



## **SafeParks report for PRABOA AGM 2022**

Prepared by: Mike Rosholt November 2022

### Executive Summary

SafeParks is the security initiative of the Parkhurst Residents and Business owners Association (PRABOA). We are your fellow residents and have a deeply vested interest in ensuring that public and private spaces in Parkhurst are as secure as we can reasonably make them. To this end PRABOA, through SafeParks, had previously appointed 24/7 SECURITY as our preferred public space and armed response provider.

On 29th March 2022 PRABOA was informed that CORTAC was selling its armed response contracts to CAP. This left very little time to react or consider the options for our suburb. We have a duty to ensure that our security is effective and we get maximum value for money for any solutions we choose, on our members' behalf. Following the notice of the sale we reached out to a number of security companies operating in and around Parkhurst AND Neighbouring suburbs for proposals. We also reached out to members and leaders of surrounding communities resident's associations. The latter because we needed to know what was working in those areas and equally, what needed improving.

After a very intense period of assessment, PRABOA and SafeParks appointed 24/7 Security Services as the preferred security provider to service Parkhurst residents with Public Space Security (PSS), and Alarm Monitoring/Armed Response (AR).

24/7 Security operates as resident's associations' preferred providers for PSS and AR in neighbouring Parktown North and Parkview, as well as being dominant in the Parkview Policing Precinct under which Parkhurst falls.

On May 1st, 24/7 Security provided two (2) SafeParks branded tactical vehicles, each manned by highly trained security officers as well as a 3rd tactical support vehicle, during peak times, to service Parkhurst.

24/7 Security is monitoring all existing cameras on the Vumacam network that SafeParks pays for and will, over time, provide a further" roll ,out of 111 extra camera poles to further secure Parkhurst.

All SafeParks subscribers have free access to the 24/7 Security App which has a geo-located panic button function as well as private medical and fire emergency support.

On 1 May 2022, SafeParks had an average of 40% support rate by residents and traders in Parkhurst. CAP took over the CORTAC clients and in the immediate following period this caused confusion and, sadly, division in the community, leading to SafeParks numbers dropping somewhat.

Some reasons for this are:

- Residents believing that CAP was the chosen PSS provider
- Residents did not understand the difference between armed response (AR) and public space security (PSS) and why it was/is important to contribute to SafeParks for PSS.
- Residents understood that their contribution to SafeParks, previously paid to CORTAC, would be paid over to SafeParks by CAP. Unfortunately, it is not the case. Monies paid over to CAP -ostensibly for PSS under the original SafeParks scheme does not get paid to SafeParks.
- Despite active communication to the broader Parkhurst community on the realities regarding misinformation and pricing, a number of residents decided to stay with CAP "waiting to see what happens."
- Residents think CAP and CORTAC are the same company

Whilst SafeParks support dropped during May and June we have seen a steady increase in sign-ups since then. With a number of previous SafeParks members coming back into the scheme after "waiting to see" what happened with the transition to CAP. In addition SafeParks has negotiated with 24/7 on the fee structure, in an attempt to encourage residents to sign up as we are mindful of cost constraints on residents in these straitened times.

As of November 2022, SafeParks runs at a loss and is having to subsidize the scheme with monies from reserve funds- built up by the scheme for such eventualities. However, because of negotiations with 24/7 and the steady increase in sign-ups since July we will have narrowed the funding gap substantially by January 2023 and the viability of the scheme appears not to be in question any longer.

SafeParks will have to work harder to get the numbers up more in the next few months to achieve full operational break-even and thereafter to begin to implement the enhanced measures that we had hoped for, for Parkhurst. The alternative will sadly be a reduced number of services and/or resources for residents, impacting the suburb at large however we have a duty to ensure the scheme's sustainability in the long run.

Whilst it has been a somewhat tumultuous few months since the exit of

Cortac, we are pleased to confirm that we are very satisfied with the services provided by 24/7 to date. Where there are failings in terms of the SLA, we engage directly with 24/7 senior management to address such and the response is typically swift. We have had several unsolicited compliments and recommendations from residents surprised at the service levels from SafeParks and 24/7- not something we were used to previously.

In addition to the exit of CORTAC and the onboarding of 24/7 we have had to say a sad farewell to the SafeParks administrator of 7-years, Lynn Rushton. During the time that Lynn was the administrator she grew the SafeParks scheme and managed it with dedication and passion. Lynn accepted an offer to lecture full time and we wish her all the best with her new career. Thank you, Lynn, – we shall miss you!

Theresa du Preez is the new SafeParks administrator and ready to engage with members and prospective members.

