



Articles:

Possible abolition of the SIA page 1 and 3



Regular Features:

Editorial	2
Staff Page	4
Quiz	5



Octaga Security Services holds SIA approved contractor status for the provision of Manned Guarding services

Issue 15

New Website Launched

Late September saw the re-vamp of our website – which is now a clearer and crisper design, reflective of the professional stance and direct approach of Octaga.

Easy to navigate and with links to the Octaga News and current job vacancies, it is a communications portal for staff and clients alike.

Work is ongoing on this site, though soon all pages will be finished and we shall present the professional and concise online presence reflective of our services.

Accreditations

Safe Contractor - 3rd Year Running

2010 again sees us maintain our impressive list of accreditations with a third endorsement from the Caerphilly based auditors, recognised across the construction industry and by many public bodies.

NSI

Our recent NSI audit went exceedingly well, with us being given yet another high mark and praised for staff training and communications. The National Security Inspectorate's Gold Medal – arguably the longest lived and most respected benchmark in the industry has been awarded to Octaga now since 2001.

NACOSS

The application for accreditation for Electronic installations is now complete and we have undergone our initial review of procedure in this specialist discipline.

We expect our accreditation soon, after technical and physical audits, which will add to our strong credentials respected by many private and public organisations



SIA to be Abolished? *By Dave W*



As you will all have no doubt heard by now, the Security Industry Authority appeared on a Government list of Quangos considered for abolition. (Extract from consultation doc leaked to the BBC, above).

Abolishing the SIA would not save taxpayers much money because it is largely self-financing but as the document suggests, the move would save security firms thousands and contribute to "reducing burdensome regulation".

The SIA was set up to moderate and regulate an industry plagued by a criminal element and a terrible press – though has been accused by security workers and company bosses alike of doing little to improve UK security and instead turning into a self-serving dinosaur.

It was charged first with licensing Door Supervisors and Wheel Clampers – and yet years later there was never a British Standard for 'Vehicle Immobilization'. Furthermore, many 'old school' doormen claim to have received better training when they were licenced by local councils than the simple 'multiple choice' exam to get an SIA badge.

Oddly, on the day of the documents leak though, the

Security Institute seemed to have leapt to the defence of the SIA, saying that it had, "noted with concern" the BBC report.

And there was a similar reaction from the IPSA, who said that abolition of the SIA would be a "severe step backwards".

There are some it seems who worry about the proliferation of 'cowboy companies' again should the SIA go, and licensing with it. But what has the SIA, with over 340,000 licenses issued, equating to an income well in excess of £27,000,000 a year, plus some Gov't money, actually done; and should it be abolished?

Toward the end of the 1990's, private security had become rather a joke – plagued by companies of crooks and employing the illiterate, infirm, ill-tempered and illegal.

There was clearly a need for regulation and higher standards – that the industry might regain the faith of clients, the public and police. In principle, no serious company or security operative would disagree that on a national level, something needed to be done – Licensing was, and still is in principle - a good idea.

Yet the In-House v Contractors fiasco drove a wedge between the SIA and the grass roots of an industry it was intended to serve.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Low Sick Rates

Editorial

So, the SIA's days are numbered ... perhaps..

Maybe soon we can see common sense again and be able to use people according to their aptitude and skills rather than according to the piece of plastic they've paid for!!!

Let's all be clear about one thing - Licensing has not raised standards - it has only raised money!

The licence to operate in private security should be - and should always have been - an annual Criminal Records Check - at a cost of TWENTY THREE QUID, plus of course a photo ID card. After that, training and procedure is set out quite clearly in relevant British Standards - for which good companies attain NSI Gold or become principal BSIA members.

I for one hope the SIA goes quickly - so that people's real attributes and life skills can be put to good use and no more will some of the lowest paid people in Britain have to pay for the right to work!

And to anyone worried about, "the cowboys will come back" - you seriously think they ever went away???

[Naturally, the Octaga News welcomes your views on this.](#)

Sincerely yours

Dave

At Octaga we carefully monitor Sick rates across sites and regions, as this is important data for use at Management meetings.

We have been aware that for some time sick rates have been falling, perhaps due to morale, management or for other reasons - whatever the cause, recent data from the first six months of 2010 has shown a sick rate at Octaga of just **1.733 days** per year per man; a truly remarkable figure for the service industry.

According to the annual survey by the HSE - The average sickness absence in the UK in 2009 was 4.8 days for private sector workers and 9.4 days for those in public sector jobs - with no indication that there will be a significant fall in the 2010 figures, which has been predicted by many as the recession begins to bite at the 'man in the street'. In fact, some publications have hinted that figures of around 4.6 days for people in the private sector and 9.0 for civil servants are on the cards for this year.

