Interface

2026 Restaurant Security Benchmark Report

What 1.1 million monitored events reveal about risk at America’s restaurants

OVERVIEW

1.1 million
events monitored

9,392
restaurant locations

98.4%
resolved remotely

1 in 6
sites had a serious incident

REPORTING PERIOD
June 2025 – May 2026

This report provides restaurant loss prevention teams with data-driven insights to improve restaurant security and employee safety.

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Restaurant operators are stretched thin protecting people and property across hundreds of sites, often with no dedicated security team. This report gives them the data to focus their spend where the risk actually is.

Brent Duncan
CEO, Interface Systems

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE BRIEF

Five Findings for Restaurant Operators

Between June 2025 and May 2026, the Interface Security Operations Center (iSOC) processed 1,107,297 events at 9,392 US restaurant locations across 78 quick-service, fast-casual, and casual-dining brands. Out of 1,107,207 events, 13,486 events were categorized as high-priority events and this included criminal activity, disruptive activity, and emergencies. That works out to 37 serious incidents somewhere in the network every single day. Five findings stand out.

1. Restaurant risk is people risk. Loiterers and disturbances account for 74%of high-priority events. Retail's biggest category, theft and loss, barely registers at restaurants.

2. Risk concentrates hard. 3%of the network generates 81% of all high-priority events.

3. There is no safe hour. The single worst hour is 6 PM, exactly when crews are busiest, and roughly 30% of events land overnight when almost nobody is on site.

4. Staff ask for backup 225 times a day. Employees initiated 82,248 requests for live monitoring support, including 650 security escorts.

5. False alarms cluster at opening. 44% of 296,265 false alarms fire between 7 and 10 AM, led by a massive 8 AM spike.

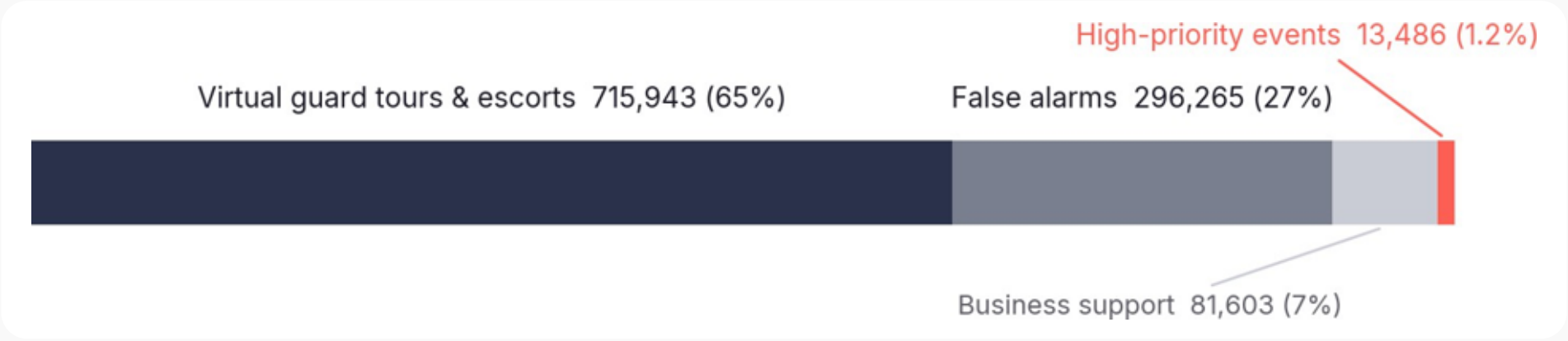
98.4%	13,486	3%	22:1	225
of all events resolved remotely, no dispatch	high-priority events	of sites carry 81% of serious events	false alarms per high-priority event	staff assistance requests per day

CHAPTER 1

The Year in Numbers

A million events of quiet, deliberate work, and the 1.2% that mattered most.

Most monitoring activity is proactive. Of the 1.1 million events processed during the year, 715,943 were virtual guard tours and employee security escorts: remote checks of dining rooms, drive-thrus, lots, and back doors, plus live security escorts for staff, all carried out by trained specialists. False alarms added 296,265 and staff-initiated business support another 81,603. High-priority events, the thin orange sliver below, totaled 13,486.



All monitored events by category, June 2025 – May 2026. Segments sum to n= 1,107,297.

Two dispatch numbers describe the year, and the denominator matters. Across all 1.1 million events, only 1.6% required a dispatch; live agents with video and two-way audio resolved the other 98.4% remotely. Within the 13,486 high-priority events, 61.5% (8,295) ended in a dispatch of police, fire, or medical responders. When something serious happens at a restaurant, more often than not it requires real-world intervention.

The severity ladder runs deeper than most operators expect: 406 battery or assault events, 302 medical emergencies, 108 burglaries, 76 threats,34 robberies, and 15 fires. Violent or threatening incidents alone average ten per week across the network.

