

BACK DOOR CONTROLS

An Absolute Necessity!

Control of back doors is not an option – it is absolutely critical! Rest assured that if your back doors are unsecured and uncontrolled, **YOU WILL LOSE MERCHANDISE**. Shoplifters steal merchandise through front doors, but theft by associates is, for the most part, through back doors. Shoplifters must contend with the chance of being observed by sales associates, cashiers and honest customers, but dishonest associates who remove merchandise through a back door can take their time and wait for the opportunity to exit when they know there is no one watching. And while we use the term “back door” in this article, it applies to any door at the back or side of a store that is an associate only door. Now, let's examine some of the more common back door risks.

The stockroom normally contains an overhead door, often times with a personnel door adjacent to it. It is not uncommon for a retailer to believe that the receiving door must remain unsecured because it is used often throughout the day. If this is the case at your store, then it is imperative that someone in a supervisory/managerial role be in the area at all times the door is unsecured. Ideally, of course, the receiving door should be closed and locked when not in actual use, with the keys to the lock controlled by management. If the receiving door must be left open all day for ventilation reasons, we recommend a minimum six-foot high, lockable chain link gate be installed and kept locked at all times the door is not in actual use.

The same control should apply to any personnel door located in the stockroom. In many cases, the personnel door is a designated fire exit. As such, the Life Safety Code demands that it remain unlocked while the building is occupied. That same code dictates that the door be equipped with a panic bar, although in certain situations, the local jurisdictions will allow a standard door knob in lieu of a panic bar. In either case, we recommend that the door be equipped with an exit alarm. An exit alarm is a device that will sound an alarm when the door is opened, unless it has been turned off prior to opening the door. There are various brands of panic bars that come equipped with a built-in key-controlled exit alarm. If not deactivated by a keyholder, it will alarm when the door is opened and will continue to sound until someone with a key resets it. If you have a back door that is not equipped with a panic bar/alarm, you can purchase and install a stand-alone exit alarm. These devices come in a variety of configurations, including those that are battery operated. Both the alarmed panic bar and stand alone exit alarms are available from our preferred vendor-partners (see VENDORS > ACCESS CONTROLS). The key to the exit alarm should, of course, be held only by management personnel. It is understood that keeping back doors secured will not be as *convenient* as leaving them unlocked. Unfortunately, convenience and good controls do not normally share the same space.

Associate parking should never be allowed near the receiving door or any back (or side) door that is not closely controlled. Associates should be required to park their cars as far away from those doors as possible. The reason for this is obvious. Uncontrolled back doors and close-by parking of associates' cars is a recipe for big losses.

Removal of empty boxes through back doors is the number one method of product theft by associates, if not properly controlled. Again, another simple rule applies. You should require and enforce the flattening of all empty boxes *before they are removed from the building*. The ideal solution is to install a compactor in the stockroom and require its use for all empty boxes.

Trash removal can be a dirty business. It is a chore that no one likes, and is usually assigned to a junior associate, often a part-time person. Well, while it is, indeed, a dirty business, it is also a prime candidate for use by a dishonest associate bent on stealing merchandise. It is very

important that you do not underestimate the significance of controlling this daily chore.

- First, while your procedure may be to collect trash just prior to closing, trash bags should not be removed from the store until the following morning. There are two reasons for this. First, allowing trash to be carried out during hours of darkness increases the opportunity for theft; secondly, it also increases the opportunity for robbery. It is not uncommon for businesses to be robbed by someone who waits out back at closing time, accosts an associate who is taking trash to the Dumpster and then forces that associate, under gunpoint, back into the store and to the office/safe.
- Second, we recommend that clear trash bags be used, both in your trash receptacles and for the collection of trash. This increases the risk of detection for an associate who is thinking of putting merchandise in the trash bag. Clear trash bags, in a variety of sizes, are available from Ace Hardware distribution centers.
- Third, the removal of trash should always be witnessed by a member of management. This would be a natural occurrence if the back doors are secured and the keys to door locks/alarms are kept by management personnel only.
- And fourth, if possible, the Dumpster should be locked, again with the key retained by management personnel only. Most dumpsters come configured so that they can be locked, and your refuse company may even supply a padlock that their drivers have the key to open. Or they may just require that it be open at the times they come to empty it. Locking the Dumpster removes the incentive for an associate to put stolen merchandise in it for later pick-up, and it also prevents neighbors from using your Dumpster for *their* trash.

If you have a back or side door that is the designated associate entrance/exit, you should examine the feasibility of using the front door instead. With a back door or side door as the designated associate entrance/exit, it must necessarily remain unlocked, and associate vehicle parking is typically close by - again a recipe for losses. Another associated risk is that this door is frequently left unsecured early in the morning for the convenience of arriving associates. Needless to say, no door should be left unlocked and uncontrolled prior to opening, as this presents an excellent opportunity for robbery. One solution is to install a cipher lock (or card reader) on the outside of the door for associate use. The cipher lock would be an additional lock for use when the deadbolt is unlocked, but would provide a means to prevent unauthorized persons from entering. The combination to that lock would have to be changed, of course, whenever someone with the combination terminates employment. (NOTE: An identical lock could also be installed on the interior side to control - and record - exits by authorized users.)

Closed circuit television plays an important role in reducing the threat of theft of merchandise through the back or side door. Strategically placed cameras enhance your theft deterrence efforts. Cameras should be placed either immediately above the interior door frame or near the door at a location that covers the path to the door that is taken by associates who use the door. It is important (and a huge deterrent) that you see the face of the associate and anything that may be in the associate's hands; not the backside of the person as they are walking out. Also, by positioning the camera so that it points away from the door, there is less chance that high light levels from outside sunlight will distort the video. It is also recommended that at least one exterior, environmentally housed camera be mounted on the perimeter wall to observe the overhead and exit doors, the Dumpster and any associate parking areas at the back/side of the store.

If you do not presently have cameras, but would like professional assistance in determining your CCTV needs, Retail Loss Prevention provides a free service that includes providing you with a recommended layout for cameras specific to your store needs, along with a turnkey equipment/installation quote from our preferred CCTV vendor-partners. A camera system purchased from a Retail Loss Prevention preferred vendor is guaranteed compatible with your Activant POS system and is also eligible for financing via Ace Hardware's 12-Payment Loan Program.

In summary, two simple, common sense rules apply to back door controls...

**If an 'associate only' door *is not an emergency exit*,
and there is not someone in authority always within sight of the door,
*it should be locked – with the key retained by management!***

***If the door is an emergency exit and cannot be locked when the building is occupied,
it should be alarmed - with the key retained by management!***

Contact Retail Loss Prevention at 630-972-2670 and speak to a member of our staff, or e-mail us at info@acelossprevention.com for additional information or to discuss a specific issue.

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