



SGSECURE

FOR AMBULATORY CARE CENTRES AND CLINICS

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What is SGSecure?

Threats against national security are inherently present, and it takes a community to deal with the constantly evolving landscape. These threats affect the very backbone of Singapore, infringing on communities, the economy and our sovereignty. Being prepared and staying resilient will aid us in weathering these threats. Launched in 2016 by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, SGSecure is a national movement aimed at enabling our community to prevent and deal with terror attacks. This is to be accomplished through sensitising, training and mobilising the local community. In light of this, the Ministry of Manpower has created SGSecure@Workplaces to help strengthen vigilance at workplaces and businesses.¹

Can such events truly happen here?

Singapore has long enjoyed an enviable reputation of being a safe and peaceful city-state. Nevertheless, this reputation requires significant work behind the scenes to maintain the status quo. In the past, healthcare-related businesses or institutions have enjoyed a “protected” status; however, times are changing.

One need only look towards war-torn Syria where fighter jets have bombed medical facilities and hospitals, leaving a country in such dire straits even more bereft.² The ongoing seven-year war has demonstrated that healthcare facilities are frequent targets of military action.³ Perhaps in the “war-free” Asia-Pacific region, this scenario may be unimaginable. It is important to remind our readers that in 2016, a man in a wheelchair detonated a pipe bomb in a Californian clinic.⁴ Even closer to home, in September last year, two persons including medical staff were injured when a man threw a petrol bomb at a clinic in our neighbouring country, Malaysia.⁵ Our clinics, situated in the heartlands and scattered over the nation, may be inadvertently affected in the event of a surprise attack.

Implementing the 3Ps

SGSecure recommends the 3P approach which is key to building up organisational resilience against terrorism. This three-pronged approach comprises **Preparing your workforce**, **Protecting your workplace** and **Partnering your community**. Providing your employees with the right skill set and information to deal with crises will help with reducing

downtime at the clinic and allow for better outcomes in the event of an emergency. Ensuring that risk management plans and mitigation measures are in place in the event of crises is the key to ensuring that your clinic will be able to weather these storms. Finally, building up a community of like-minded businesses and clinics can promote increased vigilance as well as improve response and actions during emergencies.

Preparing your workforce

How then can you go about training your personnel and ensuring your workplace preparedness? The first step would be to nominate and register one of your staff as the SGSecure representative for your clinic. This individual can help keep your employees abreast of all SGSecure-related matters and disseminate new information when the need arises. He/she will also be the point of contact for the authorities in times of need. It is important to emphasise that SGSecure preparedness is not the job of one individual – all employees should be encouraged to download the SGSecure app. This interactive app will help provide information on matters pertaining to SGSecure. It is important that your clinic has an emergency escape route in the

event of an attack, and employees should be briefed on these routes. The SGSecure advisories, such as “Run, Hide, Tell” and “Press, Tie, Tell” can be downloaded from the SGSecure site (<http://www.sgsecure.sg/resources>) and displayed to serve as a daily reminder for your employees. Other steps can also include building a team of ready responders by sending employees for fire-fighting, CPR/AED, and first-aid trainings (including psychological first aid skills). Such certification courses are available at the Singapore Red Cross and St John Singapore. This will also complement their skills development and further learning. Bonding activities can help cement the understanding between various groups in your workforce and feedback channels will help to reduce tension when grievances arise.

Protecting your workplace

The Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) Council's bizSAFE programme seeks to help improve your workplace's safety, health and security capabilities. SGSecure content has been incorporated into bizSAFE Levels 1 to 3 and helps to better identify and manage the security risks at your workplace. Mitigation measures and response plans are critical in aiding businesses in continuing functions during this difficult time. The ISO 22301 Business Continuity Management certification courses and crisis communication-related courses offered by the Business Continuity Management Portal can be helpful in developing the special skill set needed. Government grants may be available for clinics/businesses to send staff for such courses. In the age of information technology (IT), protecting your workplace against cyber threats is a critical component of securing the clinic workplace. The Ministry of Health has issued a cybersecurity advisory 1/2019 dated 7 February 2019, in the wake of the SingHealth breach.⁶ Clinic owners are advised to familiarise themselves with cyber security threats and institute an IT security plan for their clinic(s).

Partnering your community

This involves forming support networks that can improve vigilance and the

ability to deal with security threats and attacks in the immediate vicinity around your clinic. Steps that can be taken include registering to join the Singapore Police Force and Singapore Civil Defence Force's Safety and Security Watch Group schemes. If you own the building where your clinic resides, you and your staff can work with the police to conduct a security survey of the premises for target hardening. Enhancing communication capabilities also include creating and updating an emergency call directory and to consider use of mobile messaging applications to create group-based communication channels. Forming strong relationships with your key stakeholders (eg, customers and suppliers) is also important. A good practice would be to prepare a list of potential business partners who can support your operations in the event that current ones are affected by crises.

bizSAFE & StartSAFE

For the busy medical practitioner, it may be daunting to navigate the complicated environment of workplace safety and health. The WSH Council has a five-step bizSAFE programme that helps companies build the necessary internal capability to do risk assessment and build up their WSH capabilities and standards at the workplace. SGSecure components are also incorporated within the bizSAFE programme which prepares enterprises to respond to and be resilient toward terror threats in the workplace. Companies in the bizSAFE community can also display the bizSAFE logo as a reflection of their commitment to safety and can enjoy privileges and advantages offered by bizSAFE partners who also participate in this programme. For a more detailed outline and application, please refer to <https://www.wshc.sg/bizsafe>.

If you would prefer to have a WSH consultant visit your clinics to provide advice and hands-on guidance, you may wish to embark on StartSAFE – a programme initiated by the WSH Council to assist non-bizSAFE small and medium-sized enterprises (including clinics). The StartSAFE programme will help you embark on the bizSAFE journey eventually. You may refer to <https://www.wshc.sg/startsafe> for more information.

Conclusion

Preparedness and vigilance is the responsibility of every member of our nation – ambulatory clinics will also benefit from such measures. This short introductory article summarises the important measures that can help our clinic workplaces to be safer for all. ♦

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