HOW TOP OPERATORS RESPOND

Multi-unit operators increasingly route all security incidents through a single managed platform so their teams deal only with the events that matter. Interface runs two US-based monitoring centers protecting 50,000+ customer sites and handles 6.5 million security events a year. Learn more.

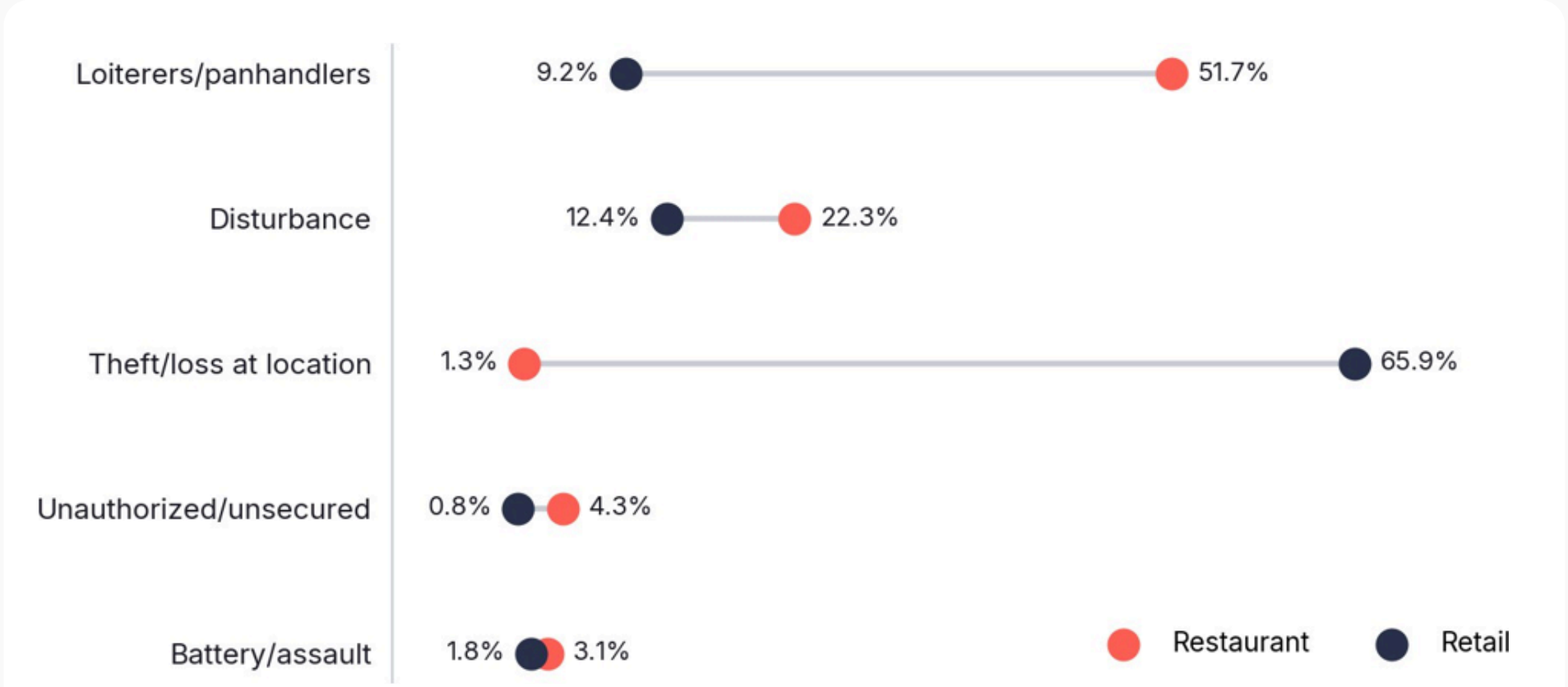
CHAPTER 2

Restaurants are Not Retail

Retail defends merchandise. Restaurants defend people, lots, and drive-thrus.

Compare the high-priority mix at restaurants against retail and the picture inverts. Theft and loss dominates retail at 65.9% of events; at restaurants it registers 1.3%. Loiterers and panhandlers drive 51.7% of restaurant events, disturbances another 22.3%.

Three out of four serious restaurant incidents involve people on the property, not products off the shelf. Battery and assault runs nearly double retail's share, 3.1% against 1.8%, and medical aid appears in the restaurant top ten while absent from retail's.



Share of high-priority events by resolution, restaurant vs. retail iSOC portfolios, same 12-month window. Restaurant shares computed on the comparison dataset; restaurant-only figures elsewhere may differ by a point.

The implication is direct: a security program built on retail assumptions defends the wrong asset. POS analytics and interior cameras do little against a late-night encampment or an aggressive panhandler at the drive-thru window. Restaurants need to protect people and the guest experience at the perimeter, before a situation reaches the counter.

