

# BUSINESS SECURITY

Security is **your** responsibility

## BUSINESS SECURITY

**Thieves and vandals prey on people who don't take preventative measures. Are you doing what you can to protect your business?**

### HOW TO PROTECT YOUR INVESTMENT

**Proper business security will not only prevent crime; it can improve your business by providing a safe place for customers to shop. Traditional preventative measures, such as locks, safes and alarms, should be paired with Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) concepts to increase safety and security.**

Landscaping and architectural designs can incorporate simple and inexpensive CPTED guidelines to improve security for your business. Shrubs and trees should not create blind spots or hiding spots on your property. Walkways and landscaping should direct visitors to the proper entrance and away from private areas. Exterior doors should be visible from the street or from neighbouring businesses. Sidewalks, parking lots, doorways and all areas of the property should be well lit.

#### NATURAL ACCESS CONTROL

- Cash registers should be located at the front of the store near the main entrance (visible from outside).
- Public paths should be clearly marked.
- Signs should direct patrons to parking and entrances.

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- There should be no easy access to the roof.
- Rear access to shops should be provided from rear parking lots.

#### LIGHT UP AT NIGHT

- Light up all entrances, including alleys, with vandal-proof fixtures.
- Leave some lights on inside your premises.

#### NATURAL SURVEILLANCE

- Clear visibility should be maintained from the store to the street, sidewalk, parking areas, loading areas and passing vehicles.
- Window signs should cover no more than 15 per cent of windows.
- Interior shelving and displays should be no higher than five feet for visibility.
- The exterior of buildings and all parking areas should be well lit.
- Keep all weeds, shrubbery and debris away from windows and doors. Don't provide concealment or climbing platforms for a burglar.
- Lock up ladders and all tools that could invite a break-in or make a burglar's job easier.
- Restroom doors should be visible from main pedestrian areas and away from outside exits.
- Locate automatic teller machines or drive-through windows at the front of banks or businesses, facing main roads to increase visibility.

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- All entrances should be under visual surveillance or monitored electronically.

#### MANAGEMENT TIPS

- Business hours should coincide with those of neighbouring businesses.
- Pay phones should be call-out only and placed in a visible location.
- Nighttime employees should have access to safe, visible parking that is close to the entrance.
- Adopt a cash limit (for example, \$50.00). Train employees to check regularly for cash over the limit and place it in a "drop safe" that the clerk cannot open. Post a sign: "Maximum Cash in Register \$50.00."
- If it's not possible to have a safe, don't place large bills under the cash register – find a safe alternate hiding place.
- Train employees to be alert for suspicious persons.
- Parked cars and telephone booths are common outdoor observation spots for watching a business.
- Watch for customers who seem to be loitering or glancing around the store while shopping or browsing a magazine, or who seem nervous or rushed.
- Check all doors and windows routinely at closing time.

- Check references. A number of armed robberies involve former employees, so be certain to screen applicants carefully. You may wish to take a snapshot of each new employee to post as an introductory welcome and later keep in the personnel file.

- Try to have two staff on hand at opening and closing times; this is an attractive time for robbers.

- Storage rooms: install locks that can be opened from the inside and keep an extra key inside; robbers sometimes lock employees in storage rooms. If you have an alarm system, consider installing a button in the back room.

- Keep side or back doors locked at all times and have employees use the main entrance.

- All employees should be instructed to challenge any strangers, even people who work in the building but do not belong on a certain floor.

- Work with other businesses in the area to promote shopper and business safety and address specific security issues.

- Conduct periodic security reviews with a qualified security expert or locksmith.

#### LOCK UP

- Install deadbolt locks on all outside doors (excluding fire exits).
- All fire exit doors should have full-length blocker plates and security hinges and should open to the outside. Ensure that any security devices for locking the panic hardware on exit

- doors (when the building is not occupied) meet the requirements of Alberta's fire and building codes.
- Make sure padlocks are solidly mounted and never left open ... even on an open door. Unlocked padlocks can be removed and replaced by a would-be burglar, enabling easy access at a later time.
- Secure all equipment and computers with security locks. Record equipment serial numbers.
- Check door and window frames for looseness or rotting. Repair them immediately.
- Practise good key security. Sign out all keys and collect them when employees leave your company.
- Never label keys indicating what they're for – use a code.
- Use non-removable hinge pins on all outward swinging doors.
- Reinforce rear and side doors with crossbars, and install grating or bars on rear and side windows.
- Don't neglect roof openings, air ducts, skylights, hatchways, doorway transoms, and sidewalk and basement openings.
- Don't lock a burglar inside when you leave. Inspect all closets, bathrooms and other hiding places.

