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RICHARD LONG – PRESIDENT

SECURITY SERVICE COMPANY

For 50 Years, Service Has Been SSC's Middle Name

By Kathy Hunt

Whether heading out on a weekend trip or a week-long summer vacation, people want to believe that, in their absence, nothing will go wrong at their home or place of business. Before leaving, they lock the windows and doors, make sure the range, coffee maker, and other appliances have been turned off, and confirm that everything seems secure. Unfortunately, fires can unexpectedly break out and burglaries do occur. However, with the protection afforded by Security Service Company (SSC), home and business owners have assurance that, no matter what event takes place, they and their possessions will be safeguarded.



JIM LONG – V.P. OPERATIONS



BENJAMIN LONG – CIO

PHOTOS BY STYLISHIMAGES



Based in Fleetwood, Berks County, the family-owned SSC installs and supports commercial, residential, and personal security systems across southeastern Pennsylvania and western New Jersey.

This fall marks the 50th anniversary of Security Service Company's founding. Along with his late business partner, Gary Hager, Richard Long started SSC in Allentown in 1973. Long, who had previously worked as a sales manager at a national security firm, handled sales and system design, while Hager, who had many years of experience, cared for installation and service. Over time, the business moved its headquarters and expanded to its current staff of 30, including sons Jim Long, SSC's vice-president of operations, and Ben Long, chief information officer. Although both the company and technology have grown considerably since the 1970s, the goal remains the same — to protect people and businesses including their safety and well-being.

RAPID RESPONSE TO FIRE AND MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

When it comes to protecting clients, SSC emphasizes "total security." This entails designing a system that meets each customer's individual needs, installing that system, servicing, and monitoring and responding to any alarm signal. The company provides rapid, 24/7 responses to such scenarios as an intruder, smoke, fire, and carbon monoxide detection, as well as medical emergencies.

Ben Long said. "Most people don't think about fire, however, a fire involves life safety, and you never know what's going to happen. Wiring may start smoking within your walls, and with smoke and fire detection, the alarm is set off. With a fire detection system, you save your house, you save your pets, you save your lives."

Although some home construction codes require a smoke detector to be installed on each level of a house and in all bedrooms, these sensors rely upon someone being present and alert to hear and act upon them. With a fire alarm system, the home is connected to SSC's central monitoring station, which supervises notifications and contacts the fire department in the event of a fire. The system may also include sprinklers that are likewise monitored remotely.

"There's definitely an advantage to having monitored fire as opposed to the smoke detectors that you buy at the hardware store," Jim Long said. "Monitored fire means that there is a dispatch involved and it saves lives and property. If a smoke detector goes off in

your house and you're not there, your house burns down, and your pets die."

Even if people are at home when a fire starts, they may not realize that something inside their home is burning. "There may be a fire in the attic that they don't even know about, but the fire alarm knows and has notified us. Over the years, we have had that happen," Jim said.

Fire alarm systems may be hardwired or wireless. A hardwired alarm ties into a building's existing electrical system and includes battery backup in case of power outages. A wireless system operates on batteries for an extensive period of time. When the batteries are running low the customer is notified either by a phone call, or if they choose, text message.

When SSC installs a commercial fire

alarm system, the business owner can rest assured that the system will meet local, National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 72, which is the national fire alarm and signaling code standard, and UL code requirements.

"Commercial fire alarms are very code driven, and we lay out fire alarms per code," Jim Long said. "After that we submit drawings to the AHJ (Authority Having Jurisdiction), such as the fire marshal. We do not have to submit them for residential settings. Commercial fire is a different animal," he explained, pointing out that, in Pennsylvania, fire alarm codes depend upon municipality, but, in New Jersey, the same code applies throughout the state.

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To ensure that customers receive prompt assistance, not only for fires but also medical emergencies, SSC offers a medical alert service. It can be incorporated into an existing fire or security system or installed separately. Known as a PERS or Personal Emergency Response System, the unit is worn around the neck and allows people to request emergency assistance, to communicate with other parties and also provide them with your location with the push of a button. Capable of tracking routine activities, it may independently send an alert when the wearer deviates from normal behavior. Should someone become unexpectedly ill, fall, or suffer other medical emergencies, a personal emergency response system assures that help arrives quickly at any hour of the day.

SAFEGUARDING BUSINESSES' AND HOMEOWNERS' PROPERTY AND POSSESSIONS

While fires may occur less frequently than break-ins, incidents such as trespassing, vandalism, and fire do happen often. To combat this, SSC offers commercial and residential security systems that communicate using a mesh network. Instead of relying upon radio towers, a mesh network works with a group of connected devices that act as a single network and provide faster service and extended coverage.

“Mesh networks provide extended coverage and fewer dead zones than single router access points.”

“We do not trust phone lines for alarm systems and haven’t used them for at least a decade,” Ben Long said. “Everything has gone wireless — cellular or, even better, mesh networks. Some less critical alerts, like access control systems where you’re sending door openings, go over the internet.”