HOW TOP OPERATORS RESPOND

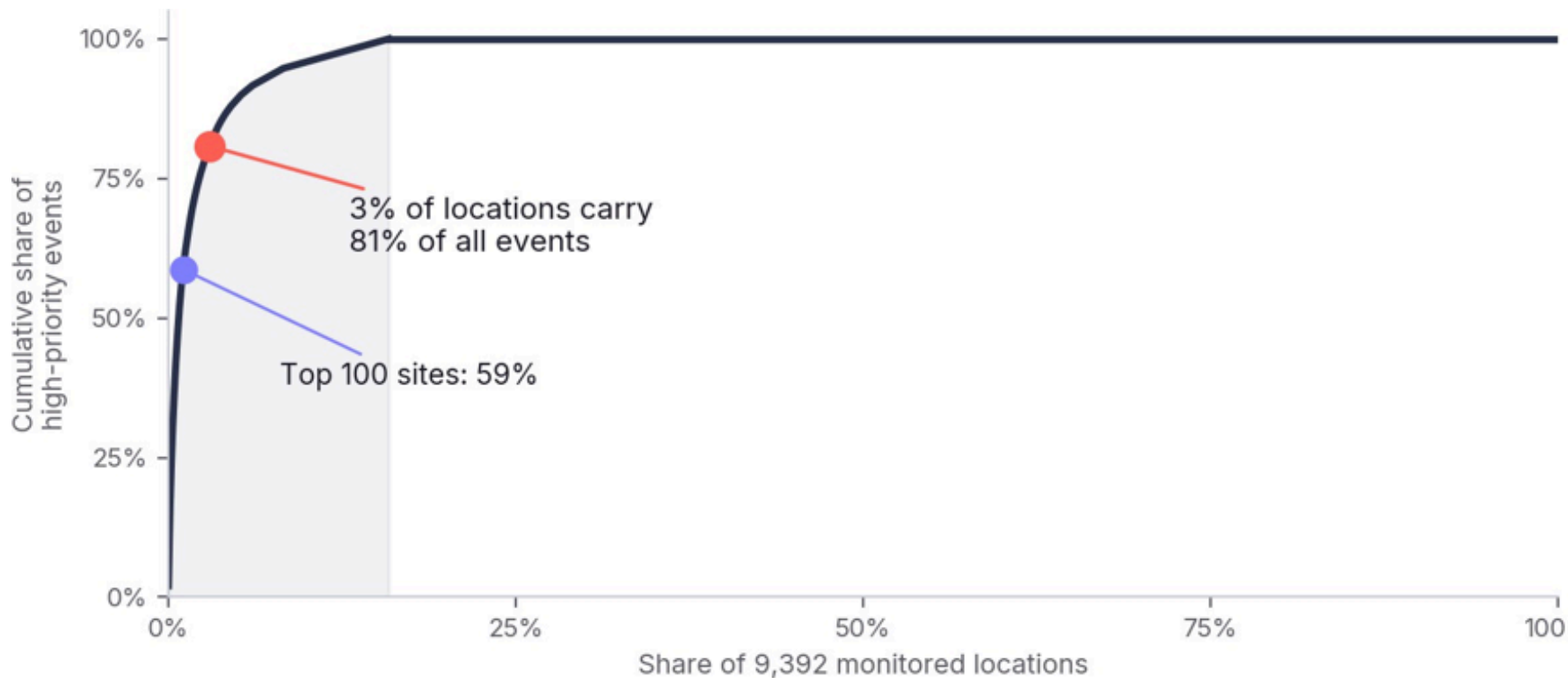
Operators with chronic loitering pressure put intervention at the property line. AI-enabled cameras flag people in lots and drive-thrus, strobes and 92 dB speakers deliver live voice-downs, and trained agents escalate when a threat persists. Interface packages this approach as Virtual Perimeter Guard. Learn more.

CHAPTER 3

The 3% Problem

The average site logged 1.4 serious events. Averages mislead.

Spread 13,486 high-priority events across 9,392 locations and the burden looks light. The distribution says otherwise. A total of 715 locations logged exactly one high-priority event all year. Meanwhile, a small group of locations recorded ten or more, and that group, 3% of the network, accounts for 10,891 events, 81% of the total. The top 100 locations alone generate 59% of high-priority events.



Cumulative share of high-priority events against share of monitored locations.

