

If you own or operate a small business, you probably know that crimes against businesses are usually crimes of opportunity. You may have already taken steps to protect your business from theft, fraud, and violence. But you may also be wondering if you have done enough to reduce or prevent the devastating impact of crime on both your employees and your hard-earned profits.

To lay a strong foundation for crime prevention, you must take a good hard look at your business-its physical layout, hiring practices, operating procedures, and special security risk. You may wish to contact your local law enforcement agency to help you assess your business's vulnerability through a crime prevention survey. Ask for advice on lights, alarms, locks, policies, procedures, store layout, and other security measures.

Following are some basic prevention principles that will help you create a safer workplace.

BUILDING SECURITY

- Access to office building should be controlled, allowing only authorized employees to enter; visitors should be required to sign in. Retail establishments should control access to inventory areas.
- All outside entrances and inside security doors should have sturdy well-installed deadbolt locks. Exterior access or security doors should be metal-lined and secured with metal security crossbars. Be aware of local building /safety codes: Everyone in the building should have clear exit access from the inside in emergency situations.
- Establish a system so all visitors are properly identified and monitored.
- Windows should have secure locks and burglar-resistant glass. Consider installing metal gates on all but the display windows.



Crime Preventions Tips From

NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION COUNCIL

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PROTECTING YOUR BUSINESS FROM CRIME



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- Light the inside and outside of your business, especially around doors, windows, skylights, and other entry points, and use vandal-proof fixtures around outside entrance.
- Before investigating in an alarm system, decide what level of security fits your needs, and learn how to use your system properly. Train all employees who open or close on how to use the system.
- Trim shrubbery and remove debris around windows and doors. They provide concealment or climbing platforms for burglars.
- Keys issued to employees should be stamped "do not duplicate" and be protected against duplication by utility patents. Install new locks and issue new numbered keys whenever employees leave their jobs.
- Establish and train employees in sound opening, closing, cash-handlings, and response-to-crime procedures. Local law enforcement agencies or your business association can help.

ROBBERY PREVENTION

- Keep your cash register in plain view from the outside of your business so that it can be monitored by police and passersby during and after business hours.
- Keep only small amounts of cash in the registers. Empty cash drawers and leave them open after hours.
- Make bank deposits often and during business hours, but don't establish a noticeable pattern.
- Be sure your safe is fireproof, securely anchored, and in plain view. Use a drop safe so cash cannot be taken out once it is put in, and post signs accordingly.
- Do not keep valuable goods in display windows when the store is closed.

- Consider installing anti-theft devices on inventory.
- Train your employees to report any suspicious activity or person immediately, and write down the information for future reference.
- Make sure employees know how to reduce opportunities for shoplifting. Use mirrors to eliminate "blind spots" that might hide shoplifters.
- Talk to employees about what to do if confronted with a robber. Remind them that they should cooperate to avoid harm and notify law enforcement as soon as possible.
- Establish and enforce clear policies about employee theft, and educate employees about these policies regularly.
- Make valuable equipment such as registers, computers, and calculators with an identification number. Post the Operation Identification warning sticker in your storefront window.

CREDIT CARD/CHECK FRAUD

- Train employees to follow the authorization procedures for each credit card company.
- Make sure cards have not expired or been altered, that cards have been signed, and that the signature on the receipt resembles the signature of the card
- Establish a check acceptance policy, and make sure all employees know what it is. Pay close attention to a check's appearance, the date and signature on the check, and the identification of the person presenting it.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

- Create a company emergency plan, and post evacuation plans in highly visible areas.

- Make sure employees are aware of their responsibilities in an emergency and know exit routes and evacuation plans for buildings.
- Provide fire extinguishers, first-aid kits, and individual preparedness kits in the correct size and number for the facility
- Designate a meeting location for employees if the building is evacuated.
- Create emergency plans for workers who are disable or require assistance.

BUSINESS WATCH PROGRAMS

Modeled after the Neighborhood Watch concept, Business Watch seeks to reduce commercial crime and the fear of crime. It is based on one of the oldest and simplest concepts -neighbor helping neighbor. If you are not already a member of a Business Watch program, consider starting a program in your area or joining an establish one.

Business Watch programs help deter criminals by the following actions:

- Promoting communication and understanding between law enforcement and the business community.
- Encouraging cooperation between neighboring merchants.
- Teaching merchants to crime-proof their own properties and to watch over neighboring business and report any suspicious activity to authorities.
- Developing a notification system for quick dissemination of information regarding criminal activity or suspicious persons in the area.
- Encouraging the development of signals to activate in adjacent business when someone needs help.