

| | |
|---|----|
| Editors' Note..... | 1 |
| 9 things Tokyo's New Disaster Guide Can Teach You about Survival..... | 2 |
| Gas Safety Tip For Your Home..... | 5 |
| Make Sure Any Planned Event Is Safe From The Threat of Fire..... | 6 |
| Potentially Unwanted Program (PUP) Threaten, Slow Your PC..... | 7 |
| How To Encrypt Your Business Data..... | 9 |
| 6 Questions To Ask When Purchasing Security Seals..... | 10 |
| Misunderstood Myths About Diamonds | 12 |

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Security Solutions

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS AND
SECURING THE FUTURE

Helping secure
your world

Editor's Note

As it is customary with our first issue of the New Year, we at Amalgamated Security Services Limited would like to extend a heartfelt Happy New Year to all our subscribers and readers. We do hope that 2016 would be a blessed year of success and prosperity for you.

A new year brings new hope for new beginnings, new opportunities and a new life in some instances. However, we must not plan for good time only; many times when disaster strikes most of us are caught off guard and worst of all, unprepared. The first article speaks to this by showing readers how the Tokyo Disaster Guide teaches nine things about survival such as the importance of planning and stockpiling supplies daily. Our second article keeps within the theme of safety and identifies gas safety tips for your home such as; installation and maintenance of equipment to name a few. This article is also tied into article three which reiterates the issue of fire safety. It outlines how one can ensure that a planned event is safe from the threat of fire.

As you continue reading the articles within the newsletter you will realize that we now shift our focus from physical safety to computer and software safety. Article number four classifies Potentially Unwanted Program (PUP) and how they threaten and slow down your PC. In the next article, the author teaches readers how to encrypt business data. Our business readers will love the aforementioned articles due to the fact that they speak to issues that are encountered quite frequently. The security of data and software on PCs is of extreme importance because if not properly secured and managed an entire company can crash almost immediately. When deciding which issue will be of extreme interest to our business readers the topic of cargo and how to secure it came to mind, which is why the sixth article was chosen. Readers will learn about the six questions to ask when purchasing security seals, some of these questions include; the value of cargo and are the products desirable to thieves.

We end this edition of the newsletter on a light note with a

favorite topic discussed by women around the world. This article was not chosen by coincidence, on March 8th we celebrated International Women's Day and every human being knows that diamonds are a girl's best friend. The seventh article titled 'Misunderstood Myths about Diamonds' is geared towards educating both males and females about the myths surrounding diamonds and the 'real' truth behind these precious gems.

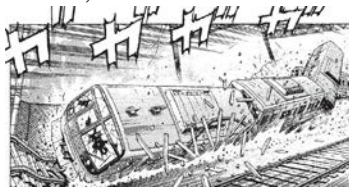
At **Amalgamated Security Services Limited** we will continue to fulfill our commitment to provide quality service for all customers. In keeping with this commitment we do hope you find these articles and the safety techniques helpful and find some way of implementing it on your everyday life and company's daily operations.

Regards
ASSL Marketing Team

9 Things Tokyo's New Disaster Guide Can Teach You About Survival

Knowing how to survive in the wild isn't the same thing as knowing how to survive in the big city when an earthquake or tsunami strikes. Wherever you live, Japan's new survival manual may save your life.

By: [Wes Siler](#)
Jan 20, 2016



Manga illustrations are an effective way to convey important survival tips. *Illustration:* Tokyo Metropolitan Government

There's a 70 percent chance a major earthquake will directly strike Tokyo in the next 30 years. With over 13 million residents who speak many different languages facing threats ranging from falling debris to stampeding crowds to freezing weather, communicating preparedness guidelines that're simple to follow, wide ranging and, most importantly, *effective* is a huge undertaking. But, with its

new *Disaster Preparedness Guide*, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government has achieved that.

Unlike most survival manuals, this guide provides realistic advice for real people in plausible situations. It won't teach you how to catch a moose in a deadfall trap if you happen to find yourself stranded in the arctic with only a bobby pin and a bad attitude, but it will show you how to use newspapers for warmth, make a stove out of soda cans, or splint a broken limb with plastic wrap. And it covers situations faced across the world—stuff like torrential rain, mud slides, terrorist attacks, and even the outbreak of infectious disease. Released late last year, the guide is being distributed free to citizens and has also been made available online. You can [download your copy here](#). Bonus: it includes a manga-style comic.

