

Robbery Prevention

Several studies have examined risk factors for robbery in retail establishments. The stores that were most attractive had large amounts of cash on hand, an obstructed view of counters, poor outdoor lighting, limited staff, easy escape routes, and low risk of recognition or detection of robbers.

Robberies can be reduced or prevented by implementing sound engineering and administrative controls. Engineering controls remove the hazard from the workplace or create a barrier between the worker and the hazard. Administrative and work practice controls affect the way employees perform jobs or specific tasks.

Engineering Controls

Visibility: Employees should be able see their surroundings and persons outside the store, including police on patrol, should be able to see into the store. Employees in the store should have an unobstructed view of the street, clear of shrubbery, trees or any form of clutter that a criminal could use to hide. Signs located in windows should be either low or high to allow good visibility into the store. The customer service and cash register areas should be visible from outside the establishment. Shelves should be low enough to assure good visibility throughout the store. Convex mirrors, two-way mirrors, and an elevated vantage point can give employees a more complete view of their surroundings.

Lighting: The establishment should be well lit both inside and outside the establishment to make the store less appealing to a potential robber by making detection more likely. Exterior illumination may need upgrading in order to allow employees to see what is occurring outside the store.

Fences: Use to direct the flow of customer traffic to areas of greater visibility.

Drop safes: Limit the availability of cash to robbers. Post signs stating that the amount of cash on hand is limited.

Video surveillance equipment: Closed circuit TV (CCTV) can deter robberies by increasing the risk of identification. This may include interactive video equipment. The video recorder for the CCTV should be secure and out of sight. Posting signs that surveillance equipment is in use and placing the equipment near the cash register may increase the effectiveness of the deterrence.

Height markers on exit doors: This will help witnesses provide more complete descriptions of assailants.

Audible door detectors: These alert employees when persons enter the store.

Door buzzers: Persons can only enter if the employee “buzzes” them into the store. These are electronic locks.

Silent or personal alarms: These will ring directly to the authorities or management. To avoid angering a robber, however, an employee may need to wait until the assailant has left before triggering an alarm.

Physical barriers: Bullet-resistant enclosures with pass-through windows between customers and employees can protect employees from assaults and weapons in locations with a history of robberies or assaults.

Administrative and Work Practice Controls

The following examples illustrate work practices and administrative procedures that can help prevent incidents of workplace violence:

Daily procedures: Check lighting, locks, and security cameras, to help maintain worksite readiness.

Cash on hand: Each register should carry \$50 or less especially during evening and late-night hours of operation. In some businesses, transactions with large bills (over \$20) can be prohibited. In situations where this is not practical because of frequent transactions in excess of \$20, cash levels should be as low as is practical with the aid of a drop safe.

Emergency procedures: Develop and review with employees on a regular basis to use in case of a robbery or security breach.

Communication systems: Employees should have access to working telephones in each work area, and emergency telephone numbers should be posted by the phones.

Physical barriers: Review use and operation of enclosures and pass-through windows.

Staffing levels: For 24 hour operations or in areas with a history of robbery or assaults consider increasing the number of employees during the night shift. It is important that clerks be clearly visible to patrons.

Locks: Doors used for deliveries and disposal of garbage should be locked when not in use. Also, do not unlock delivery doors until the delivery person identifies himself or herself. Take care not to block emergency exits—doors must open from the inside without a key to allow persons to exit in case of fire or other emergency.

Procedural rules: Ensure that employees can walk to garbage areas and outdoor freezers or refrigerators without increasing their risk of assault. The key is for employees to have good visibility, thereby eliminating potential hiding places for assailants near these areas. In some locations, taking trash out or going to outside freezers during daylight may be safer than doing so at night.

Opening and closing: Keep doors locked before business officially opens and after closing time. Establish procedures to assure the security of employees who open and close the business, when staffing levels may be low. In addition, the day's business receipts may be a prime robbery target at store closing.

Limit or restrict areas of customer access, reduce the hours of operation, or close portions of the store to limit risk.

Don't forget to include safety procedures and policies for off-site work, such as deliveries.

Administrative controls are effective only if they are followed and used properly. Regular monitoring helps ensure that employees continue to use proper work practices. Giving periodic, constructive feedback to employees helps to ensure that they understand these procedures and their importance.

Your local police or sheriff's departments are an excellent source for additional information on robbery prevention.

Source:

<http://www.osha.gov/Publications/osha3153.html>