As a final note for this AGM report we encourage any residents still on the fence or finding themselves unhappy with their current AR-only service to sign up with SafeParks and help us make this a better, safer suburb. The hassle of changing providers is really overstated and the good you will be doing your neighbourhood is worth any slight inconvenience.

Thank you

Mike

## **The SafeParks pro-active security scheme**

The challenge of preventing crime in our suburb is that most crime originates from the streets and public spaces. It is thus impossible to effectively secure our homes if we cannot secure the streets and public spaces. A home alarm monitoring service provider on its own will only help the resident on a reactive basis, meaning after a security breach has occurred on your property, which may be too late.

A more effective security solution is to patrol the public spaces and streets, an initiative which requires commitment from the whole community and needs to be paid for by all residents. 24/7 has added another layer of defence to Parkhurst by monitoring cameras all hours of the day. This is especially so for the License Plate Recognition cameras that have prevented many crimes as vehicles that have been used in previous crimes and that are flagged, have been picked up by 24/7 and have led to numerous arrests.

SafeParks was created by PRABOA to provide a solution that can achieve this, but this is only possible if the initiative is supported by enough

residents.

## **Funding by residents**

Parkhurst is a suburb of around 2000 households and approximately 200 businesses.

The vast majority of both groups already pay for some form of security solution, unfortunately, mostly only for a reactive home or business alarm monitoring service.

The problem is thus not money – the current total spend by the community in the suburb on security is substantial. The key problem, however, is a lack of commitment to securing the community and neighbourhood with the suburb being highly fragmented in terms of service providers that mostly only protect your home/ business on an armed response/ alarm monitoring basis, not the community and neighbourhood at large.

Many residents are reluctant to move from their personal security provider as they believe that they are happy with the service or simply that changing providers is “too much hassle.” But imagine the impact on the community and combating crime if the majority of residents contributed to SafeParks?

Other suburbs who have managed to get a substantial rate of support from their residents and business owners have been very effective in driving down crime. Some of our neighbouring suburbs have support of up to 65%, and in some instances even up to 85%. Although there are many voices in Parkhurst who are quick to complain about crime, they do not support our community. Sadly, we could do so much more to prevent crime if we could increase our support base.

## **The SafeParks/ Parksec partnership scheme**

This partnership does not exist any longer.

## **How much do residents have to pay?**

Monthly subscriptions are divided into two parts :

- a Public Space Security (PSS) contribution and
- a Home Alarm Monitoring fee, often called an Armed Response (AR) fee

The PSS debit order, as well as the AR debit order goes directly to SafeParks, and the agreed fee is then paid over to 24/7.

When SafeParks appointed a new PSS provider, one of the non-negotiable criteria was that debit orders be payable to SafeParks. This gives the

community, through SafeParks, control of the security scheme. Should we need to terminate 24/7's services at some point in the future; we are able to move the combined PSS contributions to a new provider. The power lies thus with the community, not the security provider.

Currently the PSS monthly contribution is R417 and the AR contribution is R332, giving a total contribution of R749 per month. This is cheaper than previously paid to the scheme when CORTAC was the appointed security provider.

Whilst it has historically been possible to contribute to the PSS on a stand-alone basis and to purchase your AR from another provider, it was not possible to only purchase the AR portion from 24/7 but with the new structure of the payments under the scheme, we are considering allowing for AR only, in extenuating circumstances. More on this early in 2023.

Please keep in mind that you are almost certainly already paying for a home security provider. By joining the SafeParks scheme and switching to 24/7 for your AR you will improve the scheme's total revenue. This will then directly translate into additional proactive security measures for the benefit of the community, with direct oversight of how it is spent.

We will shortly be negotiating the 2022/23 fees with 24/7. We would like to avoid cost increases as much as possible in the bleak economic climate, however salaries and fuel costs are a substantial part of the cost basis, especially as our 24/7 vehicles patrol 24-hours of the day, 7 days a week. (Note that this is another way that the other reactive security service providers save a lot of money as they mostly park and only move around a few times a day!)

Our view is that we will be able to keep the current PSS and AR rates the same until at least March 2023, should we then need to do an increase, clients will be notified.

## **Public Space Cameras**

Cameras are only one part of a community security solution. Due to all the foot and vehicle traffic in Parkhurst, as well as all the open entry and exit points, cameras cannot give the security cover what they can in a fully controlled environment. In controlled areas, AI/ rule-based cameras are much more effective as they search for specific incidents/ movements. Whilst an expensive solution with Vumacam, cameras are very good for post-event evidence gathering, picking up vehicle alerts and responding to crime events.

24/7 Security Services actively monitor cameras and make use of intelligence provided. There are two additional private cameras that are

monitored.

