

ROBBERY DETERRENCE MANUAL

Courtesy of:

SafeandVaultStore.com

Providing Security Solutions Since 1948

FOREWARD

Safe and Vault Store is more than an online retailer of safes and security products; we are part of an organization originally chartered in 1902 that specialized in selling and servicing small safes as well as key and locksmithing services. In 1948 we became part of a larger organization and expanded our products and services to include bank security products such as vault doors, safe deposit boxes, night depositories and custom safes. Later, we grew our business to include manufacturing our own line of safes, bank vault doors, safe deposit boxes, and more. Manufacturing safes and other related security products gave us great insight and experience that puts us in a position to be experts on these products. In turn, our customers benefit by getting the right product for their specific need.

The dawning of the computer age ushered in entirely new areas of growth for our company. We grew to sell, install, and service products such as access control, alarm and fire systems, video surveillance and sophisticated networked security equipment. However, our core area of expertise in safes and locksmithing continues to be a significant part of our business.

As an affiliate of our original company, Safe and Vault Store offers our customers a wealth of knowledge that we have gained over the years. We invite you to call or write to us so that we may share our expertise to help you select the best value product that is specific to your security needs.

Since 1948 our company has been guided by basic principles of customer service; we are committed to ensure our customer's peace of mind. This means courteous and competent people combined with excellent products.

The "bad guys" have gotten smarter and more sophisticated with all the technological advancements. So have we. We invite you to put our knowledge and expertise to work for you today. Call our toll free number at 800-207-2259 or write to us: info@SafeandVaultStore.com. You may also shop our online store for quick and easy click-and-buy shopping of safes and other security equipment.

Thanks for allowing us the opportunity to ensure your "peace of mind."

The information contained in this article is taken from a reprint of a robbery prevention program developed by the Southland Corporation.

DISCLAIMER

All applicable governmental rules, regulations or restrictions now in effect, or which may be promulgated, take precedence over the recommendations in this manual.

Nothing herein shall be deemed to establish arbitrary minimum or maximum standards of retail store safety or operating procedures. No method, practice, precaution, or program described in this manual shall be deemed to establish a legal standard of conduct or a legal duty, the violation of which would constitute negligence or any degree of any legal proceeding.

The purpose of this manual is to provide the retail store industry with ideas for deterring robberies. It is designed to supplement individual company robbery deterrence programs and company operating procedures. The recommendations are purely advisory and not a warranty, representation to any specific retail store situation.

The retail store owner must share the greatest responsibility for the success of any robbery deterrence program. However, the whole-hearted support and cooperation of all personnel is necessary.



INTRODUCTION

Armed robbery is a matter of serious concern for your company. This manual presents some basic robbery deterrence measures you can adapt to your store's characteristics as you develop your own robbery deterrence plan. The robbery deterrence measures presented in this manual were provided by other retail store companies who have found the implementation of the ideas to be effective in robbery deterrence.

The objectives of this manual are to:

- Reduce the possibility of retail store armed robbery and protect the safety of employees and customers.
- Improve employee awareness of retail store robbery situations.
- Provide possible actions in the event a robbery occurs.
- Encourage cooperation and improved communication among the retail community and law enforcement agencies.
- Provide information to management to help them counsel the robbery victim.



DETERRENCE



THE NEIGHBORHOOD ENVIRONMENT:

Focus on the “big picture” and some of the deterrence measures that can be taken based on the neighborhood surroundings.

Enlist cooperation and support from your community. Become sensitive to your community’s attitudes. Contact representatives from city departments such as:

- ◆ Parks
- ◆ Streets
- ◆ Police
- ◆ Lighting
- ◆ Youth group organizers

Working with your community and increasing your awareness of robbery deterrence procedures will help make your stores safer and improve industry image.



The following considerations vary depending upon specific store characteristics:

- ◆ Rural or urban
- ◆ Hours of operation
- ◆ Free standing unit or part of a strip center.

Assess the surroundings to detect possible dangers and identify preventive measures:

- ◆ Think of the most likely escape route for a robber - on foot or in a car.
- ◆ Set up barriers to block or slow the escape route.
- ◆ Remove plants and other obstacles that interfere with good observation from the street.
- ◆ Remove obstacles which obstruct effective lighting.

