The Reality Check

Sample report: Midland's logistics hub (anonymised)

Client	Meridian Logistics Ltd	**Prepared by**	Stephen Horton, Stuart Tomlin
Site	Midlands distribution hub (approx. 180,000 sq. ft)	**Date**	October 2026
Time on site	One day, including night shift (18:00 to 02:00)	**Presented to**	Operations Director, Security Manager

Where you told us you want to be

"We need to know whether the security we pay for is actually protecting the operation when the building is busy and people are under pressure, not just whether the paperwork looks right for an audit."

The short version

On paper the site has a coherent security system: access control, CCTV, contracted guards, and written procedures. In practice, several of those controls are routinely bypassed or left incomplete during the busiest periods. We recorded eight findings. Two are critical. The common thread is that the system was designed for steady-state daytime operations and for compliance checks, not for the real pattern of night-time arrivals, contractor activity, and shift handovers. No individual is blamed. The people we observed were mostly doing the sensible thing given the constraints in front of them.

Findings at a glance

Ref	Finding	Area	Severity
S1	Night-shift door checks incomplete for 40+ minutes	Security	**CRITICAL**
S2	Contractor access relies on verbal override	Security	**HIGH**
S3	Guard patrol logs do not match observed route	Security	MEDIUM
T1	Access control logs not reviewed in real time	Technical	**HIGH**
T2	CCTV coverage gaps at loading bay 3	Technical	MEDIUM
O1	Handover between day and night shifts leaves perimeter open	Overlap	**CRITICAL**
O2	Alarm response procedure not practised under load	Overlap	**HIGH**
O3	Visitor management and goods-in not aligned	Overlap	MEDIUM

CRITICAL could be exploited or fail today: fix this week. **HIGH** a real weakness: fix within 90 days. **MEDIUM** fix in planned work.

What we found

S1 - Night-shift door checks incomplete for 40+ minutes - CRITICAL

On paper: Every external door is to be physically checked and logged at the start of each shift and after any significant vehicle movement.
In reality: Between 19:40 and 20:25 the night shift was dealing with three simultaneous arrivals. Two loading-bay doors remained unsecured and unchecked. The log was completed later from memory.
Why it happens: The procedure assumes one person can cover the full perimeter while also managing vehicle movements. Under real arrival density that is not possible without support.

S2 - Contractor access relies on verbal override - HIGH

On paper: All contractors are pre-booked and issued temporary access credentials.
In reality: A refrigeration engineer arrived unannounced at 21:10. The night supervisor granted access by phone call to the day manager. No temporary credential was issued.
Why it happens: The booking system is owned by facilities and is not visible to the night team. When something urgent appears, the practical path is a phone call.

S3 - Guard patrol logs do not match observed route - MEDIUM

On paper: Guards complete a full external and internal patrol every two hours and record each checkpoint.
In reality: During the observed period the night guard completed the yard and main doors but missed the upper mezzanine and the rear pedestrian gate. The log showed all points complete.
Why it happens: The patrol route is long, and the checkpoints are not timed. When the shift is busy with vehicle movements, the less visible points are dropped, and the log is finished later.

T1 - Access control logs not reviewed in real time - HIGH

On paper: Access events are monitored and exceptions are investigated during the shift.
In reality: The access-control system is checked only at the start and end of the night shift. During the busiest two hours no one looked at the live log.
Why it happens: The system sits in the control room but there is no simple alert for out-of-hours activity. The night team is on the floor, not watching a screen.

O1 - Handover between day and night shifts leaves perimeter open - CRITICAL

On paper: Handover includes a joint walk of the perimeter and confirmation that all doors are secure.
In reality: The day team left at 18:05. The night team arrived at 18:20. For 15 minutes the main goods-in door was on a magnetic hold, and no one was present. This pattern was described as normal when the day shift finishes early.
Why it happens: Shift times are set by operations, not security. There is no overlap built into the roster and no automatic lock-down on the magnetic hold when the last day card is clocked out.

O2 - Alarm response procedure not practised under load - HIGH

On paper: An alarm generates an immediate response from the nearest guard and a radio call to the supervisor.
In reality: During the night an external door alarm sounded while two guards were occupied with a vehicle. The response took four minutes, and the radio call was missed because the supervisor was already on the phone.
Why it happens: Alarm tests are done in quiet periods. The procedure has never been run when the team is already dealing with arrivals.

The pattern behind the findings

- **Designed for paper, not people.** Procedures and logs assume steady conditions and enough staff. Under real night-time density they are completed after the fact. (S1, S3, O1)
- **Bought in pieces, owned by nobody.** Access control, contractor booking, and shift rostering sit in different systems and different teams. When they conflict, the workaround is verbal. (S2, T1, O1)
- **Tests that check the box, not the outcome.** Patrol logs and alarm tests are completed, but they do not reveal whether the control worked under pressure. (S3, O2)

What is working

- The night supervisor and two guards know the site intimately and intervene quickly when they see something unusual.
- CCTV coverage of the main yard is good, and the control room can still retrieve footage quickly.
- Staff are open about the workarounds. They are not hiding problems; they are working around a system that does not match the job.

What we did not cover

We did not review the IT network, the fire-alarm system, or the contract with the guarding company beyond what was visible on site. We also did not interview the day-shift team in depth. These can be looked at separately if useful.

What to do about it

This week: stop the obvious

Ref	Action	Fixes	Owner	Effort
A1	Add a 15-minute paid overlap so day and night teams walk the perimeter together	O1	Operations	Low
A2	Disable magnetic holds on external doors when the last day card is clocked out	O1, S1	Facilities / IT	Low
A3	Give night team read-only access to the contractor booking system	S2	Facilities	Low

Next 90 days: fix the system

Ref	Action	Fixes	Owner	Effort
B1	Redesign night-shift door-check procedure so it can be done in stages during busy periods	S1	Security Manager	Medium
B2	Link access-control events to a simple real-time alert for the night supervisor	T1	IT / Security	Medium
B3	Run one alarm-response drill during a busy night period and adjust the procedure	O2	Security Manager	Medium

If you change nothing

S1 and O1 together mean that, on a typical busy night, parts of the perimeter are unsecured for 30 to 45 minutes. A person who has watched the pattern for a week would know when that window opens. The current controls would not detect them until the next formal check or the following morning.

Suggested order of play

Week 1: A1, A2 and A3. Confirm the magnetic-hold change works on a quiet night.
Month 1: B1 in draft with the night team. B2 scoped with IT. B3 planned.
Month 3: Re-walk the night shift. Check whether the critical findings have closed in practice, not just on paper. We can return and walk the site again if you want an independent check on what has changed.

Change something or endure the consequences. Everything else is a fiction.