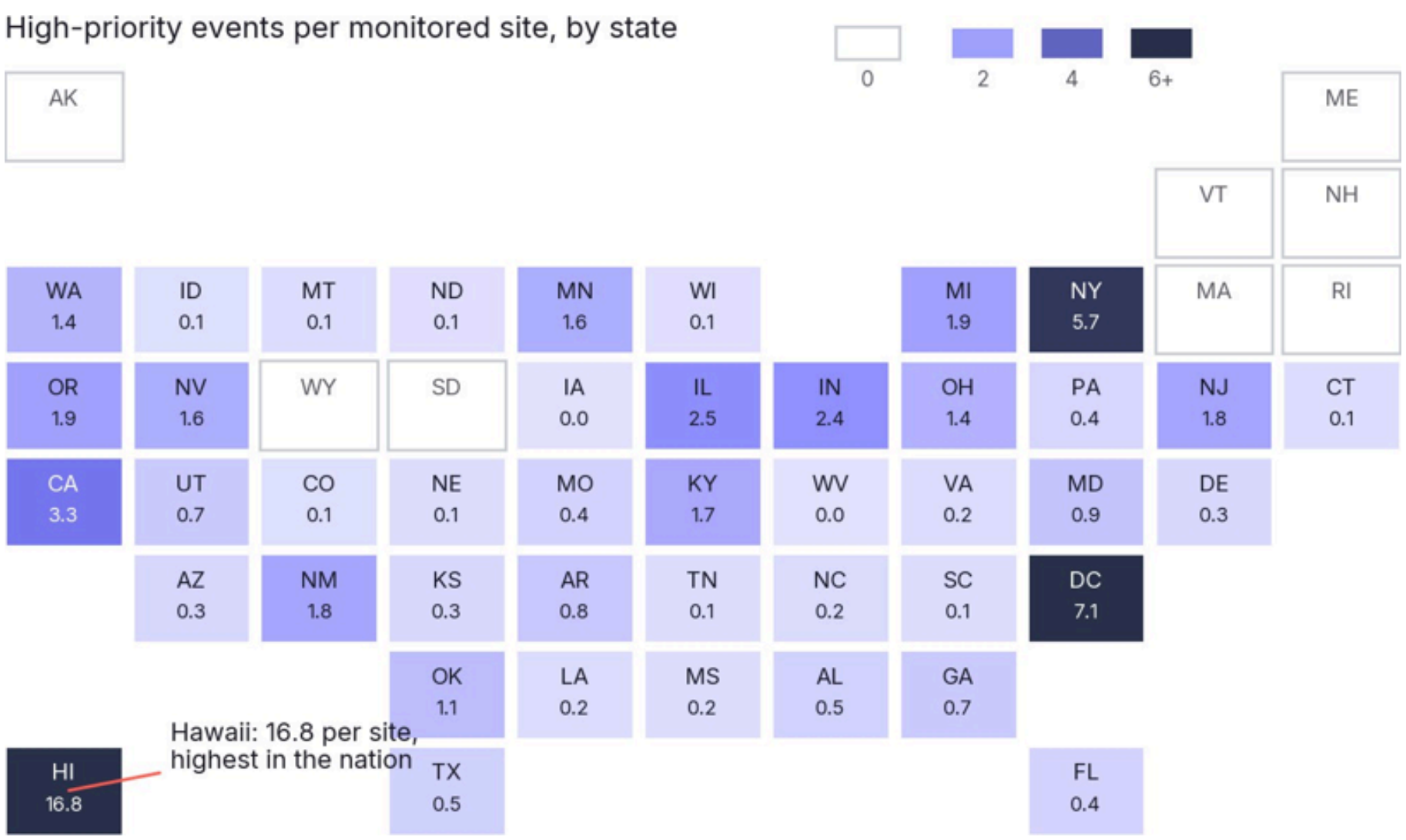
Uniform security spend across a portfolio quietly overprotects the 97% and under protects the 3% that carry the risk. The better play is tiered: find hot spots with data, concentrate intervention capability there, and run lighter verification-focused coverage everywhere else.

HOW TOP OPERATORS RESPOND

Tiering starts with measurement. AP teams use monitoring data and video analytics to rank locations by incident frequency, then match coverage to risk instead of one template chain-wide. Interface Video Intelligence gives this site-level view across every camera in the fleet, and hot spots get Virtual Perimeter Guard. Learn more.

Where the Risk Concentrates

Geography sharpens the point. California produced 5,449 events, 40% of the national total, at 3.3 events per monitored site. Hawaii averaged 16.8 high-priority events per monitored site, the highest in the country. And because only 14 Hawaii sites had any incidents at all, the ones that were hit averaged nearly 60 high-priority events each.



High-priority events per monitored site by state. White tiles: no monitored events recorded. National average: 1.4 per monitored site.

