergency personnel arrive. Their responsibilities are varied and often critical—including securing entrances, leading tenants to safety during high-rise evacuations, monitoring activity inside and outside of the building, safeguarding tenants and buildings during a crisis, and coordinating with the city's emergency personnel. Yet despite these essential duties, private security officers are undertrained, underprepared and undercompensated—putting the safety and security of tenants and the general public at unnecessary risk.

II

High Turnover Rates Found in L.A.'s Office Towers

Fred Fleet, the former director of security at City National Plaza, wrote in a commentary in the *Los Angeles Times*, "Security likely has the worst retention rate of any service-based industry. Turnover is high—anywhere from 100 percent to 800 percent." He also noted that "most of the security officers I know today would rather work at McDonald's for more money than face the hassles of a job in the security field."[3]

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the most recent median wage for a security officer in Los Angeles County is $9.64.[4] However, wages for officers in commercial real estate are likely to be even lower. The BLS data includes many security officers in other sectors such as local government, schools, and hospitals, which according to BLS data, are more highly paid. A more accurate estimate of wages for security officers in office buildings comes from the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), which is organizing officers in the Los Angeles region. According to a 2004–2005 survey of 600 officers in commercial office buildings conducted by the union, the average hourly wage is $8.50.

> "High turnover is inherently dangerous in an industry charged with the security and safety … Clearly, when employees don't stay long enough to become proficient at the job, overall performance suffers. Paying low wages that lead to high turnover is penny-wise, pound-foolish."
>
> **Michael Goodboe,** vice president of training for the Wackenhut Training Institute, from his article in *Security Management* magazine, 2002.[5]

Working full time at that wage, an officer would make $17,680 a year, which is only slightly above the federal poverty level for a family of three, currently $16,600.[6] At $8.50 an hour, security officers earn well below the income needed to cover the cost of basic necessities for living in Los Angeles. In order to afford the basic necessities for a family of four with two wage earners, an officer would need to earn at least $11.60 per hour, according to research by the Economic Policy Institute.[7]

In California, more than two-thirds of people in low-income families do not have employer-based health coverage[8] and are forced to rely on publicly funded health programs, clinics or hospital emergency rooms. The situation for security officers in Los Angeles is likely to be even worse. LAANE conducted an original survey of security officers in 37 commercial office buildings in the L.A. area, which together employ nearly 600 officers. The buildings selected are predominantly high-profile, high-occupancy sites, most of which are in downtown L.A. and Century City. (For more information about the survey, see the methodology section at the end of this report.)

The results of this survey show that although officers have the option to purchase coverage for their family members, the cost is extremely high. The average cost for family health benefits is $309 per month. For the typical officer earning less than $350

a week and struggling to make ends meet, this cost is prohibitive.

In addition, the majority of officers in the buildings surveyed are not offered affordable individual health benefits. Thirty-four percent of officers must pay for individual benefits, and the average monthly cost of these benefits is $165. Another 20 percent of officers have access to employer-paid individual benefits, but enrollment for these benefits is highly restricted, with sign-ups permitted only after a year of employment or only during a designated period once a year. Only 46 percent of officers currently receive employer-paid individual benefits.

These low wages and the lack of benefits make it difficult for security contractors to retain their employees. The reality of high turnover rates among security officers is openly acknowledged by industry experts and widely discussed in security and real estate industry trade magazines. The following are quotes from articles on turnover in leading industry publications:

- "Given the extremely high rate of reported security officer turnover, estimated at 100 percent to 400 percent, it's imperative that security professionals have a thorough understanding of the factors that cause turnover."

  ***Security* magazine, 2004**[9]

- "It's common for a security guard firm to experience 100 percent to 200 percent annual turnover with its staff … That means the guard business has one of the highest turnover rates of any industry in the United States."

  ***National Real Estate Investor*, 2004**[10]

- "While there's no escaping the security industry's high rate of turnover, some companies do fare better than others."

  ***Security Director's Report*, 2003**[11]

Turnover in L.A. high-rise office buildings up to 243 percent

Results from LAANE's survey show that high turnover rates similar to those cited in industry press are found in L.A.'s office towers. An analysis of 10 high-rise office buildings in the city of Los Angeles shows extremely high turnover rates. At the U.S. Bank Tower, one of L.A.'s top terrorist targets, turnover is 60 percent. At nine other high-rise office buildings, turnover ranges from 93 percent to 243 percent.