We are enormously pleased to have a sickness rate at such a low level, as it speaks volumes about the

Return of the Uniform Challenge

We've reached again the time of year for the 'winter edition' of our uniform challenge (now in its third year!) Managers will be assessing officers' attire on their routine visits, so remember to be smart - there might be a prize in it for you!

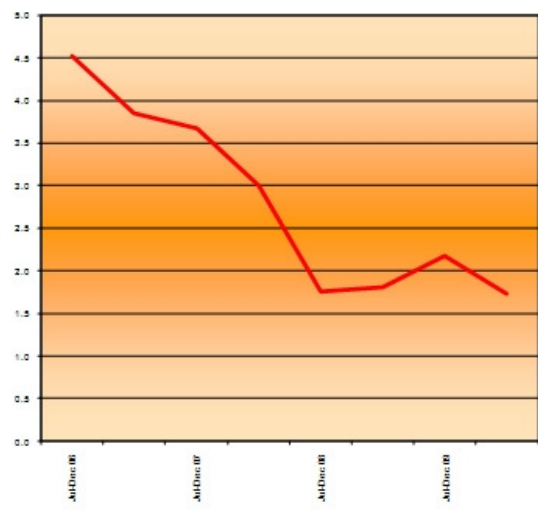
It never really ceases to impress us how well our officers are turned out and

it really is a pleasure to give prizes to the best dressed. Of course there is far more to our jobs than just looks; but impressions do count!

We do get treated according to how we are perceived, so it's best to look good at all times.

Upon this subject, please do wear correct uniform - it is

Octaga Sick Days Per Year Per Man - Last 5 years



commitment and loyalty that our officers show to their work.

Traditionally, hourly paid workers take fewer sick days than their salaried counterparts (for obvious reasons best not dwelt on here) - but even with all industry and pay level factors taken into consideration, a rate at less than 2 ¼ days a year is considered very low indeed.

These days, it seems de rigeur in certain sectors to consider sick days as part of one's "38 days holiday" a year and so easy to extend ones weekends during festival season with a couple of 'sore throats'. Too many times we have all heard stories of workers 'wagging' shifts for all sorts of reasons and it restores our faith in our officers and people's integrity generally when we seem to have a workforce with a little more about them than that.

We'd like to thank all officers for keeping sick rates at a normal level - but particularly those who have not taken sick leave this year! Never feel that you are *only* carrying colleagues; your efforts are noted and shall in time be rewarded.

tempting to put on a plain black top or our favourite woolly hat, especially on nights when no one can see us, but one never truly knows when a client or manager may arrive on site - or even a member of the emergency services who may need to quickly identify us as security personnel.

That said chaps, while we

do give out rather a lot of uniform (and please see Dave or Emma if you need more) - with winter coming, do please ensure you have appropriate foot wear and warm under clothing. These items are generally your own responsibility.

We are told however that Dave has Octaga socks and long johns for sale; a bargain at £45 a pair ☺

Recruitment Day Dancing On Ice!

Octaga held our first recruitment open day on the 1st October at Cheltenham Racecourse – which quite a few people attended, despite the foulest weather we've had for some time.

Emma, Suzie and Dave B attended the venue to meet those who called in; all of whom will soon be on our books as events crew at the racecourse.

Many more sent details through to HQ and we are now in the process of inducting new stewards to the company.

Another open day is planned soon – hopefully on a day with below average rainfall ;-)

In another superb contract for us from the studios group, Octaga shall be providing the site security presence for this winters filming of the popular ITV celebrity competition.

Our officers shall be at Shepperton Studios from 22nd November until 10th April, and will operate in teams similar in size to those that worked our Gladiators events.

It is excellent to have another large TV production to our credit, and anyone interested in working some shifts at what will be an interesting event with a lively but personable audience should get in touch with Emma at HQ.

Literary Festival at Cheltenham

The Times Literary Festival has been heralded as another success, and is another good result for Octaga. We had 25 stewards there each day dealing with between 8000-9500 guests. The Centaur at Cheltenham hosted some of the most outstanding speakers - including Michael Caine.

We has some new stewards for this weekend, who took to the work quickly All of our staff did a brilliant job, especially the car park marshals, rotating 2 car parks, bus parking and disabled parking, plus dealing with the arrival of the Artists making sure they got through without any problems. We did have some rather irate autograph hunters to deal with on the last night, though all stewards dealt with it very professionally. Suzie would like to thank everyone who took part in this years festival, including Octaga Racecourse Site Security as they helped in the evenings.

Abolish the SIA? – cont'd from page 1

As for the criminals, they simply became company secretaries instead of directors; marshals instead of doormen. The crooks did not go away!

And nor did standards rise or our reputation with the public get any better – in fact, when 12,000 illegal immigrants got SIA licences, it suffered severe damage. Even today, the most common complaint, anecdotally, that clients make about staff in private security is, "they can't speak English!" How then, the public wonders, did they pass the exam??? We all know the answer to that – trainers getting paid not by course quality but by the pass rate!!!