Here's what it can teach you about survival, no matter where you live.

Cover Your Head



Illustration: Tokyo Metropolitan Government

Throughout the guide, you'll find illustrations of people holding bags, buckets, jackets, and even duvets over their heads. You don't wear a helmet

to bed or in the office, but in an earthquake or other disaster, falling objects become as much a risk to a city dweller as they are to a rock climber on the wall. Improvising head protection with anything you have on hand is a great idea.

The Importance of Planning



Illustration: Tokyo Metropolitan Government

You'll find similar advice in any worthwhile survival guide. But it's worth repeating because it's so important. You need to have and know how to use potentially life saving equipment like fire extinguishers, stockpile food, water, and other supplies, and develop a plan about where to meet family members should you be apart. Tokyo's guide is unique in terms of the level of detail it delves into. It provides guidance on securing furniture and other items inside your home and gives a detailed checklist of supplies to stockpile for a typical family, both at home and in a "go" bag.

Perhaps most interesting is the advice on division of duties for families. I hadn't seen this kind of thing before, but it makes total sense. Through pre-

planning, families are encouraged to designate someone to perform vital tasks immediately, such as tackling a fire or securing an exit. This ensures that there's a plan in place for these immediate needs to be handled right away, amid confusion and fear.

Stockpiling Supplies, Daily



Illustration: Tokyo Metropolitan Government

When I moved into my current house in also earthquake-prone Los Angeles, one of my first priorities was stockpiling water, food, sanitation stuff, and other emergency supplies. It was expensive and took a few days of dedicated work. The guide has better advice:

Until now, it was thought that stockpiling emergency supplies was special and involved preparing items not normally used such as ship biscuits and flashlight headbands. As such, there are probably many people who gave up, believing that managing and maintaining a stockpile was difficult. However, the “daily stockpile” method allows you to easily create an emergency stash just by buying a little more of the food and essentials that you

normally use on a daily basis. If you live alone and often shop at convenience stores, you probably don’t have a week’s supply of food in your refrigerator. Try purchasing a little more of your favorite items such as instant noodles, heat-and-eat food, snacks, and beer at the convenience store to build up your stock.

The approach that Tokyo recommends is almost a 180-degree turn, in that it simply advises adding a little extra to your routine shopping. Hundreds of dollars in long-shelf-life food may seem an unnecessary burden on many people, but buying a couple extra packages of the staple food you consume already to your weekly shopping is both low-cost and low-effort. Rotating it ensures it doesn’t expire. And who can’t get behind a practical reason to buy more beer?

Stay Warm And Safe with Trash

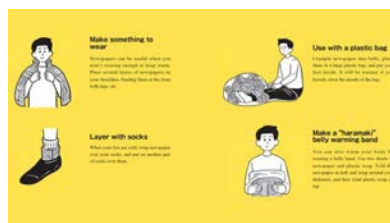


Illustration: Tokyo Metropolitan Government

Hey, it works. Shoving wadded up newspaper inside a jacket or other outerwear is one of the easiest ways to create trapped air space from found items. And trapped air space is insulation.

As the guide notes, bubble wrap, aluminum foil, cardboard, and Styrofoam can work too. The last two are most effective for creating a buffer between you and the cold ground at night. And, the guide has further advice:

In the event of a disaster, avoiding injury is critical. A disaster-stricken area may be strewn with rubble and puddles of water, and might be harder to walk through than you can imagine. In order to avoid injury from stepping on stray nails and other sharp materials, you should learn in advance how to protect your feet. The guide recommends placing something hard and penetration-resistant, like a wooden board, under your shoes, and tying or wrapping it on with string, tape, or plastic wrap.

