

Commercial Robbery



Reducing crime through partnership and prevention



Commercial Robbery is a serious offence and involves the use or threat of violence in order to commit a theft. The risk of a robbery occurring within your business will depend on a number of factors.

The usual targets for robbery are high value items as the reward for committing such a crime needs to be significant. Common items include cash, tobacco, alcohol and mobile phones but can extend to any item that is deemed worthy of stealing by these means.

Having a good prevention strategy to protect your staff and product is key to reducing these offences.

What's in this guide

Click on the items in the interactive menu below to jump to that section.

TOP TIPS

- Train your staff
- Only keep small amounts of cash in tills
- Install screens around tills
- Use a time-lock safe
- Improve store layout
- Upgrade CCTV and alarms
- Consider security guarding

Commercial Robbery



Train Your Staff



Robbery prevention plans

Involve your staff in your robbery prevention plans and train them in the use of any equipment or systems you install. However, be aware that advice to staff - if not handled carefully - can raise unnecessary anxiety; training also needs to reassure.



Cash handling

Train staff in cash handling routines such as not leaving till drawers and safes open longer than absolutely necessary, ensuring there is more than one member of your staff at hand when money is moved, and counting cash in a secure area in the store.



Vigilance

Train staff to be vigilant and to report their suspicions, potential robbers may be deterred either immediately before carrying out a robbery or when 'casing' the premises. You are also more likely to gather useful evidence for the police.



Be prepared

Ensure your staff know what to do in the event of a robbery. They are less likely to get hurt if they co-operate with the robbers' demands; they must keep still and not make sudden movements or take risks by "having a go".



Remember the details

Train staff to note suspect descriptions/ clothing/accents and to be forensic aware, noting anything touched or left behind at the scene. Ask staff to note the direction of travel after the crime and any vehicle registration numbers.



Support

If your premises are robbed, bear in mind the trauma your staff are likely to have suffered. Get advice about professional counselling, and refer those affected to your local victim support scheme. The police will be able to give you the telephone number.



Commercial Robbery



Cash and Stock



Cash on premises

Keep as little cash as possible at all times, by regularly transferring it to somewhere more secure. Use stickers or posters to tell potential robbers that you only ever have a small float in the till. (This can be a useful preventive measure in its own right.) Larger shops often use sophisticated ways of clearing cash regularly, for example using vacuum tubes or cash counting devices.



Moving cash to the bank

There are a number of practical routines that deter robbers from attacking when you take money to the bank. Cash carriers should remove badges or uniforms identifying them as shop staff and, if possible, make the journey with a colleague; they should not carry cash in a store carrier bag; and, of particular importance, they should vary the route and the time they go to the bank.



Limit cash

If your business involves a high turnover of cash, it is going to be a more attractive target. In this case, try to encourage the use of credit accounts to limit the amount of cash on the premises. Again, make sure you advertise the fact that very little cash is kept in the till.



Cash handling area

If you have a business where large amounts of cash are collected then you should give special attention to the cash handling area. Consider installing video surveillance cameras, reinforcing the doors, walls and ceilings, using 'one way mirrored' and bullet resistant glass and putting in entry control mechanisms. Consider using a Cash in Transit company to handle the cash.



If you use cash-carrying specialists it will not necessarily prevent a robbery taking place, but it puts your cash into the hands of companies that are better equipped to protect themselves.



Commercial Robbery



Tills and Screens



Screens

By installing solid screens around the till drawer you make it difficult for anyone other than the till operator to reach in when the drawer is open.

Some retailers with vulnerable businesses in high-risk areas have resorted to installing solid floor to ceiling screens between the customers and staff. Limit opening of the till. The way some Epos tills are programmed can limit the time that a till drawer remains open and accessible to a thief.



Under the till

Another useful method is to install a small safe or 'cache' under the till, securely built into the counter. In this way you can regularly take cash from the till and drop it into the 'safe' so that neither till operators nor robbers can get at the money. If you adopt this method you should make it clear through posters and stickers that you have a counter safe.



Safes

By using time-lock safes that can only be opened at specific pre-set times, or by making cash collection companies the sole key holders to your safe, staff cannot hand cash over during a robbery. These safes can be fitted with roller-trap lids (as used in bank night safes) so that staff can deposit cash but not remove it. To deter potential robbers you need to use notices or posters to advertise the fact that you and your staff have no access to the safe.

Safes built into external walls accessed by cash collection companies from outside your building will reduce the risk of robbers harming staff or customers.



Store Layout



Think like a robber

Design your store layout to make it less attractive to robbers: for example, position cash desks so that robbers cannot keep all the staff in their line of sight, or are unable to back out or escape without obstruction.



Visibility

Robbers are put off by large numbers of witnesses. Ensure that the window display and shop fittings allow a clear view of the shop interior from the street, so that your cash desk is easily visible to passers-by. Take care positioning your till: if it is too far back it will not be visible from outside the shop, but if it is too close to the door it may attract robbers because they can dash in and out quickly.

Commercial Robbery



CCTV, Alarm Systems and Security Guards



CCTV

Consider installing closed circuit television cameras to record all who enter the store or the vulnerable areas of your shop. If you make it clear to everyone that you use them you may deter robbers. Use in store signage explaining the use of CCTV.

To increase the chances of video evidence being used to get a conviction, you need good quality equipment and recordings need to be date and time 'stamped'.



Alarm Systems

Panic alarms can be linked via an intruder alarm system to summon police assistance. These can be activated by foot or hand switches, or within till drawers by, for example, removing the last note from a money clip. Again, you must make it clear to potential thieves that this kind of alarm is in place. Ask your crime prevention officer for advice. Also consider installing less sophisticated alarms ('doorbells' or personal attack alarms) that can summon help from the public, other parts of the store or other shops. Consider using Cash Trackers and Dye staining cash packs.



Security Guards

The presence of trained, uniformed security staff is likely to deter less 'professional' robbers but the cost can make sure such an option impracticable and you must ensure that these staff are properly recruited and trained.



Additional Security



You may find it useful to purchase a special cash-carrying case or bag that gives off smoke and spray dye which are set off if a robbery is attempted.



If your premises are located in a high risk area, you may consider installing double entry doors (air lock doors) which allow staff to restrict entry. Robbers can be effectively trapped in the 'air lock' between the doors.



Some high value stockists, such as jewellers and certain antique shops, may prefer an alternative approach: you use only one door but keep it locked and admit customers via a buzzer and electric lock release.

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Always Report Crimes to the Police

Always report crime to police. This allows police to capture the data and understand the full scale of the crime, which in turn informs their resources and tactics to tackle it.



When a crime is taking place, dial 999 in an emergency.



You can also report to the Police on 101 or alternatively, you can report online at www.police.uk



Helpful resources

Police recommended security products can be found at www.securedbydesign.com

