

TODAY'S SECURITY OPTIONS

Self-Storage Facilities Go High-Tech

By Kerri Fivecoat-Campbell

If you've been in the self-storage business for 25 years or so, you've most likely seen a lot of advances in security. If you've only been in the self-storage business for one year, you've still likely seen a lot of advances in security. That's because security, like other technology, is advancing at a rapid pace.

If you drove up to a self-storage facility 20 years ago—especially in a rural area—you would have found a facility with a chain link fence or, most likely, with no fence at all. Rarely were self-storage sites monitored by security cameras. In suburban and more urban areas, most had at least a perimeter fence; some with some type of access control at the gate. And most had a residential manager to help control security. A few had a primitive version of video monitoring.

Today, only a handful of new self-storage facilities are built to accommodate an onsite manager. They rely instead on today's technologies such as advanced monitoring systems, access control, and even computer software (yes, there are apps for that!) to help control security. There are many considerations for today's security features, including aesthetics and customer convenience.

"How we think about security is changing," says Tony Gardner, vice president at QuikStor Security & Software in Van Nuys, Calif. "No longer are security products meant solely for the purpose of keeping the bad guys out, but instead are evolving into increased convenience for both owner and tenant. An example of this could be allowing a tenant to pay their outstanding balance right at the gate at any time of the day."

The good news is that security setups for self-storage, like most technologies, has become affordable for even the smallest facilities. We'll take a look at some of the security features available to self-storage owners and operators as well as those coming soon to a facility near you.

If you've only been in the self-storage business for one year, you've still likely seen a lot of advances in security. That's because security, like other technology, is advancing at a rapid pace.

Perimeter And Entry

We can start with perimeter fencing and gate systems—the most basic tools self-storage operators use to secure their properties. "Years ago, many self-storage facilities had a chain link baseline design," says Ben Shirley, marketing manager for Tulsa, Okla.-based Ameristar Perimeter Security USA, Inc. "Those fell out of favor because they were fairly easy to breach and they were also not attractive."

In today's world, where self-storage has been better accepted in suburban neighborhoods and business districts with office buildings instead of being confined to industrial areas, the main goal is having a decorative perimeter that meets local ordinances while also securing the facility.

Ameristar has been manufacturing ornamental fencing and barriers for the self-storage industry for 20 years. "In the beginning, many storage facilities were only using ornamental fencing in the front, and today, they use it all the way around the property," says Shirley.

Which fence is best for your particular facility depends on the location of your store. Ameristar, for example, manufactures anything from a military grade fence with splayed spear tips to a fence with anti-scaling features. The most popular for self-storage facilities, Shirley says, is probably a model (Montage II) that offers the security of a steel fence and also has aesthetic appeal.

Shirley says one of the most important things his company does is work with customers in tailoring the right fence

may have to shut down temporarily while it is being installed.

Another important factor is whether the manufacturer can recommend an installer who knows the self-storage industry. Rick Sedivy, director of marketing for Inglewood, Calif.-based DoorKing, Inc., points out that the safety standards for gates were adopted in 2009 for international building codes.

"Certainly, new facilities are built with these standards in place, but a lot of installers still don't follow it and many inspectors are not aware," he says. "It's a liability issue if the gate hits a vehicle or person, and if it's not up to safety building codes, your defense could be shaky." Sedivy says even if you have an older gate system, it doesn't take much to bring it up to current code.

If you don't want to have to continually paint the fence to prevent rusting, the best course of action is to go with a maintenance free fence with high-quality coating and long-term warranty.

needs for their particular property. "We have a network of distributors, but we're very involved in each project to find a good fit for each customer," says Shirley.

After you choose your fence, the next thing you should be looking for is what type of a gate you will have on your facility. "The fence is easy, but the gate is very important and often overlooked," says Shirley. "You have to plan for which type of a gate you are going to install."

Swing gates aren't popular for self-storage facilities because they can come down and hit vehicles or moving vans. Slide gates are the most popular, but the type of slide you choose typically depends on the area of the country your facility is located. Cantilever gates that slide with no track are most used in warmer climates where owners and managers don't have to worry about snow and ice building up on a track system. Roll gates have more variables and require a track to be installed, which costs more up front. And because the track has to span across the entryway, the facility

Shirley cautions owners to be aware what type of maintenance your new fence and gate will require in the future. "Sometimes, we have facilities that have hired contractors that love to weld their own fences," says Shirley. "But they no more than get them up and they're rusting and need routine painting."

