

Business Robbery and Burglary Prevention

Robbery is the felonious taking of personal property in the possession of another, from his person or immediate presence, and against his will, accomplished by means of force or fear. Robbery is a violent crime and often includes the use of a weapon. Robbers often case businesses for cash on hand and ways to achieve surprise and avoid witnesses. Burglary is the entry of a business or other property with the intent to commit larceny or any felony. Businesses can prevent robberies and burglaries by protecting assets, preventing unauthorized entry, and employing various deterrent measures. They can also help in apprehending the offenders and recovering the stolen property. This page also includes tips on what to do if you are robbed.

These tips can significantly enhance the safety of your employees and the security of your business. The NPD Crime Prevention Coordinator will be glad to assist you in this by doing a free business security survey.

Apprehending Robbers

- Observe carefully all suspicious persons or vehicles so you can provide a good description of them if they commit a crime. Be aware that criminals might be using physical disguises, e.g., wigs, mustaches, etc.
- Place colored height marks at all exit doors to help employees estimate the height of suspicious persons.
- Develop a mutual aid system. Form an agreement with nearby merchants to keep an eye on each other's businesses and watch for suspicious activities. An inexpensive buzzer system can alert adjoining businesses to an emergency situation.
- Install cameras that can provide good imagery of persons entering and leaving the business, and committing a crime in the business. The imagery quality should enable the criminal to be identified.
- Monitor cameras to enable crimes in progress to be observed and reported, and actions taken to stop and apprehend the criminals before they can escape.
- Install silent panic alarm buttons at cashier and other vulnerable positions.
- Install two sets of doors and a remote locking system to enable an escaping criminal to be trapped between them.
- Make address numbers easy to read from the street to avoid delays in police response. They must be on a contrasting background and located above the doorway or in a position where they are plainly visible and legible from either direction of approach from the street fronting the property. They should be at least 12 inches high on commercial buildings and lighted at night. Additional numbers are recommended on the rear doors so they can be seen from alleys.

- Where address numbers are not easily visible from the street, e.g., for businesses in a shopping mall, additional numbers should be posted where they will be visible.

Deterring Crimes

Crimes can be deterred by having good visibility in the business and on the premises, alarm systems, surveillance cameras, security guards, dogs, and good lighting, and keeping the property in good condition, posting signs, etc.

Visibility. Good visibility in and around the business creates a risk of detection for intruders and offenders, and a perception of safety for persons legitimately on the premises.

- Provide two-way visibility in areas open to the public. Keep windows and counters clear. Don't allow them to be cluttered with signs, displays, plants, etc.
- Provide one-way visibility from the inside in areas not open to the public. Use mirrored glass or see-through curtains to maintain inside privacy. Use glare-proof glass to enable occupants of a lighted building to see out at night.
- Install convex mirrors to enable employees to see people in areas that might be blocked by display shelves, walls, or other obstructions.

Alarms. Install a good alarm system. One will usually include one or more of the following components: magnetic contacts on doors and windows, photocell or pressure sensors with annunciators at unlocked or open doors, heat or motion detectors in interior spaces, glass break detectors, keypads with a means of checking the status of the system, and audible alarms. All equipment should be Underwriters Laboratory (UL) certified.

- Multiple sensors are preferred because they reduce false alarms, which are wasteful of police resources and can lead to fines.
- Get alarm company references from other businesses. Get at least three estimates in writing. The NPD does not prefer or recommend companies, brands, or types of security systems.
- If your system is monitored, make sure the monitoring station is open 24/7 and has backup power. The company's customer service department should also be open 24/7.
- Make sure you understand your service contract, all the points of protection and the equipment to be installed, the initial and monthly payments, and the warranty period.
- Inform your insurance company. You may qualify for a discount.
- Harden the telephone line that sends the alarm signal to the alarm company so it cannot be cut from the outside. And if it is cut, have the system send an alarm to the alarm company. If the telephone line is

contained in an outside box, the box should be alarmed or locked with a shielded padlock. Or the system could have a wireless backup that would send the alarm if the telephone wire is cut.