Kill Flies

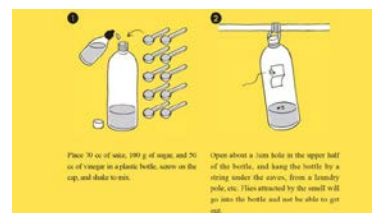


Illustration: Tokyo Metropolitan Government

They spread disease! Sanitation is one of the oft-overlooked practicalities about realistic survival. This should work as well everyday as it will in a disaster. Our takeaway? Stockpile sake.

Change the Size of a Battery



Illustration:

Tokyo Metropolitan Government

You're going to need flashlights and battery operated radios, maybe even other battery-powered devices. You can't make a big battery smaller, but you can make a small battery bigger. To change a AA into a D, match the length of the AA with a non-conductive material to a diameter of 3.4cm (1 1/3-inch), then add length to the battery by crumpling aluminum foil and placing it underneath.

Fry Fish



Illustration: Tokyo Metropolitan Government

You know, if you have fish and you're hungry. The guide shows you how to construct a stove from soda cans, fueled by vegetable oil. In a pinch, you can use a simple [cat food or beer can stove](#) filled with denatured alcohol or kerosene.

Make a Backpack



Illustration: Tokyo Metropolitan Government

Need to carry jugs of water or other heavy objects over distance? All you need is the pair of pants you're wearing, and some string.

Return to Normal Life



Illustration: Tokyo Metropolitan Government

Uniquely, the guide includes specifics on filing insurance claims, applying for jobs, obtaining damage assessments, and asking for loans. I'm not aware of any other city, region, or country that does that with such specificity, but this at least highlights the need to learn about the requirements for an insurance claim ahead of time and to secure the necessary documentation in a safe or go bag. At the very minimum, you should have copies of IDs and passports, bank details, insurance certificates, and photo

documentation of more expensive items like works of art, vehicles, and jewelry.

Reprinted from Outside Magazine

Amalgamated Security Services offer a full range of security service solutions which are inclusive of the following:

- Response Services
- Alarm Monitoring
- Guarding Services
- Electronic Service
- Courier Services
- Assess Controls
- Data Services
- Cash Services
- Investigations

Gas Safety Tips For Your Home

By [Jovia D'Souza](#) / Submitted
On January 26, 2016

Gas makes an instant, efficient and reliable form of energy which explains why it is a popular choice for many households. But just like any other energy form, you need to be careful around your home so that you minimize accidents. Here are a few tips that can help you live with your gas supply safely at home to enjoy its many benefits in the different household areas.

Installation

Safe installation should be your priority when it comes to gas around your home. It is actually only through proper installation that your appliances will manage to work correctly and efficiently so start by focusing on proper installation. Get a registered gas fitter to handle the installation or make any gas supply alterations that are necessary in your home. When you use a registered fitter, you can be sure that everything from appliances to ventilation is in working order. If yours is a new gas installation, ensure that the fitter gives you a certificate showing that the work was completed according to regulations and also manufacturer recommendations for safety purposes.

Never try to make any changes to your gas system, however simple it might look in your eyes. Instead, always get a certified gas expert to evaluate the problem and offer the best solution.



Maintenance

For the sake of efficiency and safety, ensure that your appliance gets regular checks from a competent, authorized expert. Most energy providers supplying gas can offer such services so you can take advantage of them for your safety at home. Ensure also that all your gas appliances are serviced on a regular basis. If you are not sure how often the servicing should be, contact your appliance retailer or get assistance from your gas fitter or expert. Space heaters need to be serviced annually and so do most of other appliances. Ensure that a gas worker working on other issues around your home does not leave without checking how safe and efficient your gas appliances are. Most plumbers are registered gas fitters so you can also ask they check your appliances.

Handling an emergency

One of the things you cannot forget to do once you become a gas consumer is to know the signs of a leak. The good thing about natural gas and also LPG is that they have an odor so that it is easy for you to tell when there is a leak. Rotten egg like smell or smell that is similar to garlic is usually the first sign of a leak. As soon as you suspect that you have a leak even when you really cannot smell anything, you should:

- Turn off your gas supply
- Turn off the gas appliances that were on
- Extinguish any naked flames and avoid lighting any matches or open fires
- Open your windows and doors to ventilate your home
- Immediately call your gas fitter if you still do not know what the problem was or you just want to be sure that all is well.