These high-turnover buildings are located both in downtown Los Angeles and in Century City, and all are Class A buildings. Class A buildings are typically in excellent locations and command the highest rents in the market, according to "Colliers International Market Report." Due to our survey's rigorous standards for documenting turnover rates, we were unable to calculate turnover rates for all the buildings in the survey. However, the 10 buildings we analyzed likely reflect a much broader problem in the industry.[12]

Perimeter Patrols Not Performed in Downtown High-Rise

"High turnover and understaffing are a big problem in my building. Because we're short-staffed, we don't follow the proper procedures to ensure building safety. Perimeter patrols are not conducted on a regular basis. This is an almost daily occurrence, and it leaves the building vulnerable to a break-in or a terrorist attack. It also puts tenants at risk of burglaries or assaults."

David Moreno, security officer at an L.A. area building

Building access points are left unguarded and security procedures are not performed

Due to high turnover and difficulty in recruiting new officers, security contractors have a hard time keeping positions filled, leaving buildings understaffed and jeopardizing security. As shown in Figure 1, 27 buildings—or 75 percent of all buildings surveyed—have unfilled positions or positions that are filled by "rovers." Rovers are officers who move around to different buildings and different positions within a building. These rovers report that they are often inadequately trained for their assignments. Among the buildings with these problems, 15 percent of all positions are unfilled or filled by rovers, on average.

Due to understaffing, officers report that important positions that control access to buildings are sometimes unguarded, such as turnstiles and sign-in consoles at main entrances, and the entrances to parking structures. In addition, officers report that security procedures—such as stairwell and freight entrance patrols and emergency intercom checks—sometimes are not performed.

High Turnover Rates Found At Top L.A. Terrorist Targets

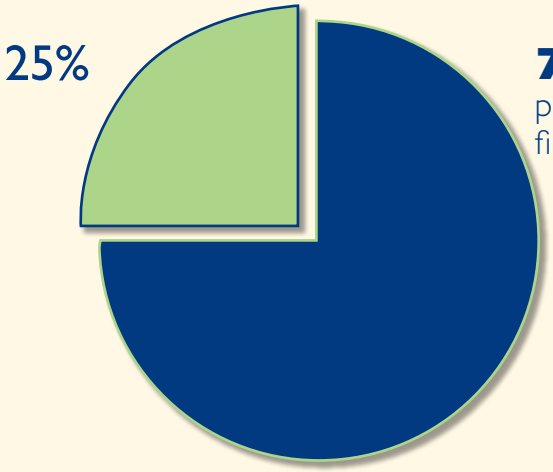
Recent revelations have reminded Angelenos that the city's commercial office buildings remain a top terrorist target. In early February of this year, President Bush revealed more details of the 2002 Al Qaeda plot to target the U.S. Bank Tower (formerly the Library Tower) in downtown Los Angeles in a Sept. 11th-style attack. This building, which is the tallest office tower west of the Mississippi River, remains one of the prime terrorist targets in Los Angeles.[13]

The building's owner has assured the public that security in the building has been substantially increased since Sept. 11.[14] However, recent interviews with security officers working in the building show that the annual turnover rate is 60 percent, meaning six out of 10 officers leave every year. This high rate of turnover means that most officers leave before they are able to gain the experience and familiarity with the building and its tenants that are necessary to protect against threats and respond to emergencies.

The Building Owners and Managers Association has touted its "Accredited Security Organization" program for high-rise buildings as a way to ensure that security officers receive the training they need to keep their buildings secure. However, at the time of this study, officers at the U.S. Bank Tower report that the last training on terrorism they received was six months ago. Since that training, at least 10 officers have left the building. The new officers who replaced them have not received this terrorism training. Without addressing high turnover rates, trainings at buildings like the U.S. Bank Tower will continue to be ineffective at ensuring that a well-trained guard force is ready to assist law enforcement in preventing a terrorist attack—leaving tenants and visitors at unnecessary risk.

At another high-profile skyscraper, the Century Plaza Towers, the turnover rate is even higher. With twin towers rising 44 stories, the Century Plaza Towers stand out as the tallest buildings in Century City and are the largest commercial property in all of Los Angeles. Interviews with officers there show that 73 officers left these buildings during a recent six-month period, resulting in a shocking turnover rate of more than 240 percent.