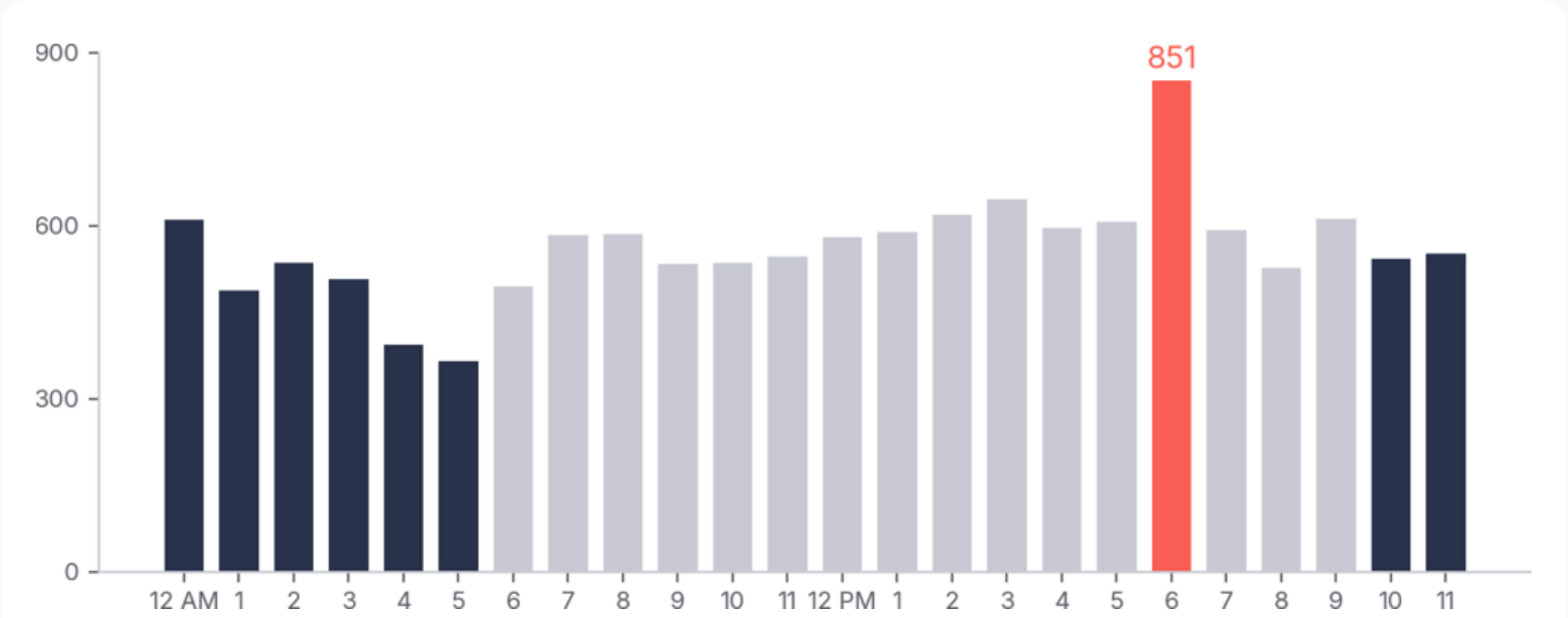
CHAPTER 4

There is No Safe Hour

The worst hour is dinner rush. The hardest hours come after close.

Plot high-priority events by hour and one bar towers over the rest: 6 PM, with 851events. It lands exactly when every pair of hands is on the line and managers are least able to deal with a parking lot dispute.

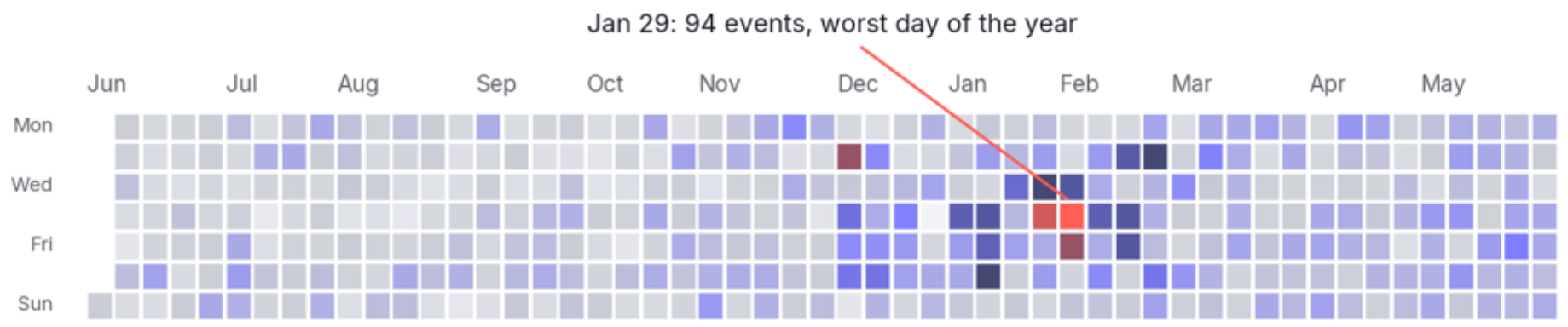
The overnight tells a different story. Raw counts dip after midnight, but roughly 30% of all high-priority events fall between 10 PM and 6 AM, 28%of loitering activity among them, and 2 AM is the single busiest hour for dispatches across all event types. Weekends compound it: Saturday logged 2,084 events, the most of any day, and Sunday events were dispatched at a 67% rate against 59% on Friday and Saturday. Fewer staff on site means the events that surface are more likely to be serious.



