Incident report writing hints and tips

What is an incident report

The incident report book is used for any serious events or near misses that have occurred on-site. These include but are not limited to; Significant issues or concerns, anything that caused or could have caused harm, and any events that have been escalated to the duty managers or police. These reports are essential to building an evidence trail and therefore should be carefully written. Like the DOB, incident reports are also admissible in court and can be used as evidence if requested.

What to include

- Reports should be made in black pen and should be completed in block capitals. These reports need to be easy to read and understand and therefore writing in a way that is difficult for others to read should be avoided. Block capitals do make an instant impact and are more legible. Incident reports are written up by the office in the incident report system. If the writing isn't legible then this is made difficult.

- Aim to keep the incident report as clear as possible following ABC (Accurate Brief and Clear). This can be done by following the 4 W's, Who, What, When and Where, this ensures that all the relevant information is in the report and avoids information that may not be necessary. Include any actions that have been taken in the main body of the report as well as at the end.

- Exact dates and times should be recorded in the incident report. If the exact time is unknown use a specific range of time. In addition to this, the exact location of the incident should be noted. These details are important as they set the scene for those reading the report, they also help to establish a timeline of the incident and how it developed.

- Entries should be made as soon as possible. This is to ensure that the information is accurate. This may not be possible straight away due to the nature of incidents, in these cases use your notebook to take brief and accurate notes, this will help you to remember what occurred. The notes you make in your notebook are also admissible in court so ensure that they reflect the situation truthfully.

- If you have made a mistake, cross out the mistake with one black line and sign next to the line to show that it was you who identified and crossed out this mistake. The mistake should not be fully covered as it looks like evidence is being hidden. If you have to make any additions to your incident report, write down "omitted in error" followed by your addition to the report, sign this off afterwards.

- Ensure that any unique ways to identify vehicles or people are used when necessary. For identifying people make note of clothes, tattoos, piercings, distinct features and height and build. For vehicles make a note of the registration, make, model and colour of the vehicle.

What to avoid

- Avoid using subjective information. For example, if a bag of white powder is found do not attempt to write down what powder it is, stick to the basics and write "a bag of white powder". Using subjective information can discredit your report if something that you assume to be correct turns out to not be true.

- Avoid using jargon or technical terms, keep the report as simple as possible to ensure that it can be understood by anyone who needs to read it.

- Some sites we work at house at risk individuals. Avoid using full names when writing reports on these sites, there may be site specific procedures that you can follow for example Joe Bloggs 24 would be JB24

If at any point you have any questions about what needs to be in an Incident report or have anything to add to this list, please email managers@securityandeventsolutions.co.uk.