**ROBBERY**

**REDUCE THE ODDS OF YOUR STORE BEING ROBBED**

**Robbery** - the act or practice of robbing; *specifically*: larceny from the person or presence of another by violence or threat. *(Source: Merriam-Webster Dictionary)*

Converting the formal dictionary definition to language we can all understand, you are *robbed* when someone confronts you or one of your associates and demands money under threat of physical harm (gun, knife, etc.).

This is different than when a thief breaks into your store after closing and steals money or merchandise - that act is a *burglary*, not a robbery.

We must first understand and accept the premise that if someone is intent on robbing your store, particularly if your store is a “target of opportunity”, with no pre-planning, there is little you can do to prevent it. However, most robberies are not that type; there is normally some pre-planning. In a small percentage of cases, the robber(s) is assisted, wittingly or unwittingly, by an associate.

In those rare cases when the robber is in collusion with an associate, the robber will take advantage of information provided by the associate regarding the best time to commit the robbery (when there is a large amount of money available), the store’s physical security protocols normally in place, where exactly the money will be at given time, etc.

These facts can also be inadvertently provided the robber by an associate when he/she is among friends and talks about "how easy it would be to rob the Ace Hardware store" because of lax physical security and/or internal control policies.
Also keep in mind that not all robbers enter through the front door; not all robberies occur at the POS terminal; not all robberies occur during business hours; and not all robberies occur within the store.

Let’s break down the various facets of robbery prevention and apply them directly to your store:

**Opening/Closing Procedures**

- **Opening**

  Employ a *two-person rule for opening*. The associate who arrives first should await the arrival of the second person before opening the door. This is particularly important during early morning hours when it is still dark.

  If there is a *strange vehicle in the parking lot* and you can see that there is someone in the vehicle, or there is a *person on foot near the store who is loitering - call the police*, explain the situation, and ask that a unit be dispatched to check out the vehicle or pedestrian. This is particularly appropriate if it is still dark when you arrive.

  **Immediately relock the entrance door** after entering the store. If other associates will be arriving soon, one of the opening associates should stay near the door to let them in, relocking the door after each associate enters.

  **Do not unlock other perimeter doors at this time.** If there is a door that is normally left unlocked during operating hours, wait until the store is open for business to unlock that door.

  **Do not** allow customers in the store before the store officially opens for business.

- **Closing**

  When the store closes for business, **ALL perimeter doors that are still open/unlocked should be immediately locked**.

  **Station a manager or other trusted associate at the front door** and let remaining customers out one at a time, **relocking the door after each exit**. The same rule applies to associates who depart prior to store lockup.

  Unless you are certain of the identity (and know the person as a frequent customer), **do not open the front door after closing**, regardless of the story from the person (broken water pipe, need to use the phone, etc.). This is an often used ruse by robbers.

  The closing manager or other trusted associate should **check all out-of-the-way areas of the store immediately prior to the front door being locked**. Robbers occasionally will hide in the store (stockroom, restroom, etc.) and wait until after the doors are locked to come out of hiding and commit the robbery. If you have a two-way radio system in your store, use it to verify that all areas have been checked.

  As with the opening process, employ a **two-person rule for closing**. The ideal closing process is for all associates to leave at the same time.
Also as with the opening process, if there is a **strange vehicle in the parking lot** and you can see that there is someone in the vehicle, or there is a **person on foot near the store who is loitering - call the police**, explain the situation, and ask that a unit be dispatched to check out the vehicle or pedestrian.

**Do not take trash to the Dumpster after closing** (particularly during hours of darkness). Enforce a policy in which trash receptacles are emptied prior to closing, but the trash bags are not removed from the store at that time; but rather by the opening crew. This is a prudent policy not only as regards robbery prevention, but also as an element of your internal theft prevention program.