Figure 1. Three-Quarters of Buildings Surveyed Have Unfilled Security Positions or Positions Filled by "Rovers"



source: LAANE survey

Building Entry Points Left Unguarded

"Because the turnover is so high in the building I work in, posts that are crucial to building safety too often are not covered. We used to stop all cars entering the parking structure but there is no officer on that post anymore. There have been times when there is only one officer covering the entrances to the main lobby, and they can't possibly check in everybody entering the building during rush times. Patrols of the freight entrances and stairwells are not done with the frequency that they should be, because we don't have the staff necessary to keep the building as secure as we want to."

Celedonio Jimenez, security officer at an L.A. area building

Sixty-eight percent of buildings use rovers on a regular basis to cover unfilled positions, according to survey results. When rovers are sent to a new building, they often do not receive training on exit routes, evacuation procedures, or the location of utility shut-offs and hazardous materials. In addition, rovers who are new to a building are not familiar with the tenants. As a result, rovers will have a hard time recognizing suspicious visitors or activities, which is essential to crime prevention.

Rovers Unfamiliar With Building Procedures

"Working as a rover, I am sent to about four different locations every month. When I'm sent to a new site, I rarely receive any training or orientation. I'm usually not trained on what the evacuation procedures are or where the building exits are. I wouldn't know how to help police or fire in an emergency. I think I could do my job a lot better if I were assigned to one location, so I could be more familiar with the building, the emergency procedures, and the tenants."

William Robbins, security officer at an L.A. area building

Besides relying on rovers to fill empty positions, security contractors often ask officers to work many hours of overtime. The need for employees to occasionally work overtime is a part of doing business, and often welcomed by officers as a way to boost their income. However, excessive overtime can lead to decreased performance, higher rates of injury, poor health, and higher worker turnover and absenteeism.[15] According to a comprehensive study by the National Institute for Occupational Safe and Health, 12-hour shifts, combined with working more than 40 hours per week, are associated with decreased alertness, increased fatigue, lower cognitive function, declines in vigilance, and increased injuries.[16]

High Turnover Undermines Emergency Preparedness

"In the last six months a majority of security officers have left their jobs in my building—there's so many new officers always coming in, they're not getting the training they need. They are basically shown a video and are placed at their post, sometimes without even a tour of the building. They don't know where the key emergency exits are, or even where the office of the post commander is. They don't know who or how many tenants are in the building. I hate to think about what would happen if my building was attacked or an earthquake happened and we needed to evacuate the building."

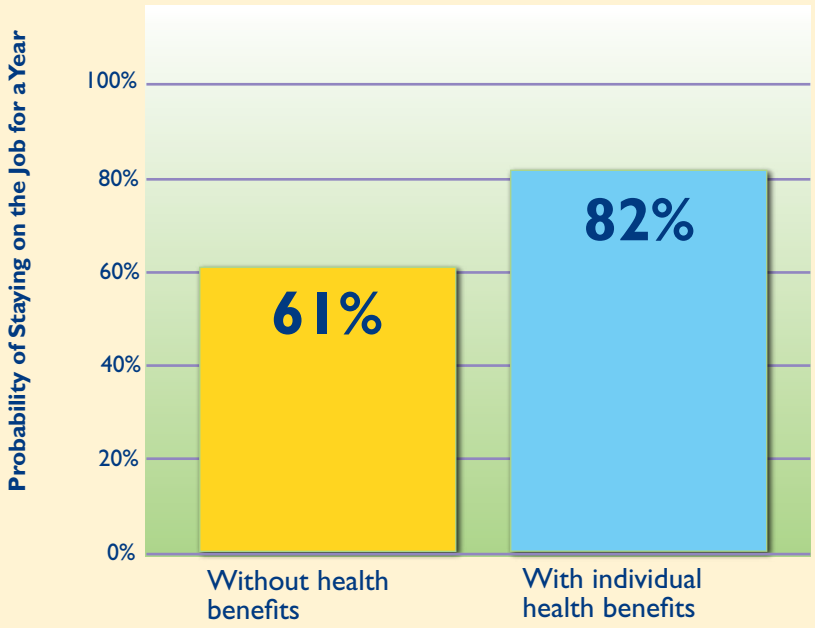
Lillie Lewis, security officer at an L. A. area building

Improving Pay and Benefits Reduces Turnover

Although high turnover rates jeopardize security and threaten public safety, recent research shows that steps can be taken to reduce turnover. A growing body of academic research shows that improving wages and benefits is an effective means of reducing turnover.

