

PROTECTING YOUR BUSINESS AGAINST ROBBERY



Advice from Nottinghamshire Police's Pre Crime Unit



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Introduction

If you own or run a small business, follow the advice in this guide to reduce the risk of robbery at your premises, and, if a robbery does happen, to minimise the impact on your staff and customers.

What is robbery?

Under Section 8 (1) of the Theft Act 1968:

A person is guilty of robbery if he/she steals and immediately before or; at the time of doing so, and in order to do so, uses force on any person, or puts or seeks to put any person in fear of being then and there subjected to force.

For an offence to be categorised as a robbery, a person must have been subject to actual force, or the threat of force.

Robberies at businesses are relatively rare, but when they happen it can have a significant impact, especially on small businesses. Robbery can affect your staff and customers physically and psychologically and the costs to your business can be substantial.

Business premises are classed as a workplace and you are required under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to provide a risk assessment. The purpose of this assessment is to identify and, where possible, reduce the risk of violence to your staff. The advice in this guide should help you develop a risk assessment for your premises.

Good security normally comprises a number of factors

- A risk assessment.
- Effective security policies and procedures to reduce the risk of robbery.
- Appropriate security equipment based on the identified risk of robbery and product cost.
- Efficient, courteous and trained staff.

What is suspicious?

There are some tell tale signs of suspicious behaviour. Please be aware that, alone, some of the examples may not be greatly suspicious, however, as more elements become apparent the more suspicious a situation it becomes. Signs you should look out for include

Clothing: Depending on the weather conditions, certain types of clothing can be suspicious. For example people over-dressed during warmer months wearing long coats, gloves, scarves and hats.

Actions: 'Customers' who avoid eye contact, avoid staff, look up at CCTV cameras or remain on your premises for extended periods without buying or looking at your goods or services.

Questions: 'Customers' who ask questions relating to opening and closing times, lunch breaks and other unusual enquiries.

Vehicles: Parked cars with people sitting in them who appear to be watching your business. Be particularly aware of vehicles at opening and closing times and report these to police.

Simple precautions

Keep windows clear

Remove advertising or posters from windows if they obstruct the view of staff and any passers by. Where possible, keep stock at no more than 140cm high so windows are clear.

Excellent customer service

Customer service is as important for deterring offenders as it is for improving sales. A professional approach by staff members, who follow procedures, sends a strong message to offenders that the premises are well run and likely to be more challenging for them during a robbery.

Till cash limits

Cash is the most popular target for robberies. Don't hold large amounts of cash in your till. Impose a till limit that you and your staff stick to. A realistic cash limit for most retailers is between £50 and £250. Signs regarding cash levels in tills is available from the Pre Crime Unit.

You can also consider installing an under counter casher where notes are put into a secure unit under the till.

Consider alternatives to cash, such as promoting the use of card payments. If you occasionally have to provide large amounts of cash, for example for a refund, consider alternatives including using a cheque or returning the cash to a debit/credit card.

Cash handling

Do not count cash in public view. Cashing up should take place in a back room, preferably where the safe is located, with the door locked.

Opening and closing

Opening and closing are two very vulnerable times. Staff need to be aware they must be extra vigilant at opening time and in the lead up to closing time. Ensure you have the right procedures in place.

Incident log

Keep a record of all suspicious incidents. The log should include the date and time of the incident, a description of the people or vehicles acting suspiciously and what they were doing. Always report suspicious activity to the police.

Signs

Many commercial premises display a security menu in their windows or on an external wall warning offenders that security systems are in place. For CCTV there is a legal requirement under the Data Protection Act to provide details of who operates the system, what the system is in place for and who to contact to obtain images.

Your Neighbourhood Policing Team

Your Neighbourhood Policing Team is your local link with the police. They will be able to tell you what is happening in the local area and you can tell them about any suspicious incidents at your premises.

Training

Your staff should be trained in how to deal with the public in violent or confrontational situations to reduce the risk of harm to them. Staff should also be trained in the procedures you have introduced and any security equipment you have in place and in what to do in the event of a robbery.

Banking

Banking can be a vulnerable time, as the journey to the bank means you do not have the security that you have in-store. Some simple steps can reduce the risk.

- **Identify a number of safe routes to the bank.**
- **Using physically fit staff who have received relevant security training.**
- **Vary the days, times and routes of bank runs.**
- **Place cash in a rucksack, for example, instead of a cash bag or tin.**
- **If walking, face oncoming traffic and walk in the centre of the pavement.**
- **If driving, place the money in the boot and park in areas covered by CCTV.**

If you become suspicious during a bank run go to a place of safety, for example, a police station or other retail premises and call the police.

If you find that you are regularly banking large amounts of cash you should consider the use of a professional cash carrying company.

Security equipment

Any security equipment should be professionally installed and maintained. Unfortunately, we often attend robberies where security equipment is installed poorly, or not well maintained, resulting in the equipment not working when it is most needed.

CCTV

CCTV is a vital tool in the fight against crime and regularly provides images that secure convictions of offenders. When installing a CCTV system or reviewing your existing system consider the following.

What is my CCTV system for?