**Do not make bank deposits after closing**, particularly during hours of darkness. (See [Bank Deposits.](#))

### Physical Security

- **Alarm System**

  The modern-day alarm system consists of many components and features, to include some that are designed to be of use in the event of a robbery. In addition to the basic intrusion detection features of your system, it should also have a **duress alarm** capability. This normally consists of a unique alarm code (sometimes just adding a specific digit to the end of your normal code) that sends the message to the alarm company that "I'm under duress!" In such cases, the alarm company would not call the store, but instead would call the local police department and advise them that there is a hostage situation at your store. Police would then respond in a manner totally different than if it was a burglary call. You should ensure that all associates with opening and/or closing duties know the duress code. **NOTE:** If your alarm panel has a **POLICE** button, that SHOULD NOT be your duress code!

  If your store is located in a high crime area, you should consider having your alarm company include one or more types of **hold-up alarms** in your system. These alarms can consist of a remote device that you carry in your pocket; a device mounted on the floor under the POS terminal; or even within the POS terminal (e.g., money clips/bill traps, buttons, etc.).

- **CCTV System**

  CCTV systems, once an option in retail, have become a necessity - for a variety of reasons, including robbery prevention. A robber is less likely to rob a store that he knows has **CCTV coverage of the POS terminal (and safe area)** than a store without CCTV coverage. The CCTV system should also include a **public view monitor** mounted at a height of 7.5 feet above the floor just inside the front door. When someone thinking of robbing your store knows he will be seen entering the store and standing at the POS terminal, he is less likely to choose your store for robbery. The fact that you have CCTV in operation should be stated on a sign on the front door - most CCTV suppliers can provide such signage.

- **Lighting**

  Perimeter security lighting is the least expensive of all the tools in your robbery prevention toolkit. That includes **parking lot lighting**, as well as **lighting over all**
**perimeter doors.** Check perimeter lights daily to ensure that they are operational. If your exterior lights are not light sensitive (automatically turn on at dusk and turn off at daybreak), but are on a timer, be sure to adjust the on-off times to correspond to the changing times of daybreak and sunset.

**Access Control**

**Rear/Side Perimeter Door**

- It is imperative that perimeter doors be locked to prevent uncontrolled entry from the outside at all times; this includes before, during and after store operating hours. If this is not possible because associates use a rear or side door for entrance/exit, first make an effort to change their entry/exit door to the front door.

- If that is not feasible, install **keypads on both the inside and outside of the door.** Remove/change the combination when an associate terminates employment.

- Install an **automatic locking device** that prohibits entry without successfully entering an acceptable code into the keypad device. (NOTE: This is normally, but not always, an included feature with the keypad device.)

- Install an **automatic closer** of sufficient strength to ensure that the door closes promptly and securely each time it is opened.

- Install a **wide-angle peephole** in the door to verify the identity of anyone who knocks on the door or rings a doorbell before opening the door.

- Ensure that the door is **alarmed** (either as an integral element of your store's intrusion detection alarm system or as a stand-alone) to sound when the door is opened during business hours without an acceptable code being entered into the keypad (NOTE: This is particularly appropriate when the door is a designated fire exit and must remain unlocked for exit.)

- Install both **interior and exterior cameras** to capture the image of all persons entering and exiting through that door.

**Office Door**

- Ensure that the door to the office where the safe is located and/or where money is counted is always **closed and locked** when money is exposed. This includes those times when cashiers are counting down their tills; when office personnel are reconciling sales/money and preparing bank deposits; and when managers must access the safe to obtain change, etc.

- Install an **automatic closer** on this door.

- Install a **mechanical keypad** with an **automatic relocking device** on this door.

- Install a **wide-angle peephole** on this door.

- Instill in all associates the need to keep this door closed and locked when money is out, and to look through the peephole before opening the door to a knock.
Remove/change the keypad combination when someone with a combination terminates employment.

**Safe**

- Keep the safe *closed and locked* when not in actual use. *NEVER* allow the safe to be left on *day lock* - require all associates with access to the safe to always spin the dial after closing the safe door.

- *Safe combinations should be memorized* and not recorded on calendar pads, pullout desk trays, etc.

- If the safe has a key instead of a combination dial, or a key that can be used in lieu of the combination dial, do not allow that key to be kept in an *unsecured desk drawer* or *hidden* behind a picture or other location within the office. Ideally, that key should be in the physical possession of a minimum number of trusted associates at all times.