With everyone needing to be licenced very quickly, the exam had to be easy, or Britain would be suddenly short of guards and those with a brain and their quality employers could suddenly demand more money for their services!!!

Couldn't have that, could we???

With seven different licences now – and with a commitment to licensing Private Investigators in 2011, precognition agents and consultants shortly thereafter, and no less than THREE different types of licence for Dog Handlers being discussed, the SIA seems to have truly lost touch with reality and fallen out of favour with Government.

As news broke of the inclusion of the SIA on the coalition governments Quango 'hit list', the initial comment from Octaga MD, Dave Allison pretty much summed up many people's feelings; "The SIA has been a shambles ever since they started. They had all good intentions but it should have been the job of an established Industry leader like the NSI to govern UK private security. The amount of complaints far outweighed any good the SIA tried to do and [they seemed to] make it up as they went along.

"As part of the NSI Gold Accreditation, companies must adhere to British and EU Standards of Management, Communications, Screening, Vetting and Security Ops.

In what it defiantly called "Clarification on Media Speculation", the SIA made the following statement; "The SIA, along with all other arms-length public bodies, is subject to a review to determine whether we should continue ...This is a decision for the Government and we cannot comment on speculation. We will continue to fulfil our duties under the Private Security Industry Act 2001 and the current law applies."

Whatever the future, Dave Allison says, "Good companies will stick to providing a quality service and be accountable - principled customers will want to remain with the

committed and principled security companies."

The SIA has survived for now – the Government says that there will be a "phased transition to a new regulatory scheme" after a thorough review of the SIA and its practices.

In other words, they will probably go eventually, but we may have to work with them for a while yet - if we do, we shall do so with the good faith and integrity that we always have.

But if they have any common sense or humility or understanding of ground security, the SIA will see this episode as a wakeup call – and charge less for licences and begin to champion standards within the sectors they have rather than push on with licensing every possible activity; simply raking in more money and making millionaires out of more 'training' providers!

When (?) the SIA go, we can be judged by the public not on the basis of a plastic card we've paid for, but on our membership of the BSIA, NSI Gold and our relationship with clients and reputation of our company.

An accredited company with good references in fact ... like it should be.

There is a need for a licence – but not in the way it was done.

Dave Allison in Charity Clay Shoot

Our own MD, along with his clay team, "Near Miss", was in action at the Whitfield Estate recently as part of a charity event which raised more than £18,000 for Hereford Cathedral.

Always keen to be involved in community and charity events, Octaga was also a co-sponsor of the occasion.

Dave was top gun at the event and led his team to a win and a prize of champagne.

Sadly, none of the booze made it to the desk of the Octaga News.

"If you don't understand the acronyms ... don't apply for the job, right?"

Dave Jewkes
From the short story 'Relic'
by David Fell

Staff Page

Staff News

New Starters

In addition, we have taken on a new manager, **Jim D.** He comes to us highly qualified and with a good track record from a major CCTV installer. Dave Allison says in introduction, *"[he has] many years of experience, which ... will only be a positive addition to what we already have and ensures we continue to further develop our Technical department."*

A warm welcome to Octaga is also extended to Surya, Karen and Wayne, who join us at Shepperton; to Steve B who started with us on Monday the 11th to be Cliff's partner at Halesowen and to Uttam, who joins Capt Chitra's team at OR.

We are sorry to lose Phan from OR, though he served us well and we wish him all the best in his new career. Likewise, it is with regret tinged best wishes that we say, 'goodbye' to Slav and Bhim from Shepperton.

Special Commendation

A particular note of thanks this period goes to Andy Jones. Andy is one of our regular events crews who spends quite some time at the studios. He has built up a superb rapport with clients and fellow officers

and has been functioning as a very effective Team Leader of events staff down there.

It is a pleasure to have you with us, Andy – thank you very much.

And congratulations to Godsen for passing his CCTV surveillance certificate!



"Today more than ever we need creative minds to address the issues of the age. And one of the most urgent is this: How can humanity know so much, achieve so much, and still fail so many people so badly?"

King Abdullah II

"Talent is cheaper than table salt. What separates the talented individual from the successful one is a lot of hard work."

Stephen King
Writer

Health and Safety: Jobsworth v Reality?