Scottish Power supplies electricity and gas to businesses and homes across the UK. It has a committed and reputable customer service that can be reached on [Scottish Power number](#) 0843 770 5075 for any energy related enquiries.

Article Source:

http://EzineArticles.com/expert/Jovia_D'Souza/2007086

Make Sure Any Planned Event Is Safe From the Threat of Fire

By [Liam Swann](#) / Submitted On February 17, 2016

In most locations, procedures are put in place to make sure that any event will be compliant with fire regulations and building codes. This includes fire extinguisher hire based on size and occupancy for the event at hand. A professional fire safety company will know just what to do, but here are some tips and guidelines that can help one plan an upcoming event and ensure that everyone will be safe throughout the festivities.

Establish a Responsible Individual

There should be a person from the organisation throwing the event that will be designated as responsible for compliance with all requirements in relation to fire and safety. They must be present through the entire event and keep on top of compliance procedures and guidelines.

Occupancy or max capacity should be known when reserving and planning the event and of course, followed. It's important to keep in mind when reserving a space that

chairs, tables, bar, any stages or other fixtures will affect the capacity as well. Fire extinguisher hire will calculate the amount and type needed based on the amount of attendees.

Flame Resistance

It's also required in most cases that all wall coverings, insulation for sound and decorations be flame resistant according to fire prevention regulations of the area. There may need to be a permit for decorating that says all materials are approved and flame resistant along with approvals signed and dated. Nothing should be placed in front of or around clearly marked exits.



Fire Fighter Presence

In some cases, and depending upon the event and amount of attendees, fire fighter detail may be required in addition to fire extinguisher hire. It's crucial to contact the fire marshal a few weeks before the event to review requirements and request a professional fire fighter if necessary, and any costs will be the event planner's

responsibility.



Open Flame Rules

Even with fire extinguisher hire, some venues will not allow open flames, pyrotechnics and candles. Flameless candles are often permitted if they are battery operated. These give the illusion of the candle flicker for those putting on intimate events such as a wedding or dance.

Orderly Set Up

Most venues require that tables and chairs be set up in an orderly manner, and all aisles be free and clear in case evacuation needs to happen. Anyone planning an event should be sure that there's a clear path for exit, and to fire extinguishers hired in case of a fire. There are guidelines of how wide aisles should be in various locations that should be noted when setting up for the event.

Checklist Prior to Event Start

Here is a great list of items to consider about an hour or so before the event begins. This way there will be no interruption, and festivities will

be safe and enjoyable throughout.

- Check panic hardware on all doors for inside events
- Open all doors to make sure there are not obstructions.
- Handicapped entrances should be unobstructed as well, and unlocked.
- There should be at least two exits from every space.
- Make sure exit signs are clearly visible and working as they should. If fire signs or exit signs are needed they can also be obtained from companies with fire extinguisher hire.
- All supplied fire extinguishers hired should have an inspection tag present and be in the green zone which says they are ready for use.

Things to Check for During the Event

There's also plenty to check for during the event, so the designated safety person should keep this list handy and remain actively aware of the surroundings at all times to have a safe and pleasurable event.

- Ensure capacity for the venue has not been exceeded.
- Keep aware of all exits, hallways, stairs and the like to be sure they

remain unobstructed and clear.

- Gracefully ask anyone who is blocking a hallway or door to move.

EXIT

When the event is over, it's smart to have whoever was the responsible party sign this checklist and keep it on file to note that all procedures were followed the entire time. This protects the organisation that has put on the event from possible law suits. One never knows what may happen, so it's best to be prepared. By following these rules, any event will go off without a hitch.

As an established UK fire and safety specialist, S K Fire Protection is the go to company for fire extinguisher, alarm, and safety lighting installation and inspections. Companies continually turn to them to help stay within regulations at all times and keep their properties safe for themselves and their clients or customers. They are up-to-date on all laws, professional and affordable but never waiver from the strict standards of customer service and stellar equipment used. The company continues to service the most prominent companies across the UK and uphold a stellar reputation. When you need assistance with fire equipment they are the

company to call. Learn more at <http://www.skfireprotection.co.uk/the> level of risk

Article Source:
http://EzineArticles.com/expert/Liam_Swann/1931816

Potentially Unwanted Programs (PUPs) Threaten, Slow Your PC

Have you ever discovered a potentially unwanted program -- PUP for short -- running on your computer and wondered how the heck it got there? It might not only be useless to you, it could also be spying on you, serving up adware or otherwise disrupting your computer usage.