- The system should also have a fail-safe battery backup. Check the batteries periodically and replace them if necessary.

Surveillance Cameras. Criminals may be deterred from committing a crime if they know that their actions are recorded on a camera. Or they may be prevented from committing a crime if preventative measures can be taken soon after they are observed entering your property or business.

- Install cameras to record people entering and leaving the business, and committing a crime in the business. Cameras should be mounted where they cannot be covered or tampered with. Dummy cameras should not be used because most criminals can tell the difference between real cameras and dummies.
- Observe what is happening outside your place of the business. Look for anyone watching or loitering near it.
- Install cameras to record people and vehicles in your parking lot.
- Install video analytics or intelligent video software in your camera system. It will alert you when something suspicious appears on your monitors so you don't have to watch them all the time. The monitors could be located at your business or at a security company office. In the latter case an Internet link to transmit the imagery would have to be provided. The NPD could then be called if a crime is observed. Officers might even arrive in time to catch the perpetrators.
- Lights could be turned on when motion is detected in outside areas that are secured at night, and audio announcements made to warn trespassers that the police would be called if they do not leave the property immediately.
- If signs stating that security or surveillance cameras are installed are posted and the cameras are not monitored all the time, the sign should also include that caveat. This is important in keeping people from having a false sense of security and expecting help in the event they are attacked.

Any camera system that is installed should be designed to provide high-quality, digital imagery of suspicious persons and activities for use by the NPD in investigating crimes.

Security Guards. Consider employing well-trained, highly visible security guards. Uniformed security guards that patrol the business on foot can be a highly effective in deterring robberies and burglaries. Make sure that the guards are from a licensed and insured company. The guards should be licensed as well.

Dogs. Dogs act mainly as a psychological deterrent. They can be an excellent supplement to a security system provided the animal can be relied upon to give warning when warning is needed. Dogs can scare a stranger away by either barking or looking fierce. But remember that they can be lured away, poisoned, killed, or even stolen. Trained attack dogs are not recommended because the risk of liability to the owner is great should the dog attack an innocent person. Outside dogs should be kept in a fenced area with a good lock on the gate.

Lighting. Illuminate all external areas of your property at night, especially parking lots and storage yards. And leave a few interior lights on in the back of the store or office where they may illuminate and silhouette intruders but not create glare for passing patrol cars.

- Timers or photoelectric cells can be used to turn lights on at dusk and off at dawn. And motion sensors can be used to turn lights on when any motion is detected. Streetlights or lights from adjoining properties should not be relied on for lighting the property at night. Also, the lights should be directed so they don't shine into the eyes of passing motorists or police patrols.
- Replace burnt-out bulbs promptly. Use screens, wired glass covers, or other protection for light fixtures and bulbs. Install padlocks on circuit-breaker boxes to prevent the lights from being turned off.
- Because lights and other security systems work on electrical power it is important that measures be taken to prevent disruption of external power or provide internal backup power. At a minimum, external circuit breakers should be installed in a sturdy box that is locked with a shielded padlock.
- Trim trees and bushes so they do not block lighting.

Property Condition. Keep your property in good condition. Criminals are attracted to property in poor condition because it shows that the owners or tenants don't care about it.

- Keep property free of trash, litter, weeds, leaves, dismantled or inoperative vehicles, and other things that indicate neglect.
- Replace or repair broken windows, screens, fences, and gate locks.
- Remove loose rocks and other objects that could be used to vandalize your property.
- Keep outside trash dumpster enclosures and the dumpsters in them locked when not being filled or emptied.
- Remove graffiti as soon as possible after it is found. This will discourage further vandalism. The graffiti should be covered with matching paint so a "canvas" is not left for the vandals. Hardware or paint stores should be consulted regarding the best products for removing various types of graffiti from specific surfaces without damaging the surface. Extreme care should be used in applying special graffiti removal products like MEK (Methyl Ethyl Ketone) or "Graffiti Remover" on glass or unpainted surfaces.