High-priority events by hour of day. Dark bars mark 10 PM – 6 AM.n = 13,486.

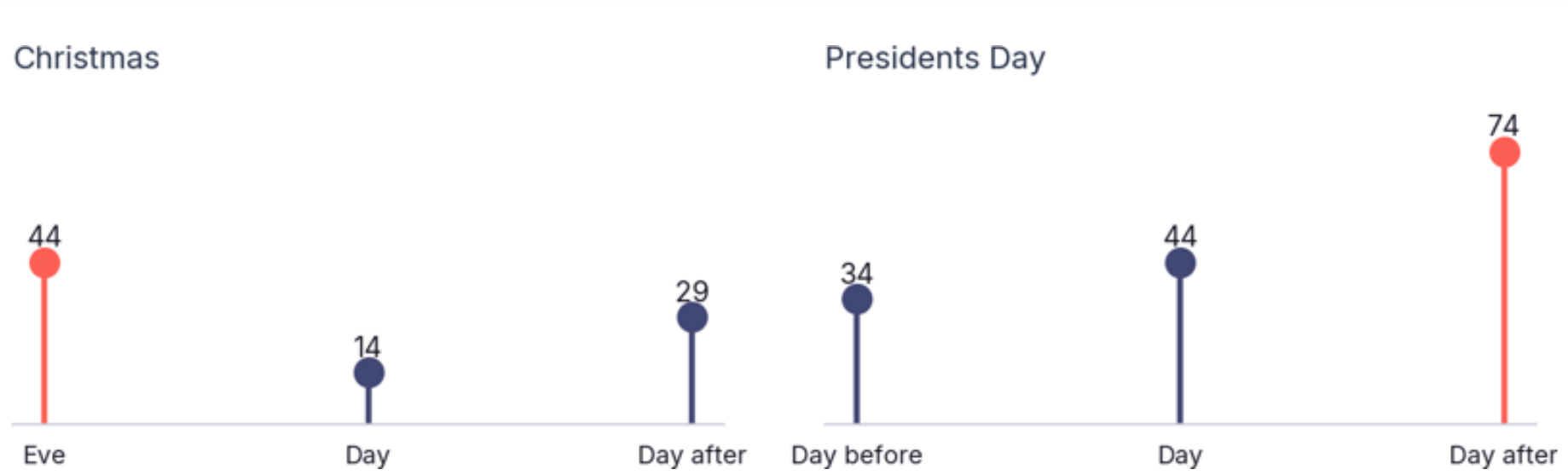
The calendar holds a surprise. Conventional wisdom says summer is crime season; restaurant data says winter. January was the worst month with 1,514 events, 61% above June's low of 943, and December through February produced nearly 30% of the annual total.The worst single day of the year was January 29, with 94 events.

There is No Safe Day



Daily high-priority events, June 2025 – May 2026. Darker is busier; red marks the peak.

Holidays bring their own pattern: risk surrounds the holiday rather than landing on it. Christmas Day was the quietest day examined at 14 events, but Christmas Eve ran three times higher at 44. Presidents Day logged 44 while the day after spiked to 74, the highest of any holiday window, as properties came back to life after the long weekend.



High-priority events around two holiday windows, per iSOC event dates.

HOW TOP OPERATORS RESPOND

Around-the-clock exposure is the argument for monitoring that never clocks out. Remote specialists run scheduled tours through closing, overnight, and opening windows, and can see, hear, and speak into a location the moment something looks wrong. Interface Virtual Security Guard covers these hours for a fraction of the cost of on-site guards. Learn more.