- In San Francisco, one study showed that providing employer-paid individual health benefits to low-wage service workers increased the probability that a worker would stay on the job at least a year from 61 percent to 82 percent.[17] Providing family benefits would likely increase retention rates even more.
- Also in San Francisco, a living wage law and other policies enacted at the airport increased wages and benefits for low-wage service workers. Where raises were 10 percent or higher, turnover fell by 60 percent.[18]
- Here in Los Angeles, the city increased wages and benefits for its contracted service workers, including security officers, through a living wage law. A study of this law's impact showed that employee turnover rates at living wage companies were 35 percent lower than at comparable companies that pay lower wages and provide fewer health benefits.[19]

Figure 2. Health Benefits Improve Worker Retention



Source: Study by Connecticut College Economics Professor Candace Howes[20]

Security officer turnover rates are lower when workers receive better wages and health benefits, as shown in Table 1. Security officers in both San Francisco and Chicago have higher wages, better benefits, and lower turnover rates compared to Los Angeles and New York City. According to Ligouri Associates, a leading security contractor in San Francisco, since health care and other benefits were improved under a union contract in 2003, turnover has decreased. In Chicago, officers receive affordable full family benefits, and reported turnover rates are only 25 percent.

Table 1. Lower Turnover among Security Officers in Cities with Better Wages and Benefits

	Los Angeles	Manhattan	Chicago	San Francisco
Typical Hourly Wage in Commercial Buildings	$8.50	$9.68	$10.80	$11.88
Affordable Individual and Family Health Benefits	No	No	Yes	Yes
Annual Turnover Rate	60%–243%	44%–100%	25%	Marked reduction since union contract in 2003

Sources: LAANE Survey, Public Advocate for the City of New York,[21] SEIU

Another striking comparison can be made between security officers and janitors in the same office towers in Los Angeles. Among security officers, turnover in the 10 high-rise buildings surveyed ranges from 60 percent to 243 percent. Janitors in those same buildings earn $10.38 per hour on average and receive free family benefits, paid vacation and sick leave under a union contract. The turnover rate for janitors in these buildings is less than 5 percent, according to data gathered in interviews with union staff.

Turnover in San Francisco Decreases When Wages and Benefits Are Improved

"The security industry has historically recorded one of the highest employee turnover rates of any industry. A 100 percent–300 percent turnover rate was typical in the Bay Area. Since wages and benefits were improved under a master union contract, there has been a marked turnaround in the employee turnover rate. Better employee retention will only result when the importance of the security role is acknowledged and better pay, benefits, increased training and career advancement are provided."

Lou Ligouri, president Ligouri Associates Inc., a leading security contractor in San Francisco

Lack of Consistent Training Puts Public at Risk

IV

Overall security measures in commercial high-rises are superficial, according to Todd H. Richardson, the managing director of Insignia/ESG's property services group for Southern California, which manages 34 million square feet of office space. In 2003, Richardson told *The New York* Times that "the lion's share" of landlords "have gone back to pre-9/11 levels of interest" and are unwilling to pay for better-trained security guards.[22]

While the Building Owners and Managers Association of Greater Los Angeles (BOMA) claims that training standards have been raised, the security officers on the front line tell a different story. According to these officers, current training is minimal, inconsistent, and sometimes nonexistent. It is often left in the hands of security contractors who want to keep costs to a minimum and put officers on the job quickly because of high turnover rates.

Officers Train Themselves

"The only 'training' we get in my building is by way of a handout with questions that we're supposed to read and complete. The answers are right there in the handout. There's no deadline, and there's only one handout for all the officers in the building, so we can only work on it during our breaks if no one else is reading it. The officers that have finished the test and turned it in don't even get a grade or response on their answers. I've never had any hands-on training on important things like CPR or emergency preparedness."

Keani Christianson, security officer at an L.A. area building

Minimal Training Since September 11, 2001

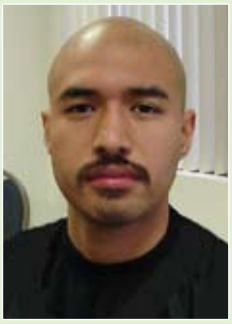
- Nearly half (46 percent) of California security officers said that they received no training prior to starting their job from their employer.
- Half (52 percent) said they received no training in emergency response prior to starting their jobs
- Six in 10 said they received no pre-hire training in first aid.
- Forty percent said their employers had issued no new procedures since Sept. 11, 2001, to strengthen or alter security at the facilities where they work.
- Half (48 percent) of security officers said the buildings in which they work conduct no emergency drills.
- Two-thirds (65 percent) said their buildings do not conduct earthquake drills.
- Two-thirds (67 percent) said their buildings do not conduct bomb-threat drills.
- Three in four (76 percent) officers never conduct arrest procedure drills.

