Article Side

Common SCIF Construction Requirements and Specifications by VanPey

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A Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility (SCIF) is an accredited area where restricted or classified information can be safely stored, discussed, or electronically processed. These are highly-secure rooms in an organization's office, allowing only authorized persons to access the premises. The military commonly have such installations for their missions and tasks, but other government or private agencies also maintain their own SCIFs. To ensure total information security, the following construction requirements and specifications are observed.

Entrance and Exit Doors

Accredited SCIFs only have one primary entrance door to ensure safety. However, SCIFs in places where local fire regulations are more stringent have an emergency exit door. All primary entrance doors should also have an automatic door closer, or a combination lock and access control device approved by authorities. SCIF entrance doors in an uncontrolled area should also have a combination lock to prevent tampering or unauthorized access.

Control or vault doors in SCIFs should likewise be used strictly for authorized personnel. On the other hand, emergency exit doors should be constructed from material equivalent in strength and density to the main entrance door for optimum safety. After all, this reliable emergency exit door may be challenged by enemies who want to infiltrate an organization's SCIF.

Door Construction Types

SCIF doors should have a solid wood core with a minimum thickness of 1.75 inches. There should be a metal cladding over these wood or composition materials, and these should cover the door's entire front and back surfaces. Metal fire or acoustical protection doors should likewise be 1.75 inches thick. Joined metal rolling doors on the other hand must be first approved before installation.

Vents, Ducts, and Pipes

Stringent SCIF construction demands that all vents, ducts, and similar openings that pass through the facility be secured with bars, grills, or commercial metal duct sound baffles. As you've probably seen in some of those Bourne or James Bond series, some agents can eavesdrop on others' conversations through the vents. In an SCIF where sensitive information is handled, safety from unauthorized access should thus be ensured.

Windows

SCIF windows where personnel, documents, or activities can be viewed should have blinds, drapes, or other coverings to avoid visual surveillance. An SCIF door at ground level (less than 18 feet above the ground) should also be covered with strong materials that can prevent forced entry. Perimeter walls and windows must likewise be secured from unauthorized access.

Sound Attenuation

Furthermore, the perimeter SCIF walls, doors, windows, and floors, ceilings, and other openings should feature ample sound attenuation. Advanced acoustical control and sound masking techniques can eliminate inadvertent disclosure of crucial conversations, enhancing security for the personnel and the sensitive compartmented information stored in the facility.

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