One of the ways these pesky or downright dangerous programs get onto your PC is through "bundling." That happens when you install certain new software on your PC that comes "bundled" with other programs it adds at the same time without you necessarily noticing. Some

PC manufacturers also bundle unwanted programs that go under the name of "bloatware" and other less palatable terms on new machines. Other times, you visit a free software-downloading site, only to be confronted by a host of buttons marked "Download." The aim is to trick you into clicking the wrong button so that, instead of the software you thought you were getting, you end up with a PUP on your PC. Sometimes when you click the wrong Download button, several PUPs may be bundled and installed one after another.

Yet other times, sites may insist you install one program before they'll give you access to the one you really want. And on other occasions, clicking the wrong Download button can simply launch a pop-up or take you to an advertisement-saturated web page. Even if you manage to get the program you wanted, you'll often be bombarded afterwards by offers of other free programs you don't want.

The sites that perpetrate these tricks aren't necessarily breaking the law -- but they are picking up a commission for placing third party software you don't want on your computer. There's even specialist software that can be used by these mischief-makers to make it easy to bundle one program with another.

All of these behaviors are reminiscent of being bombarded by telesales calls. They drive us

nuts and sometimes lead to trouble! Plus, they're often a major cause of slow running PCs.

Fortunately, there's quite a lot you can do to avoid loading up with PUPs. Here are 5 key actions you can take:

1. Follow the custom route.

When you're installing software, even purchased products from reputable companies, don't click on the option that offers something like "express installation" usually followed by "recommended" in parentheses. If you do select this, you'll automatically install whatever the bundle includes.

Instead, choose "custom installation" (or similar), which, at least with reputable software, allows you to deselect any bundled software you don't want. If you're not offered this option, read each screen after you click "next" and look out for bundled programs that may be checked by default for installation. Deselect anything you don't want.



2. Beware of download sites.

Be doubly cautious whenever you decide you want to

download software from free or trial sites, even when they come from reputable companies. Chances are high that the most prominent "Download" button will not be the one you want.

Often, if you hover your mouse over the button it will reveal a link. If that link seems unconnected with the software you're trying to get, don't click it. Instead, look for the button that has the name of the software you're after next to it.

Whichever button you click, scrutinize the follow-up screen. If it's not the program you want, don't click anything but return to the original screen. If you arrive at the correct screen, follow the instructions in #1 above.

By the way, if you're searching to download a well-known piece of software -- like Malwarebytes mentioned below -- use the program producer's own site rather than third party sites offering it.

Other sources could be "Download" button minefields!

3. Get rid of those PUPs

If you find you have unwanted programs running on your PC, whether they came with the machine or as part of a bundle, uninstall them. If you don't know how to do this, ask for help or search online.

Some PUPs are particularly difficult to get rid of. Again,

search online using a term like "uninstall [name of program]" (inserting the name of the software). In some cases, PUPs run as add-ons, such as special toolbars to your Internet browser. They may even change your browser home page. These can usually be disabled or deleted in the "add-ons" section of your browser's settings -- but again, if you're not sure how to access this, do an online search or ask a friend who is more technical than you.

4. Resist temptation!

Ignore ads on web pages, in emails or pop-ups offering you the opportunity for a "free scan" of your computer. There are only two possible reasons why you got this offer:

- * The so-called scan program wants to install unwanted software onto your PC, possibly a virus, adware or spyware.

- * It's a prelude to an attempt to sell you a paid program you probably don't need.



5. Fight back!

Finally, good Internet security software will often alert you to attempts to install this type of software on your computer. And even Windows will usually ask you if you want to install a particular program.

But if all else fails, consider using a program like Malwarebytes to identify and remove PUPs. The free version of this program can be run at any time to check for and get rid of potentially unwanted programs. The paid version runs in real-time -- all the time your computer is switched on -- monitoring for attempts to install PUPs.