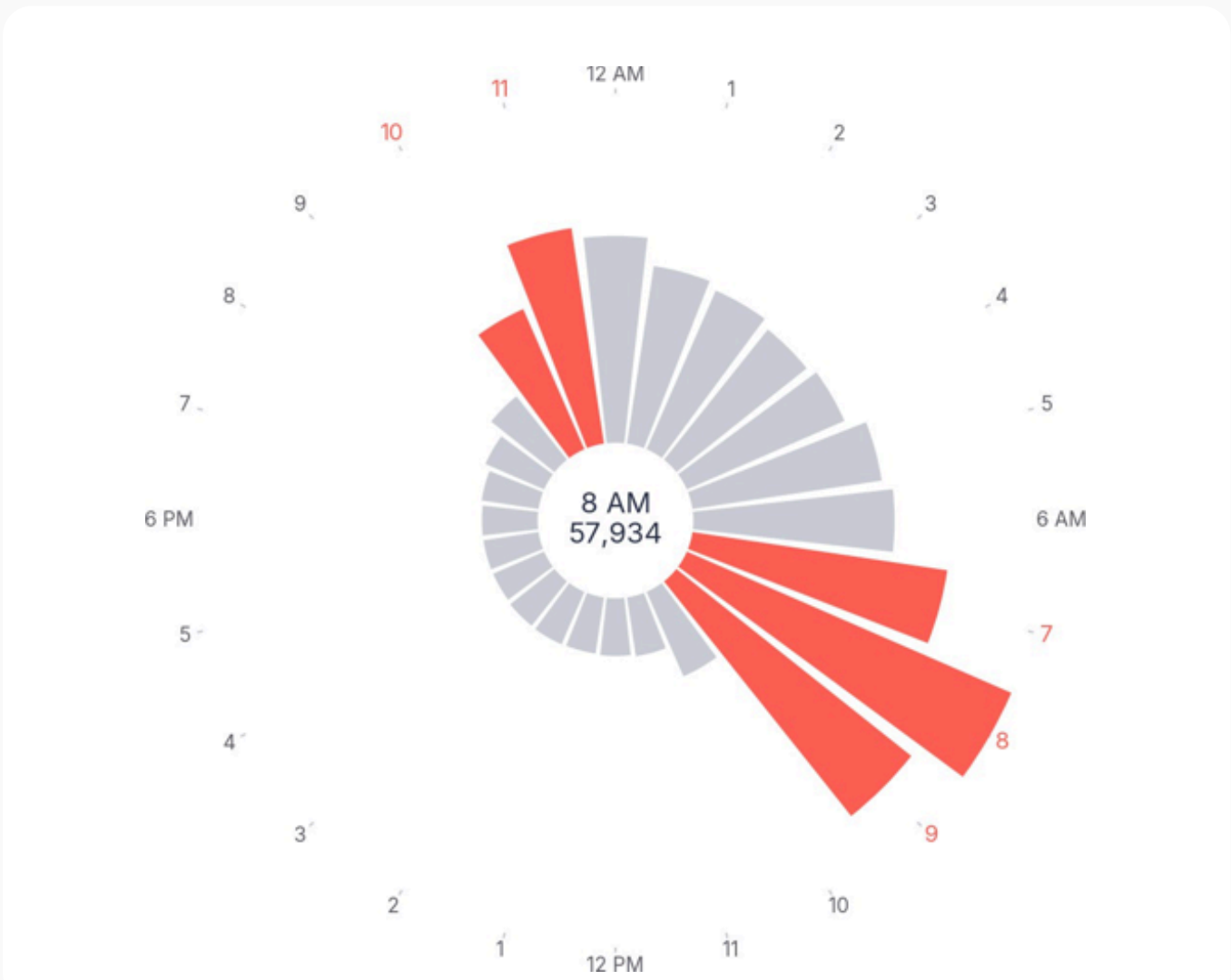
CHAPTER 5

The Opening-Hour Alarm Tax

296,265 false alarms. One in five fired during the 8 AM hour.

False alarms rarely make the LP dashboard, yet they quietly tax every multi-unit operator: 31.5 per site for the year, about 812 every day, 22 for every genuine high-priority event.

Their timing is the tell. 44% fire between 7 and 10 AM, with the 8 AM hour alone producing 57,934, and a second surge runs from 10 PM to 1 AM. These are opening crews fumbling disarm codes, new hires on a first solo open, managers propping a back door before the panel is off. Procedural errors, not crime.



False alarms by hour on a 24-hour dial. Bar length on a square-root scale; orange marks the opening and late-close windows. n = 296,265.

Every signal that reaches a police dispatcher carries a cost: municipal fines that commonly run $250 to $6,350 per incident, eroded response priority for the alarms that matter, and staff trained to treat sirens as background noise. Video verification absorbed over 97% of the year's false alarms before they became dispatches, fines, or 4 AM phone calls to a district manager.

HOW TOP OPERATORS RESPOND

The fix pairs verification with better alarm management. Interface video-verified alarms let iSOC agents confirm what tripped a sensor before anyone is dispatched, and managed intrusion alarm programs tackle the root cause with consistent panels, schedules, and opening procedures across every location. Learn more.

CHAPTER 6

A Cry for Help, 225 Times a Day

The most underappreciated numbers in this data set come from employees themselves.

Over the year, restaurant staff initiated 82,248 requests for live monitoring support. The breakdown: 67,220 requests to monitor a developing situation, 14,378 requests for a voice-down announcement to move someone along, and 650 requests for a virtual security escort while an employee walked to a car, opened the store, or handled a deposit. Security escort demand peaked in June (101) and December (74), months of long days, late closes, and holiday cash.

67,220	14,378	650	225
requests to monitor	voice-down requests	remote security escorts	staff requests per day

Set those requests against the 406 battery and assault events and 302 medical emergencies recorded in the same period and the demand makes sense. Front line restaurant workers face volatile situations routinely, often at night, often alone. They reach for backup when they know backup is there.

There is a retention argument here that LP leaders can take to the C-suite. Turnover remains one of the most expensive line items in restaurant operations, and perceived safety shapes whether crew members stay. A documented record of 82,000 answered requests for help is evidence of a safety culture, not just a security expense.