This is an important question as your CCTV needs to be fit for purpose. If you claim that the system is to identify offences and offenders the imagery from your system needs to reflect that. Good, clear head and shoulder images of any person entering or leaving your premises, the person's image needs to fill 120 per cent of screen height, preferably from a camera that is positioned at such a height that it provides head-on view rather than a ceiling-down view.



Remote door locks

If your business is open late you should consider installing a remote locking device, sometimes referred to as a Maglock. This device allows you to control who enters the premises and has been used to good effect in some retailers, for example jewellers and bookmakers.

Alarms

Consider installing intruder and hold-up alarms. For details of approved alarm companies please visit The National Security Inspectorate website www.nsi.org.uk

Hold-up alarms, sometimes referred to as panic or personal attack buttons/alarms, should only be used immediately prior to an attack or during an attack and then only when it is safe to do so. The hold-up alarm provides police with an address and the fact that they are needed urgently.

Following an attack, call **999** as soon as possible. Your call will assist police with the exact location, the nature of the offence and details of suspects and any weapons involved.

Safes

A safe is a good investment. Many premises use a safe with an 'insert'. The insert is a safe within a safe. Both safes should use a time delay system. Many offenders do not like to be on premises for extended periods, as this increases the risk of them being caught. The use of and advertising of time delay systems is a deterrent that is widely used.

The police have a 20 minute target for responding to **999** calls from rural areas and a 15 minute target for responding to **999** calls in urban areas. The time delay should take this into account. The longer the delay can be set, the better. Twenty minutes is a good minimum.

Provide clear signs that explain staff do not have unrestricted access to the safe.

What to do if a robbery takes place

Remain calm: Try not to panic and don't make sudden movements.

Think safety: The safety of you, your customers and staff is paramount.

Alarms: If there is a hold-up alarm installed, use it, **but only if safe to do so.**

Descriptions: It is important to remember as much detail as possible. Even if you have CCTV your description of offenders and events will play a vital part in any investigation. When the incident is over make notes of what you remember, but please do not confer with other witnesses and do not watch the CCTV as this may affect your memory.

- **Suspects:** How many? How tall? How old? Any visible features? Clothing (brands and labels), any items carried (bags or weapons).
- **Actions:** Try to remember exactly what happened and in what order.
- **Accomplices:** Look out for accomplices outside or in a vehicle.
- **Escape:** Try to see the direction of travel that offenders take and details of any vehicle make, model and registration number if possible.

Reduce the loss: Your safety and the safety of customers and staff must always come first but you can reduce the loss:

- If ordered to fill a bag, stuff small denomination notes and coins in (unless instructed otherwise).
- Don't look towards safes or other cash storage areas.

What to do following a robbery

- **Close your business immediately** as this will help the police crime scene examiners.
- **Help customers or staff** who may have been injured or who appear to be suffering from shock.
- **Call police** dial **999** and provide the operator with details. They will need the address, details of any injuries, and details about the offenders. These questions are important as police responding to the call will be looking out for the offenders while travelling to the scene.
- **Don't touch anything** that has been handled or left by the robber(s). Firearms or other weapons should not be touched but left in place for police to deal with.
- **Inform your security department** (if you have one).
- **Secure any CCTV images.** Do not watch the footage, but tell police that CCTV exists.
- **Don't give any information to the media before speaking to the police.** There will be information which we might not share if it could jeopardise the investigation.

Robbery is a traumatic offence and affects people differently.

If you or a colleague need help contact your GP or call the Victim Support Helpline on **0845 30 30 900** or visit www.victimsupport.org.uk

Nottinghamshire Business Watch

The Nottinghamshire Safer Business Initiative aims to make Nottinghamshire one of the most prosperous, crime-free counties in the country by working with businesses to help reduce crime.

If you are interested in getting updates on major incidents, advice on crime prevention and alerts about criminals operating in your area, make sure you are registered with the system.

You can report suspicious behaviour, find out how to join a Business Watch scheme or set up your own by registering.

What do I get?

A totally free service — you can control your message settings and choose to receive alerts via email, text message to your mobile phone or recorded voicemail. You can unsubscribe at any time.

- Information about crime trends, incidents and appeals from authorised police officers and police staff.
- Report suspicious behaviour (not crime), receive updates and responses about them.
- Start, manage or request to join a Business Watch scheme in your area.
- Configure how, when and which messages you'd like to receive.

If you want to know more about Nottinghamshire Business Watch contact Nottinghamshire Police's Pre Crime Unit

Tel: 101, extension 800 3011

Email: nottinghamshirealert@nottinghamshire.pnn.police.uk

To register for Nottinghamshire Business Watch, visit www.nottsbusinesswatch.co.uk

If you would like a paper copy of the registration form, call 101 or visit your local police station to request one.

For more advice on crime prevention contact

Nottinghamshire Police's Pre Crime Unit
Arrow Centre
Hucknall
Nottinghamshire
NG15 8AY

Tel: **101**

Tell us what priorities you want your local police to focus on with our online survey

www.neighbourhoodprioritysurvey.co.uk

If you have information about criminals operating in your area, call Crimestoppers anonymously on

0800 555 111