However, be aware that the real-time version may clash with any other security software you have installed.

You can learn more here:

<https://askleo.com/how-do-i-remove-pups-foistware-drive-bys-toolbars-and-other-annoying-things-i-never-wanted/>

Follow these rules and you should stay relatively safe from potentially unwanted programs.

You can learn more about this service by visiting our website: [Amalgamated Security Electronic and Integrated Systems website](#)

How to Encrypt Your Business Data

By [Dylan Hodge](#) / Submitted On January 21, 2016

Use external USB drives that are self encrypting. You can purchase hard drives that require a code to be entered before it will be accessible. This is a great option if you use external drives for backing up your data or storing any personal information whatsoever. Super easy to use... just don't forget the code!



If you want to encrypt the data inside your desktop or laptop computer, and not lose much in the way of performance, the best way is use SEDs or Self Encrypting Drives. These hard drives handle the encryption at the hardware level so there's no clunky software to install and slow your computer's performance.

You can buy SEDs from your local computer shop and get your favorite tech guy to clone your existing drive to the SED. It may cost you a few hundred

bucks but you'll sleep better at night knowing that if your computer is stolen, the data is safe.

The next best option would be a software based encryption like the built-in Windows BitLocker (Windows 7 ultimate and above) and fully encrypt your drive. This is a great option for those that don't want to spend money on fancy self encrypting drives but keep in mind it will have more of a performance hit on your system as the encryption is happening on the operating system level instead of on the drive itself.



Finally you can look at third-party software solutions like Symantec EndPoint Encryption which is a centrally managed encryption solution for your entire office. You can encrypt all workstations via a centrally managed console on your server. Pretty slick solution but again, will make a dramatic performance hit on your hardware so make sure your workstations and server are up to the task.

When it comes to securing your data as a whole, there are additional options you can take. Pickup some cable locks and physically secure your computer equipment to your

desk. This is a great option if you're using a laptop which is a high theft item. Don't assume that just because it's in your office that it's safe. You may have a cleaning company or contractors that work at your office after hours or you could get broken into.



In conclusion, encrypting your data is always the safest route to prevent your business from becoming the next news story but it comes at a cost. Higher performance systems running the latest version of Windows or more expensive self encrypting hard drives are required. In the end however it's a small price to pay to make sure your clients confidential data (and your business) is protected no matter what.

Here's some videos on the subject from our new Video Learning Center at <http://video.biztekgyuy.com>

Dylan Hodge
<http://www.biztekgyuy.com/ezinearticles>

Article Source:
http://EzineArticles.com/expert/Dylan_Hodge/2197406

6 Questions to Ask When Purchasing Security Seals

By [Andrea C Neil](#) | Submitted On January 28, 2016

There are many things to take into consideration when transporting cargo, such as the most economical shipping mode, how quickly it needs to arrive, and what laws or regulations need to be followed. One very important aspect of the shipping process can be the use of the proper kind of security seals to protect your inventory. Navigating this area can be tricky, so it pays to do a little homework and research before making a purchase. By educating yourself beforehand, you can save yourself and your company a lot of time and money. Here are a few things to consider as you make your selections.

What is the value of your cargo? The first step in choosing a security seal is to determine the exact monetary value of what you're wanting to protect. Are you transporting pencils, or diamonds? Obviously, these two types of cargo will require very different types of protection. It will help you calculate how much insurance you might need, as well as which types of seals you'll want to use.

Monetary value is the most obvious type of "value" you need to determine, however the concept of "value" goes much further. The following questions can help you make that determination.



Are your products desirable to thieves? Certain categories of cargo will be more vulnerable to theft, such as electronics, computer equipment, or pharmaceutical products. Other types of products aren't as vulnerable, most likely because their resale value isn't as high. If your cargo is in a high-risk category, you'll want to make sure you take greater precautions, and purchasing higher-quality security seals will be part of that process.

