

The Shopping Centre Security Initiative established at the end of 2007 is now beginning to gain momentum. The Security Initiative, a partnership between the South African Council of Shopping Centres (SACSC), South African Property Owners Association (SAPOA), the Consumer Goods Council of South Africa and Business Against Crime South Africa (BAC) is aimed at addressing violent crime at shopping centres. The Initiative is based at and project managed by BAC.

The initial start up costs for the initiative were provided by Liberty Life Properties and Pareto but since then Ivestec/Growth Point, RMB Properties, Sanlam and Old Mutual have agreed to also contribute to the costs of the project. Tracey Fowler the National Director of the SACSC says that BAC, SACSC and SAPOA are visiting other managing and owner companies to get them to buy-in to the project.

The initiative has established an operation committee which currently consists eighteen of the owner and managing companies. The initiative's project manager Jenni Irish-Qhobosheane explains, "the role of the operations committee is to bring the different companies together to discuss risks and identify ways of reducing these risks. The operations committee also provides a forum where the different companies can share information and insights regarding security at shopping centres. It is really encouraging to see the enthusiasm of the different managing and owner companies and there is a real sense that these companies are committed to addressing security concerns at shopping centres. However we now need to reach out to as many other managing and owner companies and get them actively involved in the process." The initiative is also looking at working through the regional structures of the SACSC and SAPOA to ensure that shopping centres participate in the initiative.

According to Irish- Qhobosheane there are a number of different projects the initiative is engaged in including:

- Developing security standards for shopping centres. In this regard the initiative has already embarked on a process to ensure that CCTV systems are improved and a minimum standard are addressed. Irish-Qhobosheane also says that the initiative is currently involved in addressing cash management systems in shopping centres with the view of reducing the cash robbery risk at shopping centres.
- Establishing an early warning system which will enable shopping centres to immediately record and report suspicious activity and to be notified of what to watch out for in their area. Irish-Qhobosehane says that that there are concrete examples where early detection of suspicious activities has averted an armed robbery.
- Together with other businesses and the SAPS hot spotting certain high risk areas and developing approaches to these high risk areas.
- Working with the SAPS in addressing security concerns at shopping centres. Irish Qhobosheane says they have received really good support from the SAPS at both a national and provincial level. "In Gauteng the initiative, together with other businesses and the SAPS have established a Joint Operations Committee which meets weekly to discuss security concerns. We are also hoping to role these types

of forums out to the other provinces. In KwaZulu Natal there have been a number of meetings between shopping centres and the SAPS to discuss security concerns and in the next two months we are hoping to formalize this process. The SAPS in the Western Cape have agreed to support the initiative and we now need to look at meeting with the SACSC and SAPOA structures in the province to consolidate this support. At a national level a Joint Operation Centre has been established to interface between business and SAPS.”

Irish-Qhobosheane explains that the initiative is also being asked to meet with shopping centres, managing and owner companies to assist them with measures that can be taken to reduced violent crime at some of their centres. “Some managing companies have even asked the initiative to assist them with training of centre staff indicating that these centres are interested in developing a more proactive response to security.”

The initiative plans over the next few months to increase its capacity and to bring on board additional resources. “The expectations and demands of the managing and owner companies are big and as more companies become involved in the initiative this is only likely to grow. We need to ensure that we have the capacity to meet these expectations and to make a real impact on violent crime at shopping centres” says Irish-Qhobosheane