## GLASS

Any area where glass is located is vulnerable. If there are windows or glass doors at ground level, a vehicle could be backed through. To avoid this, consider steel bars, roll-shutters, concrete abutments on the pavement or concrete-filled steel posts in front of the windows.

## BE SAFE

- Keep cash to a minimum with frequent, irregular bank deposits.
- Install a burglar-resistant safe, anchored to the floor in a well-lit, highly visible location.
- Leave empty cash drawers open after hours to prevent damage.
- Keep an accurate inventory of all valuables.

## IN OFFICES

- Insist all delivery drivers check with the receptionist before entering.
- Ask all repair workers for I.D.
- Place the reception desk in a position to ensure anyone entering must go through him or her.
- Keep washrooms locked at all times and leave a key with the receptionist.
- Deposit incoming cheques and cash each day to avoid keeping large sums overnight.
- Consider adopting a code for the receptionist to use to summon help if a hostile situation arises.



■ Office furniture should be organized to ensure you won't be trapped behind your desk with a difficult client blocking the door. Ensure you are seated closer to the door than the client.

■ Keep purses and wallets in locked drawers.

■ Use the buddy system when travelling around the building or to the parkade.

■ Have a periodic security review by a qualified security expert or locksmith.

#### OTHER SECURITY OPTIONS

■ Install an alarm system. Deal with a reputable alarm company and obtain estimates from several companies. Post a conspicuous notice that shows you have an alarm system.

■ Install video cameras and post signs advising "Area Under Video Surveillance."

■ Install roll-shutters for windows and doors.

■ Install glass that is burglar-resistant or use security film. (Caution – some glassbreak sensor alarms will not be activated if a window with security film is broken.)

■ Place height markers at the main entrance so employees can use them to gauge the height of a robber as he leaves your business. To make height markings, place strips of differently colored tape at the 5', 5'6" and 6' heights.

## LOSS PREVENTION

**Company losses or shrinkage are due to three primary causes: internal theft, shoplifting or paper errors. Theft can be reduced if temptation and opportunity are reduced.**

### INTERNAL THEFT

Sixty to 70 per cent of business loss is created by employees. To prevent losses in retail businesses:

■ Do frequent cash audits.

■ Keep one person to a register.

■ Break shifts so that one employee doesn't work cash for a whole shift.

■ Do daily reports, bank deposits, retail inventory, and trend sheets to monitor shortages and overages, and the number of voids, refunds, \* readings and "no sales" per employee.

■ Be suspicious of employees with consistent overages and shortages, and frequent \* readings or "no sales."

Twenty-five to 30 per cent of business loss is due to vendors. To prevent losses by vendors, watch for a series of suspicious "mistakes," free samples, swaps, and vendors who want to count product for you, or appear rushed. Also:

■ Insist on counting product yourself and count all product, not just cases.

■ Check all invoices with a company wholesale price book.

## SHOPLIFTING

- Be observant! Watch and tend to customers in a pleasant, courteous and interested manner.
- Greet and serve customers promptly. Shoplifters do not want your attention.
- If you suspect someone has stolen something, call the manager or security. Watch them, engage them in conversation and offer to assist them.
- Shoplifters come in all shapes and sizes. Be aware of people wearing loose, baggy clothing, those carrying shopping bags or large handbags, and customers under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Do not allow your attention to be diverted by someone who may be a shoplifter's accomplice. Stay alert and avoid unnecessary conversation.
- Keep displays neat and tidy. Constant attention to stock allows sales staff to become familiar with merchandise.
- Lock small or valuable merchandise in display cabinets.
- Sales personnel should have a full view of the entire sales floor area. Rearrange displays, shelving and lighting to eliminate blind spots.

## BURGLARY AND ARMED ROBBERY

**A total security program is the best way to prevent robberies. The stronger the security image, the less likely the robber is to select your business as a target.**

Good visibility, inside and out, is a deterrent. It allows employees to keep an eye on suspicious persons and increases the possibility that someone outside will see if a robbery does occur.