Are your loads vulnerable to tampering? In terms of transporting cargo, we often think of tampering as simply the attempt to open a shipping container. But there are several types of tampering to be considered, such as contamination and stowage of contraband. Someone may want to gain access to your cargo so different types of threats require different types of seals

What is the theft / tampering history for items similar to yours?

Learn from the past, and do some research into common shipping and transporting practices for your type of cargo. This can help you find out where others have had issues or problems in the transportation process, thereby saving you from possibly having to learn these lessons the hard way - by succumbing to them yourself. Potentially save yourself some future headaches, and find out what you can about what others have learned before you.

What parts of the supply chain are most vulnerable?

Take some time to find out exactly what happens to your cargo, from the time it leaves your care, to the time it reaches its intended destination. For example, are there any points at which your cargo might be unsupervised? And for how long? How many people actually have access to your shipping containers? If your cargo is leaving the country, are there any points at which it could be more vulnerable to international threats such as terrorism?

Depending on the answers to these questions, you might want to choose security seals that offer more protection against theft and tampering, not less.



How - and where - are the goods being transported?

Different modes of transportation require different security seal needs. For example, hazardous materials transported in a tanker rail car will have different security needs than those transported in vehicle tankers, so it pays to know the ins and outs of the specific type of transportation you're choosing.

Is your cargo being shipped by air? By rail? Or by truck? What type of carrier have you chosen, do you know much about them? Again, the more research you can do to answer questions like these before you ship your goods, the better protected they'll be, and the more protected you'll be, too.

Another thing to keep in mind: many [security seal](#) retailers keep knowledgeable experts on their staff, who have real world experience in shipping and transporting, and they can be a great resource through the selection and purchasing process. As always, the lowest price isn't always the best criteria to use when making your selection - you may want to also consider customer service, quality of goods and quick shipping. Take a little

time to get educated and find a good source for your seals, you'll be glad you did!

Article Source:

http://EzineArticles.com/expert/Andrea_C_Neil/2238561

Misunderstood Myths about Diamonds

By [Bob Grant](#) on February 15, 2014

If diamonds really are your best friend, it's high time you learned the truth

You know what they say, 'Diamonds are a girl's best friend'. While not everyone agrees with this saying, most people agree they are beautiful and wouldn't mind having one or two — especially brides. Tradition has it that you must have a diamond engagement ring to be properly engaged and believe this is how it always has been. Not so. This is a myth. Learn about this and other popular myths concerning diamonds.



Myth #1 — The 4 C's is the Only Reliable Way of Telling Diamond Quality

When you plunk down a lot of money on a rock, you at least want to know you're getting the very best. But unless you happen to be a gemologist, how do you know? In 1940, the Gemological Institute of America came up with the clever method of the 4 C's. The 4 C's stands for color, cut, clarity and carat. The problem is, most people still really don't understand it and unless you have a microscope at home you plan on using to gaze at your diamond, it's pretty useless. Tom Zoellner, author of *The Heartless Stone: A Journey through the World of Diamonds, Deceit, and Desire* recommends using a more simple method using the Two S's — size and sparkle.

Myth #2 — Diamonds are Good Investments

Diamonds, like cars, depreciate rapidly. As soon as you drive a shiny new car off the dealer's lot, it depreciates. The same goes for diamonds. Once you leave the jewelry store, your diamond automatically drops in value anywhere from 30% to 50%.

Myth #3 — Diamonds are Rare

Many people believe that diamonds are expensive because they are so rare. Not so. Each year, 163 million carats of diamonds are mined. So while you won't find a diamond the

next time you take a walk around the block, they aren't as common as you think. So if diamonds aren't rare, why the high cost? Control. The gem companies control the supply of diamonds, which creates artificial scarcity along with high prices.

Myth #4 — The Groom Should Spend Two-Month's Salary on a Diamond

De Beer's invented this 'tradition' in the 1930s during the same time they came up with the idea that men should give women diamond engagement rings. By using advertising, Hollywood and European folklore, De Beer's successfully convinced society that diamond engagement rings was the proper and aristocratic thing to do.

Myth #5 — Black Diamonds Don't Exist

Black diamonds do exist. The proper name for these beauties is Carbonado and geologists believe black diamonds formed about one million years after the clear diamonds we're all so familiar with.

