



John Fannin

Public venue security: John Fannin

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Are you concerned with hotel security? What about the venue where you're planning on attending a football game or a concert? Chat with today's guest about the security of public places.

John C. Fannin III serves as President and Chief Executive Officer of SafePlace Corporation. A third generation fire fighter, Mr. Fannin has a 32 year career in security, health and life safety issues. Fannin is a member of the National Fire Protection Association, actively serving on NFPA Standards Committees; the Society of Fire Protection Engineers; the American Society of Safety Engineers; and the American Society for Industrial Security, where he serves on the Fire and Life Safety Council and is recognized as a Certified Protection Professional (CPP).

Missed the chat? Read the transcript below:

Comment from John Fannin: Greetings from Delaware, the First State. Since the tragedy of 9/11, there has been a great deal of talk about soft targets and the possibility of terrorists attacking apartment buildings, hotels and other public places.

In addition to terrorism there have been other tragedies in public venues such as the Rhode Island nightclub fire and the Chicago nightclub incident where patrons panicked and were unable to safely exit the buildings.

Are you aware that public places have multiple opportunities to improve security and safety which have not yet been fully implemented that may leave you in harm's way?

I look forward to helping to address your concerns and questions during this discussion. Let's begin:

Bow, NH : What top 10 steps would suggest for an individual to be prepared while at a hotel, arena or special event?

John Fannin: First of all, leave an itinerary at home or with a close friend/relative. Next, have a communication plan. Identify a relative or friend to contact in case of an emergency. Everyone you're traveling with should know to do that. Have a planned meeting place - preferably outside - to meet those we're traveling with or attending a show with. Once you enter a facility, locate all the exits immediately. Some may be in front, some in back. Be prepared to use the closest one - don't assume you'll be using the main exit. Check for clear exit paths - make sure aisles are wide enough and not obstructed and the exit doors aren't blocked or chained. During an emergency, react immediately. If an alarm sounds, if you see smoke or fire or another disturbance, immediately exit. Once out, stay out and let emergency personnel conduct rescue or other operations. The bottom line is to be alert, not alarmed.

Dallas, Tx: Doesn't our "concern" equate to being afraid? If so, doesn't living in fear grant the terrorists their wish?

John Fannin: No, it's not the same. Although the goal of terrorism is to force a change in the way we live our lives, we have to be responsible, which means being alert and having a healthy fear of things that can harm us. The key is to be prepared, to be aware of our surroundings, and to develop and practice behaviors that provide for security and safety.

Cranford, NJ: Why do some buildings/events seem over the top with safety and others seem to have none?

John Fannin: It's the exception that proves the rule. Good security and good safety begins with good planning. Those buildings or events we find that have exemplary safety and security features are those that have pre-planned their safety and security risks and countermeasures. The challenge for the public is to determine which buildings or venues have properly planned and instituted adequate measures and which have not. You can't judge a book by its cover, and crash testing of automobiles needs to be transferred to our selection of buildings and events. It's the reason why "safe place" crash tests buildings, if you will.

kansas city, missouri: Are we safer then we were before 9-11 like to fly or travel by train or buss???

John Fannin: In general, the more highly protected risks commonly referred to as "hardened targets", like government and military facilities and nuclear power plants, have significantly increased their security measures. Public access facilities (soft targets) have in general done little to increase effective security measures. We know that the Transportation Safety Administration has done a great deal to improve airline safety, but our ports and public transportation systems still have a long way to go.

Washington DC: Are owners and managers of venues actually concerned about safety? If so, why don't they hire proper security guards to patrol places, like you have in Tel Aviv and throughout Israel? They have REAL guards who are armed guarding places, not minimum wage rent-a-cops.

John Fannin: Security doesn't begin or end with security personnel. It begins with security planning, and requires the integration of people, technology, and procedures to be effective. The use of security guards, independent of their level of expertise, is not in itself the answer. Significant care need be taken in utilizing armed personnel in public environments.

Wilmington, North Carolina: What floor would be the safest to sleep on in a high rise hotel?

John Fannin: It is commonly believed that you are safest between the first level above the ground floor, but not higher than the sixth floor, for several reasons. First, you are most exposed to criminal activity if your room can be reached by the ground level. In the case of a fire, traditional fire department ladders do not reach far past the sixth floor. A properly designed, maintained and managed facility, for those individuals who otherwise do not have a physical impairment, provides a safe environment at most all levels. Building safety begins with automatic sprinkler systems and smoke detectors. You may not want to stay in a property, on any level, that does not incorporate these basic safety features.

New York, New York: John: I am a female in my twenties and I travel a fair amount for business. Most of the time I stay in hotels, but occasionally I need to stay in more of a motor lodge and I am fairly uncomfortable in these types of places. Is there anything I can do to increase my sense of safety?

John Fannin: You should strive to improve your actual safety, not sense of safety. Women should always avoid ground floor rooms or rooms easily accessible from outside the building, which means avoiding lodging facilities where the guestroom door opens immediately to the outside and not a corridor. Unless you need a room with an adjoining door, request a room that has no adjoining door. If you must stay in a room with an adjoining room door, insure that the

deadbolt is accessible only from inside your room. Before boarding an elevator, observe all the passengers. When returning to your room, board last or be last to select your floor button. Women in particular should always position themselves near the elevator control panel, and if threatened press the alarm and as many floor buttons as possible. When entering your room for the first time, have the bellman remain while you perform your security check. Lastly, count the number of doors from your room to the fire exit. In case of an emergency where you have no lighting or your vision is obstructed by smoke, you can count the doors to a safe escape. Parents can actually make a game about this for their children.

Augusta, Maine: Knowing from experience now that terrorists come in all shapes, sizes, genders and races, do we really have any effective means of preventing attacks, particularly from those evil people that "work alone"? In 30 years of developing the most advanced counter-terror security force in the world, it does not seem like the Israelis have conquered this issue. How can we?

John Fannin: We begin by controlling access to our shores, and controlling the movement of both individuals and goods into our country. Most significantly, we as individuals need to be vigilant, as we are the eyes and ears of law enforcement. We need to be looking for abnormal activity, unusual behavior, people who just don't seem to belong, and assist law enforcement to prevent terrorism. There is no 100% preventive measure to prevent terrorism, but we can police as a people those venues that would be attractive to terrorist attack: areas with large concentrations of people that would have a significant impact on how we conduct our daily lives.

Comment from John Fannin: It has been great chatting with you. Your questions have been very insightful. We've been talking about safety in public places, and I'd like to remind you that security and safety is your responsibility too. For helpful safety tips while you are out and about, I invite you to visit www.safeplace.com. In the meantime, be alert, not alarmed.

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