

Fire safety is difficult to evaluate because of the lack of reliable statistics. Many fires are not reported. Official statistics on the incidence and consequences of fires are classified as confidential by the *Secretaría de Seguridad Pública del Distrito Federal (SSP)*, Secretariat of Public Security of the Federal District. The United States Department of Commerce has estimated that an average 1,300 Mexicans lose their lives and that 5,200 are injured annually in fires. The economic crisis has reduced public spending on fire safety, placing greater onus on owners of homes and businesses to provide their own fire abatement systems.

There has been a sharp rise in demand for personal security devices. But growing concern over occupational health and safety as well as fire safety have not yet created substantial new demands for imported products and services. This is partly because a "prevention culture" is developing only very slowly. Also, the December 1994 devaluation of the peso nearly doubled the prices of imported goods and services. Most industry observers believe that demand for imported safety and security products will grow steadily as the economy improves and the perceived need for prevention becomes more deeply ingrained.

Canadian companies, especially those with niche technologies, usually find that partnering with a Mexican firm is the most effective strategy for entering the safety and security market. Mexican suppliers understand the market and do not face the cultural barriers that foreign suppliers do. But Mexican companies lack technical sophistication and are strapped for capital. Canadian companies that can fill these gaps will find attractive long-term opportunities in the Mexican market.