

PERIMETER PROTECTIVE SYSTEMS

10 WAYS TO GET THROUGH A FENCE IN A FEW SECONDS

It is important to understand your perimeter security from the point of view of experienced thieves and vandals. This is usually the opposite of the impressions that owners of properties have.

1. For example an owner stood proudly pointing at the fencing some fence company had recently installed. It had oodles of razor ribbon atop the fence. "No one is ever going to get over that!" he proclaimed. But why should they? They can just go under the fence. This nutty fence was constructed of the typical green vinyl coated chain link material used at residences except it was 8' high. The bottom can be lifted off the ground just like a curtain or drapery. Of course a bottom rail or bottom tension wire would have improved that but the ties or clips can be cut or pulled off in one second. Had the fence been the heavier, typical galvanized chain link fencing material, then instead of lifting the bottom up by hand the intruder/ trespasser knows to just shove a 2" x 4" under and pry up. That will do the trick.

2. An ornamental steel picket fence with 1" square pickets looks impressive and strong. But remember, experienced trespassing thieves know they have all the time in the world to cut into your fence — it is their time in getting back out that may be limited because they may be spotted and have to flee. But let's look closely at that ornamental fence. Don't see anything wrong? Two pickets have been cut through near the bottom, right above the horizontal bottom rail. They are just sitting in place, balanced on the stub below and suspended from the top rail 7' above. They can be pulled aside whenever the thief wants to come and go. Because there is a 4" space between the pickets, and the pickets are 1" wide, by pulling these two pickets aside there is a very comfortable 15" wide opening to pass right through.

Then the pickets can just be set back into place and the property owner will never find how the thieves came and went. Hacksaws readily cut the hollow tubular steel pickets.

3. Time to secure the facility for the night. The heavy galvanized chain is wrapped around the two halves of the double swing gates and a heavy padlock locks them together. Next morning the gates are locked just fine. But something big and heavy was stolen out of the yard. How's that? No cuts in the fence. Owner is the only one with a key (in this example). Let's look at the hinges the way a thief does. The typical chain link fence hinges are, to use an old term, pintel and gudgeon, that is to say the frame hinge and the post hinge are female and they are secured together with a heavy bolt that drops between the overlapping holes. The bolt is sometimes "secured" with a little cotter pin. The thief simply pulls the bolt out, opens the gate at the post, dragging both gates open, and then replaces the bolt when he is done stealing. Takes about one second to defeat the gate this way.

4. We are back at the fence with oodles of razor ribbon on top. The fence contractor has now returned and installed a bottom rail. But he has missed the fact that the cantilever slide gate, which happens to cross a sloped driveway, actually has a 9" gap from the bottom edge of the gate to the driveway. This is enough for many teenage vandals to slide under in one second.

5. Now we are at a construction site. Lots of piles of copper tubing and other good stuff. There is even a full time guard at this site. But things keep disappearing. Obviously there are lots of ways this could happen. Things could be stolen in pickup trucks, wheeled out in wheelbarrows, and so on. The site fence looks intact. But a closer look shows that a diagonal cut has been made in the chain link fence,



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leaving uncut the very top and very bottom of the fence. Each cut is right below where the formed strand of fence is woven around the adjoining link. These cuts are hard to see. The pieces can be easily pulled up by hand now and an opening to pass stuff through conveniently appears. It can then be snapped back into place making the hole virtually disappear.

6. They are not too common but there are fences made from "cut-proof" heavy welded mesh design. Except that battery powered sawzall reciprocating saws and battery powered portable chop saws cut right through them, just as they will cut through sheet metal as well.

7. Let's look at the razor ribbon again. Let's say you did want to climb over it. Bending a piece back and forth will cause it to snap. Throwing an old mattress or heavy rags on it will make it climbable. A pair of wire snips will cut it apart readily. This product is ideal only for military operations where the enemy has very limited time to cross the barrier. It also works at prisons where guards supervise the exterior. For a commercial/ industrial application it is not the right thing. No municipality will issue a building permit for it. The law in Pennsylvania (similar in other states) is that "an owner of property is liable for injuries to trespassing children resulting from highly dangerous artificial conditions." (Penal Code § 339). So this product, the military spec of which says "designed to lethally entangle, maim and kill the enemy" creates a huge potential liability for the property owner if a ten year old child gets so entangled. It may also slow down the fire department, and since it was installed without permits, may violate the insurance policy exclusions and result in uninsured exposure. Anyway, for a pro, two seconds to cross over it.

8. Solid stone wall. Now what? But walk around outside in the weeds. What's that homemade, makeshift thing over there? Some 2" x 4"s nailed together. It's a ladder. Or those pallets. They can be stood on edge. The big pile of pallets inside the wall is a welcome quick escape route for the intruders. So is the pipe rack just inside the wall. The box trucks parked backed-up to the wall is another good route: leap from front bumper to hood to roof of cab to top of box car and onto and over the wall.

9. Two more ways to go. This property has a motorized slide gate and proximity card readers. But due to the fact that the gate travels 1.2 feet

per second for its 20' width, it is open for 24 seconds. Plenty of time for the unwanted vehicle to tailgate its way in.

10. Let's make method number ten really easy. This is for an ex-employee. He has a key or an entry code or he knows when the gate is simply left open. That was easy.

The point of the above was not to suggest that fences serve no purpose. On the contrary they are often a first line of defense as well as the most universally, clearly understood "sign" that tells kids and others to stay off your property. You have a duty under the law (this is a different one than § 339 discussed above) per § 334 to take reasonable steps to protect trespassers from dangerous activities on your grounds. If you know or should have known that kids are riding dirt bikes on the field you own, or playing on the machinery you have outside, you can be liable for their injuries.

Also, if some rotten bastard short-dumps toxic materials on your ground (that's just what some people do to avoid the high costs of legal disposal) you are not responsible for the fines associated with having the material as-if you dumped it. But you are responsible for the clean-up costs and legal disposal which can cost a large fortune. Fences help in regard to these problems. Your fence should be inspected at regular intervals to look for cuts. Weeds should be cut back or sterilized to keep from overgrowing the fence. Overhanging tree branches may be an easy point of entry.

Fortunately fences that are not optimally designed can often be easily retrofit to improve effectiveness. Also, fortunately the limitations of fences for security can be overcome by installing Perimeter Protective Systems' video analytics. Whether prying under, cutting through or climbing over, the intruder must break the plane of the defined "virtual fence" and can be detected. Detection can even be set to happen just outside the fence. In some situations, like car dealerships, it may be desirable to have no physical fence. The dealers want people to walk around the lot after-hours. In this case the video analytics will alert as soon as anyone comes onto the property. The central monitoring person will give a friendly greeting over the outdoor public address system, welcoming them to look around and directing them to where they can leave their name for a call from a salesperson. But if it is a pair of up-for-no-good teenagers who were planning to key the cars or break into them, then they know they are being watched and recorded, which would spoil their plans.

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