'Health & Safety' has long been a euphemism for pedantry and 'red-tape' that prevents officers doing their jobs and throws from the window any common sense. Thankfully, things are a little saner these days – though it's worth remembering that the legislation itself was and still should be, about a safer environment for workers and that Health & Safety is every one's responsibility. In a nutshell, we all have a hand in the comfort and safety of our colleagues and clients and should endeavour to use common sense if we find a broken chair, dead torch batteries, potholes in driveways etc. Don't leave everything to a manager on a Risk Assessment visit – we can fix many problems if we all communicate and get things done

Commendations

August 08

Colin D

Colin has not been with us long but has already made a huge impression upon team-mates, client and managers. He has helped not only his own site at AP to cover shifts during the holiday season and has stepped in last minute to cover sickness, but also other sites. Colin also goes that extra mile by helping the client/visitors by completing duties that are beyond the A.I.'s. A very corporate and professional site like AP calls for a professional and reliable S/O and it would seem that T/L Paul and Octaga have found one in Colin. You have made a superb start with us Colin – enjoy your prize voucher.

September 10

D Lewis

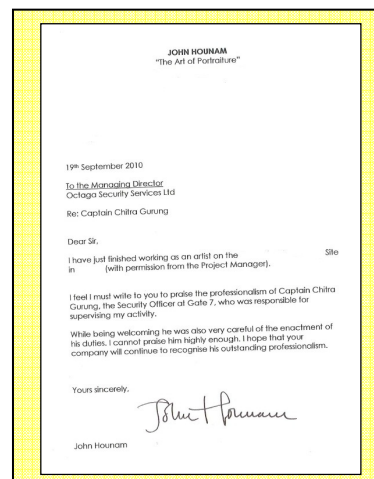
This is Darren's first commendation since joining us a short time ago – and yet a well deserved one for which he has Emma's personal thanks. Though having only been with us for four months at Pinewood, he has risen to the occasion admirably during Mo's absence and has become a first class relief supervisor respected by site management, Emma and clients alike. To have someone of such caliber join us gives us a great faith in the future of our company and we look forward to a long and professional relationship with Darren. Welcome aboard – and very well done!

Letter received at Octaga in praise of Capt Chitra

An issue of the Octaga News just wouldn't be complete with a mention for one of our longest serving and most respected officers.

This period, Capt Chitra has received a written commendation from a guest of his client – and a famous classical artist no less!

John Hounam wrote us a glowing thank you letter for Chitra's professionalism and courtesy – and we shall feature a profile of our Ghurka QGO in next months News as a tribute to a man we all admire.



And Finally ...

All correspondence to:

Octaga News

Octaga House
17 St Owen Street
Hereford
HR1 2JB

E-MAIL:
davidwaldron@octaga.co.uk

Website
See us at:
www.octaga.co.uk

Statements herein are the opinions only of the writers and may not accurately represent those of Octaga Security Services, its Staff or Directors.

Next Issue planned:
December 2010

Managers; Deadline for citation proposals for monthly awards; - 08 Dec

All Officers; Deadline for submissions, letters, articles etc; - 03 Dec



The misuse and 'pick-n-mixing' of the homophones (settle down chaps); your and you're; there, their and they're; piece and peace etc - along with numerous grammatical *faux pas* and spelling mistakes is reported to be causing considerable alarm among those needing to write - and especially those needing to read - various reports across the security industry. Thankfully, incidences of this sort of crime are below the national average at Octaga ... however;

Please all be very careful about language and spelling in reports

We can all have a laugh at the odd typo or drop into dialect or argot and no one really minds; - at least we hope not and anyway the [deliberate] mistakes in the Octaga News are only to test observation ;-)

If however one reads a report of a few hundred words and there's a clanger dropped every sentence, it is very easy for a harsh reader to make a judgment call about the writers understanding of his subject, even their general thought processes.

Grammar and punctuation can undermine a good argument - please stop, think and spell check!

So there you have it - and be warned - anyone using poor words and grammar in their reports in future should prepare for the fact that they're likely in for some extreme ridicule.

Employee of the Year - Nominations please!

As there are only two months left of 2010, it is time to think about who should be Employee of the Year. This award, which carries a £100 prize, is given to one who has:

"Made a significant and substantial contribution to the company, client and team-mates, beyond what could be reasonably expected from rank and contracted duties, thereby

enhancing the profile of the Octaga Group."

Unlike the regular monthly commendations, which are discussed by management, 'Employee of the Year' can be awarded to any operative of any rank and is given by Directors after they have scrutinized **your votes!**

Any officer can recommend any colleague for this award. Please have a think about this,

and if you know anyone who is deserving of this title, then write a letter explaining why to the Octaga News at HQ by Friday 27th November. All letters will be handled with the strictest confidence and viewed only by the editor and directors.

Your opinion counts - and remember; if ya don't vote, ya can't complain!

Chess Comp !

The winner of last issue's puzzle is David L from Shepperton who was first in with the correct answer ...

1. Rh8+ [which forces] Kxh8
2. Qh7++

Here's another one of similar difficulty - again white to mate in two.

Watch out for a hard puzzle next issue for our grand Christmas Prize!



Next Issue

- Employee of the Year!