- Install a protective film on the outside of windows to prevent window damage from graffiti, knife gouging or scratching, and acid etching.
- Keep landscaping trimmed to preserve good visibility on the property and deny criminals possible hiding places. Trim bushes to less than 3 feet, especially near windows, sidewalks, and exterior doors. Trim tree canopies to at least 8 feet.
- Use fencing, gates, landscaping, pavement treatment, signs, etc. to define clear boundaries between your property and adjoining properties.

Preventing Unauthorized Entry

The following tips suggest how to prevent unauthorized entry to your business. They deal with doors, locks, windows, security gates and shutters, other openings, roofs, fences, walls, gates, and landscaping. Make sure that all protective measures installed meet the fire and life safety standards for your type of building. You can contact Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue 886-6221 for assistance. This will assure safety and code compliance as well as enhance your security.

Doors. Exterior doors can be wood, metal or glass. Solid doors should be at least 1-3/4 inches thick.

- Reinforce wooden doors with 16-gauge sheet metal for added security.
- Use reinforced or strong glass, i.e., laminated glass or clear acrylic plastic, in exterior glass doors. The former has plastic sheets between layers of glass. It looks like safety glass but will not shatter easily, even after repeated blows. The latter is also shatterproof but has several disadvantages. It comes in limited sizes, and is susceptible to marring and scratching.
- Install a 180-degree peephole in solid doors so you can identify persons at the door without them seeing you. It also enables you to check that no one is hiding near the door before it's opened, e.g., to take out trash.
- Hinges should be located on the inside or have non-removable pins.
- Where motion detectors are installed to open or unlock exit doors from the inside when a person approaches the door, make sure the detectors are set far enough back from the door so a person outside the door cannot slip something between the door and the frame to create motion on the inside and thereby open the door. Or install a shield on the outside of the door so a person on the outside cannot slip anything between the door and the frame.

Locks. Doorknob locks offer no security. Defeating these locks is one of the most common means of forced entry. All exterior doors should have a single-cylinder deadbolt lock. Go to a locksmith or hardware store for advice on locks.

- Bolts on deadbolt locks should have a minimum throw of 1 inch. Strike plates should have screws that are at least 3 inches long.
- Install flush bolts at the top and bottom of all double doors. These should be made of steel and have a minimum throw of 1 inch.
- Secure sliding-glass doors to prevent both horizontal and vertical movement. Deadbolt locks provide the greatest security. Less effective secondary locking devices include a pin in the upper track that extends downward through the inner doorframe and into the outer door frame, a thumbscrew-type lock mounted on the top or bottom track, and a metal strip or a few metal screws in the track above the door to prevent vertical movement.
- Install deadbolt locks all doors that lead outside through garages or storage areas.
- Re-key or change all locks when moving into a new location.
- Install good locks on gates, garages, sheds, etc. If padlocks are used, they should be keyed and able to survive assaults by bolt cutters or pry bars. The shackles should be of hardened steel and at least 9/32 inch thick. It is even better to use a “shielded” padlock that is designed to protect against bolt cutters. Combination locks should not be used because they offer very poor security.
- All locks should be resistant to “bumping.”
- Use a multi-frequency opener on electrically-operated garage doors, and make sure that the bottom of the door cannot be lifted up to allow a burglar to crawl in.
- Use hardened steel hinges, hasps, and padlocks on hand-lifted garage doors.
- Install cane bolts or sliding hasps on the inside of garage doors to provide additional security.
- Consider installing a crossbar as an additional locking mechanism for exterior doors that have an interior swing. Place a metal bar or 2- x 4-inch piece of wood in brackets mounted on both side of a door. Slide bolts of heavy gauge steel can also be effective.
- Use panic deadbolts operated by push-bars to secure secondary exits that are designated for emergency use only. They can be alarmed to ring a bell or sound a horn when the door is opened.
- Install latch guards. They are steel plates that are bolted to the frame of the door to prevent the locking mechanism from being defeated. They also prevent objects from being inserted between the door and the frame that could damage the door itself. More expensive guards protect the mortise cylinder and prevent a burglar from drilling out the tumblers.