If you don't want to have to continually paint the fence to prevent rusting, the best course of action is to go with a maintenance free fence with high-quality coating and long-term warranty.

Access Systems

Long gone are the days when self-storage facilities had driveway hose that dinged whenever someone entered, similar to those once found at full-service gas stations. "When a customer rolled across the hose, they then had to come into the office, sign in, and let the manager check their ID," says Jon Loftin, vice president of business development for Scottsdale, Ariz.-based PTI Security Systems. "The managers had to come in each morning

and roll open the gate and come back every night and roll it closed."

Access control then became the norm. "Twenty years ago, most operators were happy with basic access control needs—a simple keypad with a five-digit access code or card reader—and that has evolved over time to readers being able to differentiate perimeter levels and hours," Sedivy says.

Not only will a reader allow a paid customer with an access code or entry card to enter the facility, the advanced access control systems can even allow customers to pay at the gate, which is especially handy after hours. In addition to allowing payments at the gate, some systems also automatically disarm the door to the floor and/or the individual unit the access code or card is programmed to, giving customers the convenience and peace of mind that old padlocks did not.

Once the customer leaves the floor of a multi-level building or puts the access code back into the gate to exit, the unit is relocked and armed. "If someone tries to get onto a level where they don't belong or another person uses the same code while someone is already in the unit, it will flag a warning," says Sedivy.

As for which access system is best, Dave Rothschild, owner of WHAM Security Systems in Montgomeryville, Penn., says that self-storage owners are split in half when it comes to using either an entry code or card system. "I would say key pads are a little more common as they allow customers to come in with multiple vehicles and use the same code," he says. "Security cards can be lost or left at home, which makes customers have to come in and register for another."

One access tool that hasn't really taken off in self-storage is biometrics, says Rothschild. "The problem is the large number of customers and the hassle factor doesn't allow them to give anyone else access to their unit," he says. "It is definitely the higher security measure going, but it limits flexibility and convenience for the customer."

Individual Door Alarms

Once again, when we look at the self-storage facilities built 25 years ago, we

were still seeing facilities with individual padlocks and no door alarms, making it relatively simple for someone to come into the facility, cut the lock from a unit, steal what they wanted, and stash the loot in another unit or drive off with it. No one was the wiser until the owner checked on the unit, which could be months later.

Today, many self-storage facilities are equipped with individual door alarms on each unit, which not only triggers the alarm but, in many cases, alerts the manager, security company, and sometimes the police department. While individualized alarms have become commonplace, what is taking place between alarm manufacturers and distributors is a tug of war between wired and wireless systems.

"WHAM does wired alarms," says Rothschild. "While wired alarms are more difficult to install upfront, they're not relying on hundreds of battery operated units, all of which are mounted on the outside of the buildings and leaving them more vulnerable to tampering or damage."

Of course, the benefit of wireless systems is that they are wireless, which means the installers don't need access to every unit. This can be especially important if you're putting the system in after the facility is open.

The most important thing in choosing your alarm system, Gilmore says, is to do your research very carefully and choose wisely.

Once upon a time, roll-up doors were especially difficult to alarm as there wasn't a unit made specifically for the roll-up door. Glen Gilmore, founder and advisor at Houston-based Envirocom, Inc., developed the Trackit roll-up door switch, an alarm switch made specifically for roll-up doors. "It's evolved to the door stop being the switch, which is non-invasive to the door," he explains.

At first, the switch only had one function: to disable or enable the alarm. It now performs three functions including turning on the light when the door goes up and turning them back off. And it can also be installed on climate-controlled units, disabling the air when the door is up and turning it back on when closed.

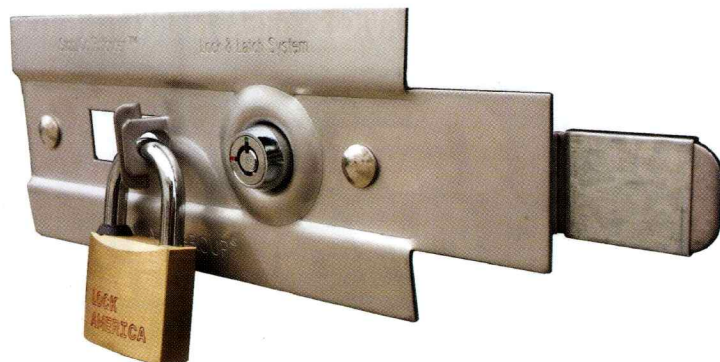
The most important thing in choosing your alarm system, Gilmore says, is to do your research very carefully and choose wisely. "There are so many door alarm jobs being done, but so many still get abandoned within the first couple of years," he says. "It's usually because the right system wasn't chosen for the facility in the beginning."

