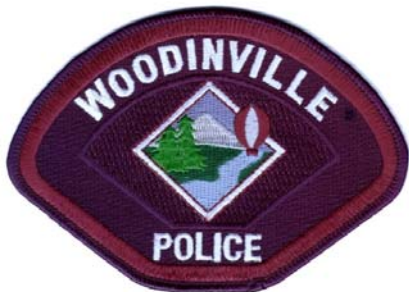

CRIME PREVENTION PROCEDURES MANUAL

For crimes relating to businesses



Business Watch Manual Preventing Crimes Against Business

Introduction:

This crime prevention information is for small business owners, managers, and your neighboring businesses. Prevention practitioners across the country are realizing more and more how important neighborhood associations are for healthy commercial districts. While many crimes have to be dealt with on an individual basis by each business, there are many problems that single businesses alone cannot overcome, like graffiti and other forms of vandalism.

These kinds of crimes are really attacks on a whole neighborhood, and affect everyone. Still other crimes, like robbery and shoplifting, can be better dealt with by a group of alert and concerned businesses together, sharing information, knowing how to contact each other, reporting suspicious behavior to the police, etc.

For this reason, we support the formation and ongoing activity of local chambers of commerce or merchant's associations, you together who are best able to solve problems common to your own areas and unique locales. These problems go far beyond crime related issues, like area promotions, traffic or zoning concerns, joint communities. Paying attention to your own business, and working with your neighboring businesses to solve common problems is the best way to insure a healthier and more prosperous future for everyone.

To treat this material as tips for self-help measures you can do yourself to reduce the likelihood of being a crime victim, working with your local association of neighbors and your police or sheriff's department.

Together we can make a difference.

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Burglaries

Businesses are four times as apt to be burglarized as homes, and small businesses are targets in over half of the commercial burglaries committed. Moreover, few burglars are caught. Almost 80 percent of all burglaries go unsolved.

These statistics emphasize the fact that your business must be made as burglar-resistant as possible. There are many measures you can take to make it clear to potential burglars that your business is no place to do their business!

Consult your local crime prevention officer for information. Remember - law enforcement agencies would much rather work with you to prevent crimes than to spend time apprehending criminals.

Follow as many as possible of the preventive measures discussed on the following pages.

Preventive Measures - The Exterior

Adequately light all exterior sides of your business (including alleyways) and the parking lot, using vandal-resistant fixtures. As most store burglaries occur at night when it's dark, lighting serves as one of the most important deterrents.

Install an alarm system and check it regularly for failure. Your crime prevention officer can assist you in making the right choice for a system. Post conspicuously a notice that shows you have an alarm.

Reinforce doors with long screws or bolts on heavy-duty strike plates, pop out proof hinges, or hole/nail combo at top and bottom. Replace all hollow-core doors.

Install deadbolt locks on all outside doors and double cylinder deadbolts on interior doors with glass panels. Check that the locks are properly installed.

Issue as few keys as possible and change the locks if keys are lost or not returned by a former employee. Don't tag keys with the name of your business. Keep a log of keys issued.

Secure all roof openings, air ducts, skylights, air conditioning units, hatchways, doorway transoms, sidewalk and basement openings.

Don't provide concealment or climbing platforms for the burglar. Clear and maintain all debris, weeds and shrubbery away from windows and doors. Lock up ladders and all tools that could make a burglar's job easier.

Protect windows and glass doors with transparent window security film, security glazing, or roll-down security panels; or install burglar-resistant glass. Use bars or grating on rear and side windows.

PLEASE NOTE: To comply with fire safety ordinances for door and window security, consult with your fire department.

Preventive Measures - The Interior

Keep a minimum of cash on the premises. Leave cash registers empty and open after hours.

Move valuable merchandise and business equipment such as computers away from the windows or doors to prevent smash-and -grab thefts.

Make it difficult to steal merchandise. ie. bolt breaks down, alternate the direction of hangers on the rack, tie appliance cords together, chain bicycles, lock small valuables in cabinets and showcases.

Arrange window displays so that passersby and police can see into the store.

Anchor your safe to the floor in a well-lit, highly visible location. Keep all valuable documents and items, including company vehicle keys, in safe.

Always leave an interior light that is visible from the street. IF for any reason it is off, the darkened store will arouse suspicion.

Finally, don't lock a burglar inside when you leave. Inspect all closets, bathrooms and other hiding places before closing. For personal safety, try to have two people present at both opening and closing.

If you suspect that your business has been burglarized, call the police immediately. Do not try to enter the premises - the burglar may still be inside. Don't disturb any evidence. consult with your local crime prevention officer to discuss how to best protect your business from another burglary.

Robberies

The majority of robberies involve either the threat or the use of a weapon, making this crime against business the most dangerous to employees and customers. Furthermore, according to the Small Business Administration, two-thirds of all money obtained by robbery goes from small businesses.

It is therefore imperative that businesses take as many measures as possible to prevent robbery. Some of the following recommendations may not be feasible in certain businesses. But the more of them you are able to follow, the greater security image you will present, and the less chance that your business will become a target for robbery.