Windows. Do not rely on the locking means supplied with your windows. Additional security measures are usually necessary.

- Secure double-hung sash windows by drilling a hole that slants downward through a top corner of the bottom window into the bottom corner of the top window on both sides of the window. Place an eyebolt or nail in the hole to prevent the window from being opened.
- Replace louvre windows with solid glass or some other type of ventilating window. If this cannot be done, glue the panes together with a two-part epoxy resin.
- Secure casement windows with key-locking latches. Make sure that the protrusion on the window that the lock is attached to is made of steel and not worn, and that the window closes properly and is not bowed or warped.
- Secure sliding-glass windows by the same types of locking devices used for sliding-glass doors.
- Consider installing security bars on side, rear, or other windows that a burglar might break to enter your business. Make sure that the retaining bolts cannot be removed from the outside. Bars must comply with Fire Code requirements for inside release to permit an occupant to escape in the event of a fire.
- Use reinforced or strong glass. i.e., laminated glass or clear acrylic plastic, in viewing windows on the lock sides of doors so a burglar cannot break them and reach in to open the door.
- Use reinforced or strong glass in display windows to prevent window-smash burglaries.
- Eliminate small windows at ground level that a burglar can break and crawl through, especially where there are low bushes in front of the windows. Or use reinforced or strong glass, or some strong opaque or reflective material in them.
- Install bollards in front of windows and doors to prevent vehicles from driving in.

Security Gates and Shutters. Folding security gates and roll-down shutters inside windows and doors provide additional security. A burglar would have to cut through the bars or slats after breaking through a window or door to enter the business all while the alarm is going off. The presence of gates or shutters would be a strong deterrent of break-ins.

Other Openings. All crawl spaces, ventilation windows, and other openings should be secured to prevent access through them.

- Make sure that window air conditioners are installed securely and cannot easily be removed from the outside. Seal mail slots in doors if a coat hanger or other device can be inserted and used to release the door lock.

- Secure or alarm hollow walls or attics that are shared with an adjoining business.

Roofs. Ladders, trees, fences, drain pipes, and adjoining rooftops can provide roof access if measures are not taken to deny such access.

- Shroud ladders with locking covers.
- Trim tree limbs that could provide access.
- Secure rooftop skylights, ventilation shafts, air conditioning and heating ducts, and other possible entry points on the inside with grills or grates. Those that cannot be secured should be alarmed.

Fences, Walls, and Gates. Well-built fences, walls, and gates are the first line of defense against criminals. Follow all code requirements when constructing.

- Install open chain link or ornamental metal fencing unless privacy and noise reduction are needed. These types are preferred because they do not block visibility into the property and are less susceptible to graffiti. Chain link fencing should have its bottom secured with tension wire or galvanized pipe, or embedded in concrete to prevent it from being lifted up to enable a person to crawl in. The horizontal bars on ornamental metal fences should be located only at the top and bottom on the inside of the fence. Fences should be at least 6 feet high.
- Sharp-pointed fencing is only permitted in agricultural zones but in special situations it may be allowed to exist in industrial zones.
- Equip gates with good locks. Latches should be mounted with carriage bolts and nuts that are welded on or secured by stripped bolt threads.
- Gates that are opened on the inside by a handle or knob should have shields that prevent a person from reaching in to open them. They should also be tall enough so that a person cannot reach over the top to open them.
- Gates with beveled latches should be shielded so a person cannot insert a wire or bar between the frame and the gate and push in the latch. The shield should be centered on the latch. A dead-bolt lock with a cylindrical latch would be even better on gates that are not emergency exits and are closed and locked manually from the outside.
- Gates that are opened on the inside by a push bar should be solid or have a solid metal or plastic shield on the inside of the gate that extends at least two feet above and below the push bar. The shield will prevent a person from opening the gate from the outside by looping a wire through the gate and pulling on the push bar.
- Exit gates should have springs that close them securely after a person goes through. Sensors should also be installed to warn the security office or manager that a gate has been left open.