SSC offers free, in-person consultations for anyone interested in a security system, fire alarm system, closed circuit TV, or access control. “We go out to the customer and meet them face-to-face,” Ben said. “We want to see the property, understand their needs and concerns, and lay out the system in person. We build custom security from the ground up for the user and their needs.”

For those interested in business or home surveillance, SSC will install camera systems with video verification as well as low-light and long-term recording. Curious about who pulled into your driveway or parked outside of your business in the middle of the night? Along with notifying customers when someone arrives at or trespasses on their property, SSC’s camera systems enable them to view images of people, vehicles and license plates from their phones, computers, or television screens. Depending on the system selected, notifications arrive through a phone app, text message, email, and other means.

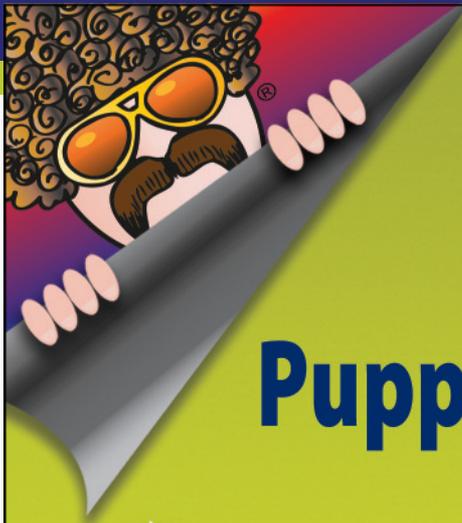
Should customers wish to engage with the people captured on camera, they can speak directly to them through an intercom system. Whether they are in another room or another state, customers have the ability to know what’s transpiring at their home or place of work in their absence and also do something about it.

“Knowing that your dog is safe when you’re not at home, knowing that your kid got home safely, these are all benefits of these systems,” Ben said.

He added that, with some alarm systems, known as “latch key systems,” parents receive a photo of their child when the child arrives home and deactivates the alarm system. It provides the parents with “security beyond peace of mind.”

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EMPHASIZING CUSTOMER SERVICE AS WELL AS CUSTOMER SECURITY

Richard Long said. "For the last 50 years, SSC has operated its own central monitoring service where in-house staff respond to alarm notices. However, monitoring alarms and customer assistance requires different skills. Utilizing today's technology, monitoring of alarms is computer based. SSC programs data, specific to each customer, into the computer system. When an alarm is initiated, the computer tells the operator how to handle it. The operator then follows the procedural-based instructions. We came to appreciate that our staff members' skills could be better used elsewhere within the company. As a result, SSC recently separated these two departments and developed a "Customer Assistance Department" to better service our customers."

"This allows us to better utilize these valuable SSC staff members, who have between 10 to 25 years of experience. We have migrated towards a partnership with a professional monitoring service to take care of the procedural-based signal monitoring," Richard Long said.

"Doing this allows our experienced staff to be of additional help to our customers. The frequent increase in technology also makes this additional help from our staff a great benefit to our customers."

"Previously, if they were on the phone with a customer, handling a service issue -like helping the customer with codes or if they need service on their system - and, suddenly, they'd get an alarm on their computer screen, they'd have to say, 'Hold on! Hold on! I must take care of this alarm,' then put the customer on hold and take care of the alarm signal. Then return to the customer and say, 'where were we?' No one likes hold! Ben said. "An alarm obviously takes priority over a service call. They would then have to bypass that service call, not taking care of the customer as a service department should, because of the requirements of dispatching an alarm."

He added, "Handing that process off to a professional monitoring service means that our people, who know and understand our customers so well and have been dealing with them for years, can handle service calls much, much better. They don't have to worry about responding to an alarm. Responding to an alarm is a very important thing.

“Providing excellent service while protecting what's precious since 1973.”

However, it's also disruptive to handling service calls. They had to completely switch gears from being personable and handling a customer's problem to the procedural-based role of a dispatcher dispatching an alarm. So, instead of dealing with the things that are procedural-based, they now work on personally handling a customer's issue."

Because SSC's staff already offered customer support, the central monitoring staff did not require additional training to transition to a customer service-focused role. SSC employees have a tremendous knowledge base, one that benefits from many years of working with security and fire alarm systems.

Customer service has long been a priority for the company. "When we first started in '73, we always said that we'd named our company 'Security Service Company,' because service is our middle name, Richard Long said. "Service has been a motivation during the entire time we've been in business."

FIFTY YEARS OF HELPING OTHERS

"We have really good people here," Ben said in conclusion. "Our employee turnover is so low. Someone just retired who had 47 years with us."

What encourages employee retention and makes each day so rewarding, Jim said, is the satisfaction you get when you report an alarm that was dispatched to an emergency situation, and you know that you're helping law enforcement and possibly saving people's lives. It feels good."

For additional information about the residential and commercial services offered by Security Service Company (SSC), contact the company at 1.800.232.2500 or email: info@SSCsince73.com, and for more information, please visit www.SSCsince73.com. On-site consultations are free and coordinated to meet the customer's schedule and needs.

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