

Light, safety and security

Jan Hollan, IDA Czech Section

Symposium for the Protection of the Night Sky, Bled, Oct 2007

We are afraid of darkness...  
as children, and even as adults, mostly

We are less afraid if some more light is around

The ghosts and monsters  
are born from the darkness...

We can't admit to believe that,  
so we speak about bad guys instead...  
about criminals.

But these, as humans, are afraid of darkness too.

It's reasonable to light our path  
if we suspect there might be obstacles. To prevent injury.

It's naive to believe that light will wipe out criminals  
like ghosts in fairy tales...

Edison promoted his light bulb:

*it will reduce crime a lot...*

What happened indeed?

The same opinion:

*let's add light to reduce crime*

is still widespread and repeated by lighting business

Why?

Lighting certainly decreases fear of crime.

But what about crime itself?

Existing field trials of lighting for crime prevention are invalid because of systematic bias and reliance on non-independent data (Marchant 2004-2007).

Significant positive correlations exist between  
city waste light and city crime rates.

Lighting blackouts always result in reductions in crime,  
indicating the causal direction of the correlation.

(Clark 2002, 2003)

The net effect of lighting is  
to assist more than to hinder criminal acts.

Fortunately, the effect is not strong:

few per cent increase in crime per increasing light amounts 10x.

Still, to reduce crime,  
reducing light levels

to not much more than moonlight would help.