Landscaping. Defensive plants can help in access control.

- Plant bushes with thorns or prickly leaves under ground-level windows to make access more difficult for burglars.
- Plant bushes with thorns or prickly leaves along fences and walls to make climbing more difficult and prevent graffiti.

Protecting Assets

Assets can be protected by keeping them in a safe place, implementing procedures that deny criminals access to them, etc.

- Locate the cash register where it is visible from the outside, but far enough away from the window so as not to provoke a quick window-smash and grab.
- Protect cashier with a bullet-resistant glass, plastic, or laminate enclosure or window. And install a secure money pass-through slot or tray.
- Keep a minimum amount of cash in the register. Close registers after each transaction. Lock registers when not attended.
- Put excess cash in a time-lock drop safe. Keep your safe locked when access is not required.
- Safes can be standing or mounted in floors or walls. Standing safes should be securely anchored to the floor. The back should be against a wall so it will not be accessible. Safes that are visible from outside the building should be well illuminated and have the front (locking side) turned away from the windows. Floor safes should be located where they can be concealed.
- Use burglar-resistant safes for money and other valuables. Use fire-resistant safes for records. Both types should have an Underwriters Laboratory (UL) label with their effectiveness ratings.
- Post signs saying that employees do not have access to the safe.
- Lock up postage meters, check writers, checkbooks, etc. when they are left unattended.
- Be unpredictable about moving money from your business to the bank. Vary the times, routes, and methods of concealment. Make deposits during the business day, not after closing time. Assign two employees to make deposits. Vary the assignments over time. Have the deposit carried in a purse or plain bag; never use a bank bag.
- Have employees leave the depository if suspicious persons are present. Have them return and make the deposit later.
- If you use an armored car service, always be prepared for their pickup and delivery.
- Designate one or better two employees to open and close the business.
- Have two employees open and close the business if possible.
- Have at least two employees working at high-risk times.

- Be especially alert at opening and closing times when the business is not crowded.
- Be careful in dealing with customers who are wearing baseball caps and sunglasses that conceal their faces from surveillance cameras.
- Never open your business for anyone after you have closed. Beware of the caller who states your business has just been broken into and asks you to come down. Always call back to confirm that the call was from a law enforcement agency or your alarm company before going to your business.
- Keep all exterior doors locked during business hours except those used by the public. Some employees or security guards should be located to monitor each public entrance. Emergency exits should be alarmed and designated for emergency use only. Have employees report and close any exterior door found open in areas not accessible to the public.
- Lock stairwell doors to areas not accessible to the public. Install card readers for employee access to these areas.
- Post signs to indicate areas that are open to the public and those that are for employees only. Install locks on all doors to interior work areas to control public access. Doors to storage and supply rooms, and individual offices should be kept locked when unattended.
- Check all restrooms and other areas at closing time to make sure no one is hiding in them.
- Have all employees wear ID badges or some other means of distinguishing them from visitors, customers, and others on the premises. Businesses with restricted areas should give their employees photo-ID badges that are color-coded to indicate the areas that the employee is authorized to enter. Offices, storage and supply rooms, and other work areas should be checked periodically for the presence of unauthorized persons.
- Keep doors to public restrooms locked or under observation to prevent abuse of the facilities.
- Anchor computer hardware and other costly items of office equipment to a desk or install an alarm that sounds when they are moved. Otherwise store the equipment in a secure place when it is not in use.
- Keep items stored outside at least 8 feet from perimeter walls and fences. Forklifts, moving equipment, and other vehicles that can easily be started should be made inoperable.
- Park company vehicles in a secure fenced area when the business is closed. If this is not possible, park them close to each other or against the building to help prevent gas siphoning, battery theft, and vehicle break-ins. They can also be parked in front of doors to prevent building break-ins.
- Keep shipments inside until they are to be loaded on trucks.
- Open loading dock doors only when shipments are being sent out or brought in. Keep the doors locked at other times.
- Install a service bell for truck drivers to use to announce their arrival.