### **LPR Cameras**

License plate recognition (LPR) cameras monitor vehicles' number plates against multiple databases, including the SAPS-listed vehicles of interest (VOI). These databases include sought-after and stolen vehicles. When the LPR cameras detect a VOI, it triggers an alert to the 24/7 Security Command Centre. The 24/7 Security Armed Response teams are then deployed to locate/block the vehicle.

### **Overview Cameras**

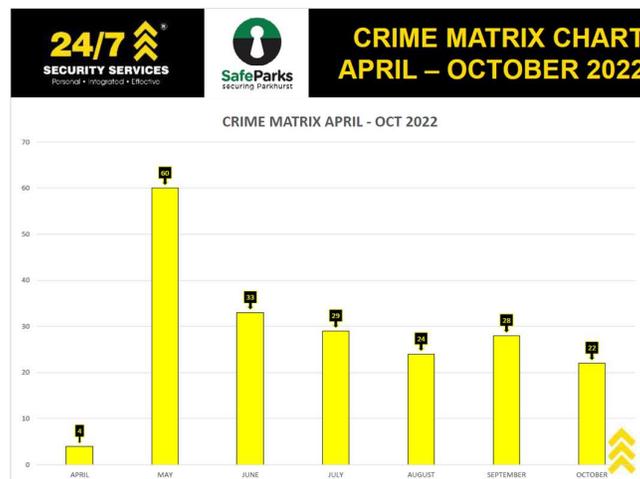
Overview cameras use artificial intelligence to monitor and detect abnormal activities. The iSentry software is designed to analyse CCTV camera footage in real-time. (Vumacam uses iSentry and the 24/7 Security Command Centre receives the feed and alerts that are generated by them.)

It uses deep learning to distinguish between normal and abnormal activities. In the event of abnormal activity, an alert is triggered to the 24/7 Security Command Centre where operators assess the alert and deploy the required resources, e.g., armed reaction, law enforcement, medical and fire response.

This video explains it well: <https://youtu.be/mVtyGYc70iA>

## **Crime trends in Parkhurst in 2022**

SafeParks appointed 24/7 as the Public Safety Security Provider from the beginning of May 2022.



It is clear that crime has come down substantially, (up to 65%!) from April 2022 until the end of October 2022.

By far the most crime that happens in Parkhurst is theft of or theft out of

vehicles, mostly parked in streets by visitors or where residents have inadequate off-street parking, especially over the weekends visiting along 4th avenue. SafeParks have continuously highlighted the risk of this to our clients, especially regarding certain targeted vehicles, using cell phones or laptops in public spaces or people leaving visible items in vehicles. Most of these thefts happen to non-clients or visitors to Parkhurst, some who may not even be aware of the risks.

Cell phone snatching numbers are high in Parkhurst, again it can be attributed to happenings in 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue as most phone stolen have been stolen at restaurants there. The residents and public have been advised to not leave phones lying on restaurant tables and not to be engaged on calls or texting when standing on sidewalks.

Suspicious persons are high on the crime matrix. 24/7 does stop and searches when alerted that a suspicious person is spotted in Parkhurst. This matrix only reflects crime reported to 24/7 and is verified by Parkview SAPS.

24/7 and SafeParks work closely with the Parkview Community Policing forum and meet on a weekly basis with Parkview SAPS.

SafeParks would like to thank Parkview SAPS under the guidance of Colonel Govender, the station commander that joined this station in February 2022, and his management team and VISPOL commanders for their contribution to keeping the crime matrix low in Parkhurst. They are following the hands-on approach and can be seen in our neighbourhood doing patrols on a weekly basis.

## **The way forward**

A significant portion of the community unfortunately still only contribute to reactive security providers or not at all and whilst the current state of the economy is certainly impacting a number of us, not supporting the community in which you reside can only have negative long-term consequences. The reality is that with more subscribers/ financial support, there is so much more we can do.

### **What you can do as a resident:**

- Join your street WhatsApp security group (some streets also have vacancies for street captains)
- Support the SafeParks PSS solution
- Use 24/7 as your AR security provider
- Encourage friends and neighbours to join or switch to the scheme
- Get on the weekly security newsletter (contact Theresa on safe@safeparks.joburg)
- Phone in all suspicious activities to the 24/7 control room – whether

- you are a 24/7 client or not
- Be involved in the community!
  - Join and monitor our website and Facebook pages:
  - Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SafeParks/>
  - Website SafeParks: <https://safeparks.org.za>
  - Website PRABOA: <https://parkhurstvillage.com>

Many thanks to those of you who are our loyal supporters and we are truly heartened by your continued support and the number for positive messages we receive.