- Advertise a cash control policy. Adopt a cash limit and deposit excess in a safe that the cashier cannot open.
- Vary your banking routine and camouflage your cash bag in an inconspicuous manner.
- Consider installing an alarm.
- Surveillance cameras are a good deterrent and provide valuable evidence of robberies.
- Record the serial numbers of bait money and keep the record in a safe place. Put the bait money at the bottom of a till section for larger bills, and do not use this money for regular transactions. In the event of a robbery, be sure to give the robber this money.
- If you discover a break-in, call the police at once.
- Don't disturb evidence of a break-in.

## BURGLARY

Small businesses are targets in more than half of the commercial burglaries committed in Alberta. Crimes against businesses are usually crimes of opportunity. Have a security check done on your business or check for the following:

- Are there shadows or boxes that would conceal a burglar's entry?
- Is there merchandise in the display window that is easy to steal?
- Is there evidence of an alarm?
- Are there hinges on the outside of the door?
- Are the windows or skylights secure?



## ARMED ROBBERY SAFETY

Even with a strong security program, there is always the chance that a robbery may occur. Employees should be trained on what to do to stay safe during an armed robbery:

- Cooperate. Don't argue or try to be a hero. The robber will likely be nervous and may react unpredictably.
- Do exactly as he or she asks, and be as polite and accommodating as possible.
- Don't make any sudden moves. Tell the robber what you are doing if you have to make an unexpected move.
- Observe details of the robber's description. Write everything down as soon as possible without jeopardizing your safety.
- Try to get a description of the robber's car and write down the licence number.
- Set off the hold-up alarm, but only if you can do so safely and without any obvious movements.
- Don't touch the hold-up note or anything else the robber might have touched.
- Protect the areas for police examination. Lock the doors immediately after the robber leaves.



## **FRAUD**

### **COUNTERFEIT CURRENCY**

If you suspect a bill is counterfeit, examine it closely by comparing it to a genuine bill of the same denomination. Counterfeit currency is often printed on paper that is thin and lacks texture. Printing is not raised on the bill and micro-printing and borders are often blurred, illegible or have broken lines. The pupil of the eye is often a solid spot, whereas on genuine currency the pupil of the eye is made up of fine, concentric circles. Do not return a counterfeit bill to the suspect. Report the counterfeit bill to the police and try to detain the customer or obtain a full description. The funds will be returned to you if the police determine the bill is genuine.

### **HOW BUSINESS PERSONS CAN SPOT CREDIT CARD FRAUD**

Police, prosecutors, courts, credit card companies, credit card holders and merchants all have a role to play in preventing credit card frauds. Retail merchants and their employees have the greatest opportunity to catch the plastic criminal, because it is at this stage of the crime that the criminal is seen. The following is a list of things that merchants and employees can do:

- Be wary of nervous, in-a-hurry shoppers. Stealing can be hard on the nerves and can make a person fidget, perspire and try to get the job done quickly.

- Take a hard look at the customer who buys clothing without trying it on, or who buys several sizes of the same item.

- Another clue – the plastic criminal will often produce the credit card from a pocket, rather than a wallet or purse.

- Be wary of people who buy a variety of items – especially if they don't seem concerned about prices. They may be stocking up for resale.

- Be suspicious if a customer seems interested in the "floor limit" of the store. It's common knowledge that a sales clerk can allow a credit card sale only up to a certain amount without calling for authorization. The floor limits often vary, and the criminal may ask about the amount before making a purchase.

- Be wary of the customer who asks you to "split-bill" for items purchased over the floor limit (i.e. two or more sales drafts to cover one transaction).

### **HOW MERCHANTS AND EMPLOYEES CAN MAKE CREDIT CARD TRANSACTIONS SAFER**

- Examine the credit card closely – look for alterations, check the expiry date, compare the signature on invoices with the signature on the credit card.

- Check the presented card with recent lists of stolen and invalid credit card numbers.

- If suspicious, ask for identification. Most driver's licences include physical descriptions – compare this description with the customer's appearance.