HOW TOP OPERATORS RESPOND

Two-way audio turns cameras into colleagues. With designated phones, panic buttons, and live intervention specialists behind every lens, employees get an immediate human response: a voice-down for a hostile guest, eyes ona closing shift, an escort to the car. These interactive capabilities are core to Interface's remote video monitoring platform. Learn more.

CHAPTER 7

Benchmark Yourself

Every figure here comes from real monitored locations. Use it as a yardstick.

Benchmark your portfolio against our data. If your incident rate, alarm load, or after-hours exposure runs above benchmark, you have found where to focus next year's program.

Measure	Network Benchmark	Your Portfolio
High-priority events per monitored location,annual	1.4	
Locations with at least one serious incident	15.7%	
Share of high-priority events requiring dispatch	61.5%	
Share of incidents tied to loitering or disturbance	74%	
Peak risk hour	6 PM	
Peak risk month	January	
False alarms per location, annual	31.5	
Staff assistance requests per location, annual	8.8	

Network benchmarks, June 2025 to May 2026. Dispatch share scoped to high-priority events; per-location rates use all 9,392 monitored sites.

Three questions worth asking of your own data

1. Which 3% of your locations carry most of your risk, and does your spend reflect that?
2. Who is watching your locations at 6 PM on a Saturday and at 2 AM in January?
3. When an employee feels unsafe tonight, what happens in the next sixty seconds?

METHODOLOGY

About This Report

This report draws exclusively on anonymized metadata of iSOC events recorded between June 1, 2025 and May 31, 2026 at 9,392 US restaurant locations operated by 78 quick-service, fast-casual, and casual-dining brands. No customer names, video footage, audio, or site identifiers were used in the analysis or appear in this report. All figures are aggregates across the monitored portfolio.

Glossary

- Virtual guard tour: A scheduled remote video check of a location by a trained iSOC specialist.
- Voice-down: A live audio announcement delivered through on-site speakers to deter or direct people on the property.
- Dispatch: Escalation of an event to police, fire, EMS, or another responder.
- Virtual escort: A live agent on camera while an employee completes a high-risk task such as a close or a cash run.

Definitions: How the iSOC Classifies Events

These are the high-priority incident types behind every figure in this report, as recorded by the Interactive Security Operations Center.

INCIDENT TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Loiterers / panhandlers	People lingering on or near the property without a legitimate purpose, including panhandling or soliciting. May escalate to trespassing or a safety concern.
Disturbance	Disruptive behavior on or near the premises, such as verbal altercations or unruly conduct that threatens the comfort of customers and staff.
Battery / assault	Physical or violent incidents involving customers, employees, or third parties. Carries a high dispatch rate due to the immediate threat to personal safety.
General Criminal Event	Criminal activity not classified under a specific category, including vandalism, trespassing, and other illegal behavior observed on the property.
General non-criminal event	Security-related incidents without criminal activity, such as customer disputes, policy violations, or suspicious but non-threatening behavior.
Location theft / loss	Unauthorized removal of merchandise, cash, or property, including shoplifting, employee theft,and organized crime detected on video.
Burglary	Unauthorized entry or attempted entry into a location, typically outside business hours. Carries one of the highest dispatch rates of all incident types.

INCIDENT TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Robbery	Theft involving force or the threat of force against a person on the premises.
Theft with assault	A theft that also involves a physical or violent confrontation.
Property damage to location	Deliberate damage to the building, grounds, or equipment, such as vandalism or broken glass.
Threat	A communicated intent to harm people or property, whetheror not an act follows.
Medical aid	Incidents requiring medical attention on the property, including customer injuries and employee health emergencies.
Panic	A staff-triggered panic signal requiring immediate iSOC attention and, where warranted, emergency dispatch.
Fire	A confirmed or suspected fire event on the property requiring fire-service response.

Conventions

High-priority events comprise resolutions classified as criminal activity, disruptive activity,and emergency response; events without actionable activity and certain administrative resolutions are excluded. Dispatch share is reported against two stated denominators: all monitored events (1.6%) and high-priority events (61.5%). State intensity is events per monitored site unless labeled per affected site. The retail comparison uses the equivalent data set from the iSOC retail portfolio over the same period; because the two datasets are compiled separately, restaurant shares may differ slightly between the comparison chart and restaurant-only figures.

Cost benchmarks

Per-incident cost figures (break-ins ~$10,000; vandalism ~$3,500; loitering ~$4,500 per month; illegal dumping and trespassing ~$2,000) are industry benchmarks informed by customer-reported incidents. False alarm fine ranges reflect published municipal fee schedules and vary by jurisdiction.

About Interface Systems

Interface Systems combines AI-powered technologies with expert remote video monitoring by trained intervention specialists from its US-based Interactive Security Operations Centers (iSOCs). The company's solutions span interactive remote video monitoring, managed alarms and access control, video intelligence, and managed network and voice services. Interface enables leading restaurants, retailers, and commercial businesses to deter crime, optimize security operations, and protect people and assets at scale.