Source: A 2002 survey of 400 California security officers by Hart Research Associates Inc.[23]

Ironically, California has some of the strongest laws in the nation governing training requirements for private security officers. Before starting work, eight hours of training are required, consisting of "lecture, discussion, exercises and role-playing," as well as completion of the state's training manual for security officers.[24] In the first 30 days after starting work, 16 more hours of training are required. An additional 16 hours are required within the first six months, for a total of 40 hours.

However, without strong enforcement and penalties, contractors have little incentive to obey the law. The California Bureau of Security and Investigative Services (BSIS), the agency in charge of enforcing the law, does not sufficiently police contractors to ensure they train their officers in accordance with state requirements. Many security officers report they do not receive the required hours of training or that training is very superficial. Often, some of the only training that officers receive is on the job—when co-workers are asked to train new hires during work hours.

Security officers often work for a number of different security companies and are transferred to many different buildings, and most officers report that training varies widely from company to company and building to building. This inconsistency results in a lack of preparedness and a lack of accountability to clients, building tenants, and the public at large.



No Eight-Hour Pre-Hire Training As Required By State Law

"When I was first hired as an officer, I watched a video and that was it. There was some very basic information that covered things like how to operate a fire extinguisher and some questions on a test that we answered as we watched the video. I have never had any training on what to do in medical emergencies but I've had to deal with three medical situations so far in my building. I wish we were better trained to know how to respond in a real emergency."

Jimmy Cruz, security officer at an L.A. area building

State training requirements are inadequate

California's training requirements are a step in the right direction toward professionalizing security officers' jobs. However, under current state law, training requirements are the same whether a security officer is guarding a warehouse in Bakersfield or a skyscraper in Los Angeles. This one-size-fits-all training leaves officers ill-prepared to be an effective partner with law enforcement in identifying suspicious behavior and effectively assisting emergency personnel in the event of a natural or man-made disaster.

Under current state law, training on essential skills such as evacuation routes and procedures, first aid, and CPR is optional; not mandatory. The state's training course outline lists these topics as electives among a wide variety of other choices.[25] Training on terrorism is minimal. The state's training manual for new security officers includes only two pages of general information on terrorism, with little information on specific techniques to deter terrorism that an officer could use on the job. Exercises include true or false questions such as, "All acts of terrorism are crimes?"

When officers are transferred to new buildings, they report they are frequently not trained on the new building's specific emergency procedures, including evacuation routes and protocols. There are no requirements in state law for such building-specific

training. Clearly, current state requirements are inadequate for officers guarding major office towers and other buildings where large numbers of people gather in a major metropolitan area like Los Angeles, which is home to top terrorist targets and at risk for a massive earthquake.

Inconsistent and inadequate security officer training, coupled with high turnover rates, creates a near-impossible situation when it comes to coordinating emergency response with the city's fire and police departments. The city's fire, police and other emergency response teams respond to incidents in high-rise office buildings on a daily basis. If the building's private security officers do not know the proper procedure for coordinating with these teams, time and lives can be lost.

No Training in Bomb Detection in Major Downtown High-Rise

"The only training that I received came in the form of a video. Part of my job is to guard the parking structures and search the trunks of cars coming in. I've been asked to report anything that looks suspicious, but I haven't even been trained on what to look for besides something obvious like a gun. If I ever did uncover something dangerous I've been told to radio my supervisor—but there are no procedures on how to protect the tenants or myself."

Juanita Burroughs, security officer at an L.A. area building

Firefighters Ask Building Owners to Invest in Their Security Officers

"When firefighters respond to an emergency in a commercial high rise, the security officers who work there are the first people we look for. Too often these officers have only been at the building a short time and don't have enough experience to know how to work with us in a crisis. Building owners must invest more in these officers—they need more comprehensive training on standard procedures and working in coordination with emergency personnel, and better compensation so trained security officers stay on the job."