Recovering Stolen Property

- Place the company's name or some identification number on all company-owned items, e.g., office equipment, tools, vehicles, and machinery. This can be done by engraving or etching, using a permanent adhesive, or by attaching microdots. In small individually owned businesses the owner's driver's license number can be used as a property identifier.
- Use "bait money." Keep a list of serial and series numbers. Do not use these bills to make change.
- Place numbered confetti in bulk goods containers.
- Contractors can get information on preventing thefts of construction equipment and recovering stolen equipment by calling the Construction Industry Crime Prevention Program at **(562) 860-9006** or visiting its website at www.crimepreventionprogram.com.
- Keep a detailed, up-to-date record of your valuables. Include type, model, serial number, fair market value, etc. Photograph or videotape all valuables.

Visitor Control

Visitor control is relatively simple in some businesses, e.g., medical offices. Patients, sales people, etc. are free to enter the building, go to their doctor's office, and check in with the receptionist. Then they are allowed to proceed to the examination rooms. Signs would be posted to indicate areas that are not open to visitors, i.e., storage and supply rooms, and individual offices, which should be locked when unattended.

Other businesses have visitor control in the building lobby where a receptionist or security guard processes visitors, who can be clients, patients, meeting attendees, sales people, business guests, contractors, delivery and service persons, or employee family members. In this case visitor processing would include the following four tasks: identification, validation, screening, and monitoring.

- Establish and verify the visitor's identity. A government-issued, picture ID, e.g., a driver's license, is usually acceptable. If a visitor does not have an ID his or her host might be asked to come to the lobby and vouch for the visitor's identity.
- Validate the visitor's purpose. This is usually done by calling the visitor's host.
- Check the visitor's personal and hand-carried items. Screening is usually done by looking into bags and briefcases. More extensive screening may be appropriate in some buildings. This would include metal detectors, package x-ray machines, and explosive detectors.
- Once a visitor has been identified, validated, and screened, his or her movement within the building may need to be monitored. Procedures

range from none, i.e., the visitor has complete freedom to go anywhere in the building, to being escorted everywhere. In most cases a visitor will be issued and required to wear a badge. In addition to the visitor's name and date, the badge could also have the host's name, the area(s) of the building to which access is allowed, and the visitor's picture. If an escort is not provided, a badge is only useful if all building employees are also required to wear a badge. Otherwise a visitor can remove the badge and look just like an employee.

- Where visitors and employees are required to wear badges, train employees to challenge and offer assistance to any person not wearing a badge.

What To Do If You Are Robbed

Every robbery is different. You will need to assess yourself, the robber, and the situation to determine what you should do. Here are some general tips to use in training your employees:

- Act calmly. Do exactly what the robber says. Keep your movements short and smooth to avoid startling the robber.
- Do not resist. Cooperate for your own safety and the safety of others. Robbers usually are excited and easily provoked. Tell the robber about any movements you plan to make.
- Activate an alarm if it can be done safely without alerting the robber.
- Observe carefully. Study the robber's face and clothing, note any other distinguishing features, observe the direction of escape, record the license, make, and color of any vehicle used in the robbery, etc. Write down everything you can remember about the robber and the crime itself.
- Lock the door and call **911** immediately after the robber leaves. Then you can make other calls.
- Preserve the scene. Discontinue regular business until officers have searched the scene. Cover any surfaces the robber may have touched and keep away from areas where the robber may have been.
- Ask other witnesses to remain. Get names and phone numbers if they are unable to remain. Ask to see their driver's licenses or other ID to verify this information.
- Save camera imagery records.
- Don't discuss the robbery with others until all statements have been taken.