Cameras

"I would say that camera systems have evolved the most from what they were 30 years ago," says Gilmore. "They quality has gone up to HD and the price has come down, so it is affordable for everyone. Before, there were cheap systems

Finally! The Cylinder Lock You've Been Looking For— With A Tenant's Padlock Option!

Manufacturers of the original cylinder lock and latch system since 1986.



High Security Cylinder

- 3 million key combinations.
- Virtually pick and drill-proof.
- Registered key codes for easy replacement.
- Master Key Option.

Tubular Cylinder

- 60,000 key combinations.
- Pick and drill-resistant.
- Registered key codes for easy replacement.
- "Red Dot" lockout option.

Now your customer can use his own padlock for peace of mind.

- Double Hasp Latches fit virtually every door style: valley mount, ridge mount or flat.
- Accepts Lock America cylinder lock and most other cylinders.
- You can even Master Key while ensuring customer privacy and security.

Call us for a quote and testimonials.

LOCK AMERICA INC.
The Definitive Word in Locks

951-277-5180
9168 Stellar Court, Corona, CA 92883

800-422-2866
www.laigroup.com

Fax: 951-277-5170
sales@laigroup.com

that weren't good; but now you can get an inexpensive system that is high quality."

Many facilities still have basic systems with a series of cameras that record what has happened. Those passive systems allow owners/managers to pull recordings to see if they caught something that happened in the past, but they don't do anything to prevent or stop a crime in progress.

PTI's Loftin says that when self-storage customers are polled, more than 70 percent of them cite security as one of the selling factors at a facility. He says a multi-layered security system—one that may include real time CCTV scrolling the entire facility, showing who is coming and going—may be a good marketing tool for your facility.

The monitors in the office may also include 3D site graphics, such as ones sold by both PTI and QuikStor, that allow the manager (and customers) to see the status of each unit, whether it is rented,

or even if the door is open and the tenant is on site.

If you're going high tech, you will need a software that integrates with all of your security applications. Be aware, say the experts, of whether the system is still operable if the computers are down.

What's New?

The latest high-tech gadgets now used in self-storage are applications that run on a phone or tablet, which allows managers or owners to see who is on the property from their phones or tablets, monitor the cameras on their device (in HD), and control access while off site.

"This would be really convenient, for example, if a customer needed in their unit after hours," says Loftin. "The manager can check their tablet, click the app, and let the customer in and out, which will really allow them to service the customer."

Apps will also soon be allowing customers to access the gates and units from their phones, saving them from roll-

ing down the window and getting their arms wet or getting cold in bad weather.

These features not only add security and convenience for the customer, they may also give an additional stream of revenue for the self-storage facility. One app already available for customers costs the facility a flat fee of \$299 per year.

"If the self-storage facility charges an additional fee for the app's use, it can pay for itself or it can be used as an added amenity to drive more customers," Loftin says. With advances in digital video surveillance, an RV facility owner could even choose to offer a monthly premium to the RV owner to remotely view a specific camera that monitors their RV 24/7.

When it comes to self-storage security, QuikStor's Gardner sums it up well: "2014 is shaping up to be an exciting year." ■

Kerri Fivecoat-Campbell is a freelance journalist based in the Ozark Mountains. Her business articles have appeared in *Entrepreneur*, *Aol.com*, *MSN.com*, and *The Kansas City Star*.

[Home](#)
[About Me](#)
[Write a Review](#)
[Find Friends](#)
[Messages](#)
[Talk](#)
[Events](#)

Hometown Storage & Orange Trucks

★★★★★ 53 reviews

Self Storage

I will never use Hometown Storage again. The truck they provided for moving was in terrible condition and was dangerous to drive...

[Read More](#)

Your Storage & Your Storage Truck

★★★★★ 73 reviews

Self Storage

I had the best experience ever! The truck they provided for moving was clean, and easy to use and drive...

[Read More](#)

Start your own complete rental truck program:

GENERATES REVENUE · INCREASES VISIBILITY
EXPANDS SERVICES · GREAT MARKETING TOOL

On The Move Inc.

Complete Rental Truck Program
 800.645.9949 www.onthemovetrucks.com

Why put YOUR reputation in a COMPETITOR'S hands?