Pat McOsker, president, United Firefighters of Los Angeles

V Commercial Landlords' Failure to Protect Tenants, Public Safety

Since the tragic events of 9/11, and the more recent devastation of Hurricane Katrina, terrorism and emergency preparedness have been major issues for American cities. Los Angeles' high-rise buildings have been widely named as terrorist targets and experts say that California's San Andreas fault could cause major devastation to metropolitan areas, yet commercial landlords have still done little to adequately train security officers to keep the tenants, and the public, safe and secure.

In recognition of these realities, the L.A. City Council voted in June 2005 to approve L.A. Safe & Secure, a comprehensive effort to upgrade standards for security officers. Shortly after this measure was introduced, BOMA introduced its own program—the Accredited Security Organization (ASO) program—in an effort to head off mandatory standards. Rather than working cooperatively with the city and private security stakeholders to improve training and raise standards in the security industry, BOMA has introduced a program of little substance and no accountability.

Security firms seeking the BOMA ASO designation are supposed to provide at least an additional eight to 24 hours of specialized training, depending on the size of the building,[26] but many security officers report they have not received the required training. Officers report they are being asked to wear pins denoting ASO accreditation without receiving any additional training.

Even if officers had received the training, it is unlikely that they would be better prepared to keep their buildings secure and handle emergencies. The required training outlined in the ASO program is extremely vague, including "coaching," "on-the-job-training," and "informal supervisor-based training." Training components that are vital for the improvement of building safety such as "arrest, search and seizure," "bomb/terrorist threats," "emergency preparedness," and "evacuation procedures" are merely electives—offering no guarantee that Los Angeles officers will undergo train-

Table 2. Inadequate Training Standards for Security Officers

Type of Training	California State Requirements	BOMA's ASO Program Requirements	City of Los Angeles Requirements
Emergency Preparedness	Optional	Optional	None
CPR and first aid	Optional	Optional	None
Counter-terrorism	Minimal	Optional	None
Evacuation routes and procedures	Optional	Optional	None

Sources: California Code of Regulations, BOMA and L.A. Municipal Code

ing in these critical areas. As shown in Table 3, neither BOMA's plan nor state law requires the kind of training officers need, and there are no city requirements for security officer training.

Officers Asked to Wear Pins, But Given No Additional Training

"A supervisor came in with a bunch of pins that said 'BOMA Security Accredited Training' one day, and wanted all the security officers in my building to wear them on our uniforms. I thought it was strange because none of us have received any kind of extra training. We were told that BOMA wanted to work with us to improve training, but all they've done is given us some pins. I have worked as an officer in this building for over seven years, and the ONLY training I received was a booklet that I had to pay $12 for. The company had us read the booklet and then they gave us a test. That's it."

David Bean, security officer at a downtown L.A. building

New York Safe & Secure: Raising Security Standards

In New York, the "Safe & Secure" training program, developed by the real estate industry, law enforcement, and SEIU, is currently training the 28,000 doormen and superintendents in residential buildings around the city to respond to increasingly complex security challenges and recognize potential terrorist threats. The four-hour, citywide program enhances the professionalism of building service staff by providing in-depth training and skills development.

The curriculum was developed by the police and fire departments, and courses are taught by police officers. Through the program, workers gain specific skills in counter-terrorism they can use on the job. Topics include identifying suspicious packages, bomb threat protocols, warning signs of terrorist surveillance, and coordination with emergency responders. Workers who participated in the training are paid for their time.

"Helping keep New York City safe is everyone's responsibility. New York Safe & Secure brings together government, labor and business to increase training and professionalism for private sector security personnel."

—Michael Bloomberg

New York City Mayor

"We are happy to have the opportunity to continue in this innovative and proactive effort to strengthen the city's first responder network. New York Safe & Secure clearly demonstrates the seriousness with which all of us view issues of security and tenant safety."

—James Berg

president of the Realty Advisory Board

"The police and the building service workers are natural allies. Both work around the clock, both are in the business of protecting people. This program gives us a powerful network of eyes and ears on the streets."

—Raymond W. Kelly

New York City Police commissioner

Recommendations VI

The prevailing low-bid system of subcontracting for security work leaves important decisions governing security standards in the hands of building landlords and their contractors, resulting in standards that are unenforceable and that differ from building to building. The problems caused by inadequate training and high turnover among security officers lead to a lack of emergency preparedness in the office towers where hundreds of thousands of people work and visit every day.