Preventive Measures - the premises

Install sufficient lighting to provide good visibility for the interior and exterior of your business and the parking lot. Well-lighted areas enable employees to keep an eye out for suspicious-looking persons, and it also increases the possibility - in the event of a holdup - that someone outside will be able to see the robbery occurring.

To further enhance two-way visibility at your cash register area, avoid hanging signs or posters on the front doors and windows.

Practice and advertise a cash control policy. Law enforcement experts consider this measure to be one of the strongest deterrents for robberies. Keep the lowest possible amount of cash on the premises and adopt a policy to limit the amount of currency for small purchases.. Let everyone know that you practice these cash- control measures. Post a sign, such as \$50.00 "Maximum Cash in Register" near your checkout stand.

Keep "bait money" in your till. Record the dates and serial numbers of a few bills and keep them separate, such as at the bottom of a till section, as "bait money" that can be traced by the police.

Place colored tape markers at the main entrance to help employees gauge the height of a robber as he leaves your business. Using different colors, place the strips of tape at the 5', 5'6", and 6" heights.

Install an alarm system. The most important factor in alarm selection is the safety with which it can be activated without arousing the robber's suspicions. A "bill trap" or "money clip" alarm is silently activated and considered to be one of the safest types of alarms during robberies. Consult your police department's crime prevention officer for information.

Make sure that side or back doors are kept locked at all times to prevent a potential robber from entering undetected.

Install an annunciator on all unlocked doors.

Vary your banking routine. Deposit money as often as practical, but never less than daily. Carry the cash in different containers and avoid using a money bag. Bank at various times of the day, so a routine cannot be determined by anyone causing your business.

Preventive Measures - Employees

If possible have two persons on hand at both opening and closing, the times that are most vulnerable to robberies. before opening have an employee check the business before others enter. At closing, checking all rooms for persons before locking up.

Have employees use the main entrance to avoid the chance that a back door will be left unlocked accidentally.

Post your law enforcement agency's emergency telephone number on or near all of the phones in your business. Keep suspect identification forms obtained from your law enforcement agency on hand for all employees.

Train employees to be aware of unusual behavior. Inside the business, this may include "customers" who seem to be loitering or glancing around the store while appearing to

shop or browse through a magazine. Employees should also be concerned with customers wearing inappropriate clothing, such as someone wearing an overcoat in hot weather. Outside, be aware of individuals in parked cars and telephone booths, two favorite observation post for casing a business. Call law enforcement and ask for a patrol check.

Have employees greet customers as they enter the store and ask if they need help. Robbers don't like to be noticed or to have personal interaction.

Finally, after these preventive measures have been taken, walk and talk through the steps of a robbery and the follow-up with your employees. Review these steps periodically.

In the Event of a Robbery

Despite taking preventive measures, there is still always a chance that a robbery may occur. In that event, it is crucial to know how to handle the situation to protect the safety of employees and customers.

The average robbery takes less than two minutes. Once a robbery begins, your main objective is to end it as quickly and safely as possible.

NEVER RESIST A ROBBER! You are dealing with a highly-volatile individual and the stakes are not worth serious injury or death.

Be as cooperative and efficient as possible. Remember, the longer the robbery takes, the more nervous the robber becomes.

Follow his instructions exactly. If he asks for tens and twenties, for example, give him those only.

Inform the robber of any unexpected moves or possible surprises. If he wants the money in a bag and you have to reach below to get one, tell him what you are going to do. If someone is in the back room or is expected in the store, let him know.

Do not try to use an alarm, especially of the hand- or foot - activated type, unless you can do so without any obvious movement which might cause the robber to react in panic. A silent "bill trip" alarm can be used. (Please see under Preventive Measures.)

If possible, try to take note of the robber's appearance and his height from the height marker gauge as he exits the store.

Don't chase or follow the robber. To chase a robber is to invite violence and the police could also mistake you for one of the criminals.

Following The Robbery

Once the robber has left the business, try to observe through the window:

type of getaway vehicle

license plate number

any accomplice

direction of escape

Call law enforcement immediately, using the emergency number posted by the telephone. Do this even if you already have activated an alarm. State your name, address, telephone number and what happened. Stay on the line until they tell you to hang up.

Discontinue business and close the store if at all possible.

Ask any witnesses to stay until police arrive. While they wait, encourage them to write down what they remember. IF they can't stay, get their names and addresses so police can reach them later.

Fill in your suspect identification form while you are waiting for the police. Write down exactly what the robber said and any details you can call about the robber's appearance, speech and mannerisms.

Do not discuss details of the robbery or compare notes with anyone else including fellow employees or witnesses. It's easy to become confused.

Protect the crime scene including fingerprints or any evidence such as a demand note. Use a box, bag or anything else handy to cover or block off any merchandise, counter area or door handle which the robber may have touched. Avoid handling these items yourself.

Give the recorded serial numbers of your bait money to the police.

Let the police answer any inquiries from the news media. Do not disclose the amount of money taken with anyone except law enforcement.

