



Government agencies also provide security advice. The *Sistema Nacional de Protección Civil*, the National Civil Protection System, provides consulting services to individual home builders and construction companies regarding fire and earthquake protection. The *Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social (STPS)*, Secretariat of Labour and Social Welfare, provides a health and safety consulting service.

The big retailers tend to prefer American-made products, partly because of their prestigious brand names. Products from Israel, Germany, Japan and France are also regarded as sophisticated and of high quality. Canada has not yet established a significant foothold in this market.

TRENDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

THE PESO CRISIS

No sector of the Mexican economy has escaped the consequences of the abrupt peso devaluation in late December 1994. Economic hardship pushed up the rate of street crime at the same time that political instability created an opening for the expansion of organized crime.

The rise in crime, combined with the inability of the government to do anything about it, reduced even further the faith that Mexican citizens and businesses place in the forces of law and order. This has fostered a huge increase in the demand for commercial, home, automobile and personal protection products and services.

THE COMMISSION FOR LABOR COOPERATION

As part of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) negotiations, separate "side agreements" on labour and the environment were signed. The labour agreement is called the North American Agreement on

Labor Cooperation (NAALC). It sets out a number of signatory obligations and establishes the Commission for Labor Cooperation. The commission includes a ministerial council and a secretariat, located in Dallas, Texas.

Under the NAALC, signatory countries are obliged to promote compliance with, and effectively enforce, their own labour laws. They must also ensure access, transparency and due process of law, and provide public information.

Much of the responsibility for Mexico's poor health and safety record falls on lax enforcement rather than inadequate standards. For this reason, it is anticipated that the activities of the commission will put pressure on the Mexican government to increase enforcement efforts. The commission has also been active in promoting technical exchanges between Canada, the United States and Mexico.

PRODUCT OPPORTUNITIES

Protection against fire

Education is the most important element of fire prevention and there may be opportunities for companies with experience in conducting public awareness campaigns. Fire detection has traditionally been limited to large corporations, especially those directly linked to fire departments. There is an emerging market for low-cost smoke detectors for residences.

Fire extinguishers are the leading fire suppression product in Mexico. The carbon dioxide type is the most popular but all types are in demand. Sprinkler systems are increasingly in demand as companies become more aware of the benefits of quick response.

Protection against burglary and armed robbery

Burglary in Mexico is increasingly being replaced by armed robbery as criminals become more bold and better armed. Window bars and

upgraded locks provide protection against both. Guard dogs are also popular, although few are properly trained. Higher-income families are increasingly using closed-circuit television systems, interphones with video, and electric fencing.

Protection against theft of vehicles and contents

The most popular products for vehicle protection are car alarms, steering-wheel locking devices, and digital door locks. Such devices are proving inadequate, especially because of the rise in vehicle hijackings. Frequently, wealthy occupants of vehicles are kidnapped for ransom. The thieves are usually heavily armed and often belong to organized crime groups. This trend has created a demand for tracking devices, smoke-emitting devices, delayed-response alarms, tempered glass and armoured vehicles.

Protection against personal assault

Mexican law does not allow citizens to carry a firearm without a permit and there is a demand for legal self-defence weapons. Mace® and tear-gas products are not permitted, but there are no specific prohibitions against pepper spray or electric-shock guns. Traditionally these types of products have been targeted at middle-class women.

Protection against shoplifting

As the consumer market has become more sophisticated, retail businesses have implemented more elaborate anti-shoplifting measures. Besides the standard guard services, false mirrors and closed-circuit television systems, stores are increasing the use of magnetic, electromagnetic and radio-frequency sensors.

Protection against industrial theft

Industrial theft is most often perpetrated by employees. This is an area