Because of commercial building owners' failure to improve the quality of security services and protect public safety, the city of Los Angeles should legislate a uniform standard of training for heavily trafficked buildings and establish enforcement mechanisms that ensure these standards are met. These measures, coupled with steps to address high turnover, will guarantee that the more than 10,000 L.A. security officers are able to effectively augment the city's already thinly-stretched emergency service providers.

Reduce turnover by improving wages and benefits: In order to attract and retain employees, wages should be increased and benefits should be provided, such as employer-paid family health care, paid sick leave, and paid vacation.

Increase training requirements and improve coordination with emergency personnel: Training requirements should be strengthened for buildings housing large numbers of people, including mandatory training on emergency procedures, CPR and first aid, and counter-terrorism.

Strengthen the enforcement of training requirements and ensure that contractors and building owners are accountable: Increasing training requirements alone will be unsuccessful without mechanisms to ensure that contractors are complying with the law. Given the state's current lax enforcement of training requirements, the city should create mechanisms to enhance accountability on the local level.

Provide a career ladder for advancement: Employees will be more likely to stay on the job if there are opportunities for promotion and advancement. Linking pay increases to the completion of specified training programs and experience on the job will help to professionalize the workforce and ensure stability.

Survey Methodology

Many of the findings of this report are based on an original survey conducted by LAANE. The survey is based on a nonrandom sample of 37 office buildings in the Los Angeles area, which employ a total of 580 security officers. The buildings selected are predominantly high-profile, high-occupancy sites, most of which are in downtown L.A. and Century City. All but two of the buildings in the survey are Class A, defined by "Colliers International Market Report" as buildings that are typically in excellent locations and command the highest rents in the market. The survey includes the top security contractors operating in commercial real estate in the L.A. region, including Universal Protection Service, American Commercial Security Services, and Securitas, and major real estate owners including Douglas Emmett, Maguire Properties, and Equity Office Properties.

Turnover was measured by asking officers to record the names of co-workers who had worked in the building and left within the last six months. Most officers said there were even more people who had left whose names they could not remember, but since this could not be documented, these individuals were not counted in the turnover totals. For this reason, actual turnover rates are likely to be even higher than those captured by our survey. The survey was conducted from October 2005 to January 2006.

Endnotes

1 "Bush Gives New Details About Old Report of L.A. Terror Plot," Los Angeles Times, Feb. 9, 2006.

2 Peter Chalk et al, *Trends in Terrorism*, Rand Center for Terrorism Risk Management Policy, 2005.

3 "Give Security Guards Credit," Commentary by Fred Fleet, Los Angeles Times, Nov. 24, 2001.

4 November 2004.

5 Health and Human Services 2006 Poverty Guidelines.

6 Economic Policy Institute, Basic Family Budget Calculator 2005.

7 This statistic is from 2003 and applies to families earning between 100 percent and 199 percent of the federal poverty level, from the research brief, "Job-based Coverage Drops for Adults and Children but Public Programs Boost Children's Coverage," UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, February 2005.

8 Goodboe, Michael, "How To Turn Around Turnover," November 2002.

9 McNally, Steven, "Turn Away Turnover," September 2004.

10 "Maximum Security," Aug. 1, 2004.

11 "Cut Turnover and Save Money: 15 Cost-Free Personnel Strategies," March 2003.

12 High turnover itself made it difficult to collect turnover information for all buildings. Turnover data was collected by asking officers currently working to list their co-workers who had previously worked in the building and had left within the last six months. In many buildings, officers reported that turnover was high, but they were not able to list the names of the officers who had left, so we did not include these buildings in our analysis. Officers were unable to list the names either because they had not been in the building for six months or because the officers who had left were there such a short time they did not learn their names. Therefore, high turnover rates are likely to be much more widespread.

13" Bush Gives New Details About Old Report of L.A. Terror Plot," *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 9, 2006.

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20 See note 17.

[21] "Undertrained, Underpaid, and Unprepared: Security Officers Report Deficient Safety Standards in Manhattan Office Buildings," Public Advocate for the City of New York, February 2005.

[22] "Different Cities, Different Security for Buildings" *The New York Times*, July 9, 2003.

[23] The survey was commissioned by SEIU and Kroll Inc., a worldwide private security consulting firm. The margin of error is ± 5 percent.

[24] Bureau of Security and Investigative Services, Division 7 of Title 16 of the California Code of Regulations.

[25] Ibid.

[26] BOMA of Greater Los Angeles Accredited Security Organization Program.