Preventive Measures - Employees

Have employees greet all customers as they enter the store and ask if they need help. One phrase every shoplifter hates to hear is " can I help you?" Acknowledge waiting customers with a polite remark such as "I'll be with you in a minute." Your customers will appreciate the attention and any shoplifters won't.

Train employees to spot potential shoplifters.

Be aware of customers who:

- enter the store in a group (particularly youths), then break up and go in different directions.

- attempt to monopolize a salesperson's time or distract them. The shopper may be covering for an accomplice stealing elsewhere in the store.

- linger in one area, loiter near stockrooms or other restricted areas or who wander aimlessly through the store.

- handle a lot of merchandise, but take an unusually long time to make a decision.

When ringing up merchandise at the cash register, have employees:

- check the lower racks of shopping carts.

- watch for switched price tags.

- inspect containers which could conceal stolen items.

- tape or staple the sales receipt to the bag.

Show a customer only one valuable item at a time.

Ensure that there are an adequate number of employees working during peak business hours.

Periodically review these preventive measures with employees.

Apprehending a Shoplifter

As a business owner, it is important to be knowledgeable of the shoplifting laws in Washington State. They can be obtained by contacting your local law enforcement agency or the Washington State Crime Prevention Association.

Washington State law allows you to detain a suspect at any time after you have witnessed concealment of your merchandise. However, customers may not be "frisked," have their packages randomly inspected or be searched unless the suspect has been placed under arrest.

If you suspect a shoplifter, it is generally advisable to let him/her pass the last possible point of payment before apprehending. The suspect does not have to leave the store before you detain him/her.

Initial contact with the suspect should be verbal, not physical, and a non-accusatory approach is preferable. Identify yourself and inquire about the merchandise "Excuse me." I am the manager of the store. I believe you have some merchandise which you have forgotten to pay for. Would you please come to my office so that we can straighten out this matter?"

Call the police immediately.

While detaining the suspect, make sure that there is an employee present who is the same sex as the suspect. Female suspects should never be detained in private solely by a male.

Internal Theft

Internal theft costs businesses an estimate \$27.2 billion in 1991. Thirty percent of all small business failures are due to internal theft.

The variety of ways in which an employee can steal from a company is limited only by the imagination. Some of the more common methods include pilferage of merchandise, supplies or cash, non-registered sales, lapping, check-kiting, payroll fraud, expense account fraud, creation of phony suppliers and various forms of business sabotage.

There are some very effective measures you can take to prevent internal theft, but the most important step is for you - the employer - to set a good example. Don't go out to lunch, taking twenty dollars from the till on the way. Don't borrow tools from work to use at home. Inspire honesty with your employees by following your own company's policy

Preventive Measures - Employee Hiring

Thoroughly investigate the background of prospective employees. Check personal and credit references.

Diplomatically inform new employees of your company's internal theft policy, what constitutes "internal theft" and provide this information to each new employee in writing.

Number and log all keys before issuing them to new employees.

Ensure that employees who are hired to handle accounting and funds are adequately bonded.

If possible, never allow only one employee sole responsibility for the company's accounting.

Preventive Measures - Employee Relations

Encourage a spirit of teamwork. Provide a consistent example of honesty, fairness, and accountability. Promptly address any employee concerns or problems.

If an employee seems upset., take the time to ask why.

Remove temptation and opportunity:

Don't leave the keys in company vehicles.

Organize merchandise in a neat and orderly fashion so that it will be easy to identify if an item is missing.

Don't leave cash or company checks laying around.

Clearly label equipment, tools and supplies with the company's name.

Don't leave a supply of signed blank checks when you go on vacation.

Spot-check accounting records. Personally approve credit memos, bad-debt write-off, unusual discounts, and other documentation for sales returns and allowances.

Conduct "exit interviews" with employees who are leaving. Significant information may be revealed regarding various kinds of internal theft at the point when an employee is leaving the company.

Vandalism

Vandalism, including arson, graffiti, and other forms of property damage and defacement, are not only crimes against individual merchants, but also crimes against the neighborhood.

Vandalism that goes unrepaired detracts from the appearance of the neighborhood, not just the building vandalized. It also sends a message that this kind of behavior, and perhaps other criminal behavior, is tolerated.

Community efforts are often an effective way to deal with vandalism. Your local Chamber of Commerce or Merchants' Association are excellent focal points for developing an anti-vandalism strategy for the community. Send the message that vandalism and graffiti are not normal in your community and will not be tolerated.

Together we do make a difference!

Preventive Measures - the premises

Paint over or remove graffiti immediately. The more graffiti becomes in an area, the more will be written there.

Repair vandalism damage immediately.

Make sure that property owners of vacant buildings keep them in good repair and properly secured.

Keep the neighborhood clean.

Discourage loitering in service areas or on streets.

Make sure every business has a visible sign on or in its location.

Develop a Neighborhood Business Watch system.

Report vandalism activity to the police.

Do not ignore it when your business is not directly involved. Sooner or later it will be