- Safes should also be *bolted to the floor*.

**Bank Deposits**

- *Make daily deposits.* Do not allow many days' worth of sales to accumulate. This includes weekends, if at all possible. Many robberies occur on Mondays, knowing as much as three days' worth of sales receipts will be available.

- *Vary the times* that you make the deposit and the routes driven to the bank.

- *Place the bank bag inside a store bag or in another container* (purse, briefcase, etc.). Do not carry it out in the open.

- *Use the bank drive-thru*, if one is available.

**POS Operations**

- *Provide training* to new associates whose job includes operating a POS terminal, and repeat that training annually. Include the following points in the training and enforce these policies at all times.

- *Be alert to what is happening around you.* If you see something that looks suspicious, notify a manager immediately.

- *Keep the amount of cash in the till to a minimum,* consistent with operational needs. Use a *cash drop box* to secure excess cash. Mount one at each POS terminal out of sight, adjacent to the POS terminal. Place all 100's, 50's and all 20's above the maximum number designated for that POS terminal immediately in the cash drop box after the customer's change has been counted back to him. Use of the cash drop box negates the need for periodic cash pickups. Keep in mind that every time you move money, you put the money and the mover at risk. (NOTE: Robbers will often visit a store before a robbery and even purchase something so that they can peek into the till to see how much money is in it.)

- *The till drawer should be closed immediately* after each sale.
• **Cashiers' purses should never be allowed at the POS terminal.** It invites theft of contents by associates, robbery and provides a convenient place for cash that has been embezzled through dishonest transactions.

**In the Event of a Robbery**

Should the unthinkable occur and your store is robbed, remember that your primary objective during a robbery is **to remove the threat of violence** and to **prevent injuries** to yourself or others. Keep in mind that the robber is probably just as nervous as you are. You want him to leave the store as quickly as possible. Following are the key things to remember during a robbery.

- Stay as calm as possible.
- Show your hands at all times.
- Do not make any sudden moves.
- Obey all commands without resistance, panic, or argument.
- Warn the robber of any surprises, such as if another associate is expected to be coming to the front end.
- Make the transaction as short as possible... give him what he wants and let him leave.
- Do not resist.
- Do not reach for the weapon.
- Do not stare.
- Do not argue.
- Do not try to apprehend or follow.
- Make mental notes of the robber's physical description and the type of gun or other weapon used.
- When the robber leaves, and without putting yourself in danger, attempt to observe the description of the vehicle he leaves in and the direction of travel. If he runs away, make note of the direction he runs.
- Call 911 and provide as much detailed information as possible (physical description, clothing, vehicle, direction of travel, etc.).
- Close the store and ask all customers to remain until the police arrive.
- Keep the crime scene intact. Do not touch anything that the robber touched.
- Complete a **Suspect Identification Form** (a printable copy can be found on the Retail Loss Prevention Website - [www.acelossprevention.com](http://www.acelossprevention.com) in "Forms" within the "Publications" tab. NOTE: Recommend a copy of this form be placed in protective plastic and kept under each till.
- Ask all witnesses to quickly record their observations.
Your Relationship with Law Enforcement

Check with the Police Department or, if your store is not within the city limits, the county Sheriff’s Office (the Community Affairs Officer is always a good place to start) and determine if city/county ordinances and department policy allow businesses to offer special discounts to police and fire department personnel. If there are no statutes or policies that prohibit it, consider offering police/fire/EMS personnel a discount on merchandise and services. These public employees are normally not paid high salaries and they definitely deserve special treatment. Having uniformed police and fire personnel in your store throughout the day is a definite deterrent to robbery.

In Summary

There is no guarantee that if you follow the recommendations in this article you will never be robbed. However, following these recommendations will reduce the odds that you will be robbed - and should you be robbed, will reduce the odds of an associate being harmed during the robbery.

Retail Loss Prevention’s preferred vendor partners offer an on-site training session designed to train management and associates in robbery prevention strategies. 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.

The alarms and other devices described in this article are available from Retail Loss Prevention's preferred vendor-partners. See the VENDORS tab at www.acelossprevention.com for details.

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