- Always fill out invoices or sales drafts completely and have the customer sign them. Keep possession of the credit card until you have completed your inquiries.
- Ensure the card has imprinted clearly on all copies of the invoice or receipt.
- If the card is invalid or stolen, or if you have any doubts, call for authorization and remember to take both the card and sales draft with you. If a customer runs away, you will still have the card.
- If a customer flees, jot down a full description including age, height, weight, hair color, type of clothing, etc. Try to determine if the customer was alone or had an accomplice. Look to see the direction of flight. Get a description of any vehicle that may have been used and record the licence number. Call the police immediately.
- Do random authorization checks on suspicious transactions. Ensure the receipt is signed and compare the signature on the receipt to that on the card. Don't wait. Do it before the customer leaves, while you still have the merchandise and the card.
- If a customer leaves his card, cut the card and send it back to the company.
- Employers – train your staff to spot credit card frauds. Teach them the correct procedures, and ensure they are following instructions. If you require assistance in employee training, call a credit card investigator from one of the major credit card companies.

- To report an in-progress credit card fraud, or a person using a stolen credit card, phone police immediately on 911 or your local emergency number for police and give details of the offence and the store name and location. Also give details about the suspect, a description and a direction of travel.

#### CHEQUE CHECKLIST

Fraudulent cheque writing has become a profitable way of life for many criminals. Poor cheque-cashing policies and personal carelessness increase the risk of loss.

##### Check:

- ☐ ...at least two types of identification, i.e. driver's licence and major credit card. READ the information on the identification; COMPARE the personal identification to the person; RECORD the information on the back of the cheque.
- ☐ ...the client's signature against that on the identification (you MUST witness the signature).
- ☐ ...with the bank on which the cheque is drawn.
- ☐ DO limit cheque authorization to designated employees.
- ☐ DO deposit all cheques promptly.
- ☐ DON'T accept postdated cheques or cheques that are more than a month old.
- ☐ DON'T let the client hurry you into accepting his or her cheque.
- ☐ DON'T accept the cheque if in doubt.

**Beware:**

- ...of cheques presented on a holiday eve or weekend.
- ...of cashing youngsters' cheques. Young people may not be legally responsible.
- ...of anyone who presents a cheque larger than required for the transaction and wants the change in cash.
- ...of second-party and payroll cheques.
- ...of a cheque that shows signs of change.

A program called "Mind Your Own Business" from the Heads Up Fraud Prevention Association provides information for retail merchants to keep them from becoming victims of fraud. Heads Up also produces a series of pamphlets on the types of fraud and fraud prevention tips. For further information, contact Heads Up at (780)421-3401, or visit its Web site at [www.heads-up.ca](http://www.heads-up.ca).

**OPERATION PROVIDENT**

A NATIONAL BUSINESS IDENTIFICATION PROGRAM

**Criminals don't like marked property. Businesses are encouraged to participate in the Operation Provident program. Not only does placing identifying numbers on company property deter would-be thieves, it also assists police in the recovery and return of property to the rightful owner. The program consists of the following:**

1. An Operation Provident number is assigned by police services to any business requesting participation in the program.

2. The business engraves or stamps this number in a conspicuous location on tools, equipment, business machines, furnishings and other items which may be attractive to would-be thieves. Each business or organization is required to obtain its own marking tools, which consist of standard or heavy-duty engravers and metal stamping dies.

3. "WARNING" decals available from police crime prevention units can then be placed on marked items as well as on entrance doors and windows.



## CRIME PREVENTION PROGRAMS

**The best way to keep crime out of our neighbourhoods is to keep ourselves involved in crime prevention. Get to know your business neighbours and discuss an effective crime prevention strategy for your area.**

If you witness a crime, phone the police. Remain on the line until a police vehicle arrives so you can direct the officers to the exact location and individuals involved in the offence. Don't assume that someone else has called the police ... three calls received are better than no calls at all.

Join a crime prevention organization such as the Alberta Community Crime Prevention Association (ACCPA), Neighbourhood Watch, Block Watch, Rural Crime Watch, Citizens on Patrol or the Heads Up Fraud Prevention Association. Contact the crime prevention coordinator in your local police service for more information on business security and crime prevention in your area.



## STANDARDIZED DESCRIPTION FORM

### TAKE NOTE

If you are the victim of a crime, take note of everything you can to help police identify the suspect. (Don't compare notes with other witnesses. It's easy to become confused.)

Time

Height / Weight

Sex      M ☐      F ☐

Hair colour / Cut

Complexion

Age

Eye colour / Glasses

Jewelry

Clothing / Shoes

Tattoos or scars

Vehicle model, colour and licence number

Any unusual physical details or accents



**Contact your local police service for  
further information.**

**Your police service phone number is:**

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