PEDESTRIAN ACTIVITY

In general, high activity areas are less prone to robberies. Assess the quantity and type of traffic, times of high and low activity and the potential for increasing traffic and activity.

Pedestrians, as well as cruising patrol cars, should have clear visibility into the store both during the day and especially at night.

It would be to the store's advantage to have a pay telephone nearby for pedestrian use should someone notice trouble within the store. The phone should also be situated so a potential robber would not be able to monitor the activities of the employee on duty while using the phone.

VISIBILITY AND LIGHTING

It is important to provide as much visibility as possible into your store from the street and to provide visibility from the inside of the store to the outside. The important point is that there should be visibility from the register area to the street. This involves an assessment of your lighting and the visibility it provides both during the day and at night.

For instance, shrubs or trees sometimes obstruct the path of a floodlight. Sometimes trees cast shadows over your lot at different times of the year. Look for such obstacles in your lot.



BUILDING AND PARKING LOT SECURITY

Some retail store operators use some security measures which could slow a robber's escape. Such measures could deter a robbery as well.

For instance, some stores fence their premises on three sides to slow a robber escaping around the side of the store. Some stores allow parking only directly in front of their stores, so an escape vehicle would have to be parked directly in front of the store. Some stores have just one exit out of the parking lot, and some have speed bumps in the parking lot.

POLICE PROTECTION

Work with your local police department to obtain planned and unplanned visits. Try to have police come in on a timely basis for a free single serving non-alcoholic beverage (juice, coffee, soda) to get the police officers into your store. If you have public restrooms, encourage the police to come in to use them. If you do not have public restrooms, you might let the police officer use the employee restrooms. Offering such amenities frequently results in a more frequent visible part of the officers to respond to the stores more rapidly, in an emergency.

Employees should be encouraged to become better acquainted with the officers, who patrol the neighborhood, and to develop friendly relationships and cooperate with the officers.

Ask police to drive through your parking lots when they are in the area to look in at your cashiers.

Consider playing a police radio broadcast in the store at night to indicate a direct link to police.

Consider a sign such as: ***Store Subject to Routine Police Patrols*** (but only if the sign is true.)

Some store owners work with the neighborhood retailers to reduce robbery by pooling resources from neighborhood retailers to fund a reward for the arrest and conviction of an armed robber.

Some retailers hire a uniformed guard to patrol the premises and other neighborhood retailers' premises, especially if they are open 24 hours. But be careful! Guards may sometimes incite a challenge and provoke violence rather than deter it.



SAMPLE LETTER TO LOCAL POLICE

Police Department
Street
Town, State Zip

Dear Mr. Policeman;

The _____ retail store has recently instituted a Robbery Deterrence Training Program, and I would like to take this opportunity to tell you about it.

We are all aware that retail store robberies are a matter of serious concern, not just for the retail store owner, but for the neighborhoods where our stores are located. The management of _____ cares about its employees and customers. As concerned corporate citizens, we want to work with community of _____ to deter retail robberies.

Our Robbery Deterrence Training Program is designed to teach our employees to be “robbery conscious” and to increase the store’s safety and security through a variety of management policies used successfully by other retail stores.

I would like to tell you more about our program and show you our training programs and policies. I think we can work together to help make our retailing community a safe and secure environment for our citizens.

Sincerely,

Store Manager/Owner/Supervisor



VISIBILITY AND LIGHTING

Install adequate levels of outside and inside lighting, particularly in areas where customers park their vehicles. Balance interior and exterior lighting at night because it is almost impossible to see what is going on outside a brightly lit store.

Make sure all parking spaces are clearly visible from inside the store. This allows you to view a potential robber “casing” the store or parking an escape vehicle without being noticed. (Poor visibility reduces the possibility of being noticed.)

But the availability of parking spaces visible from inside the store is almost an impossibility with the trending toward larger lots and corner store configurations. In stores with parking on the side, lighting should be intensified to reduce the opportunity for criminals to lurk near or case the store.

Provide maximum visibility of the inside of the store, especially the checkout area, from the outside. This gives passing patrol cars and motorists a clear view of events inside the store, particularly near the safe and cash register.

Control your window and door signage so that the clerk and cash register can be seen from the street. Use lower shelving for stocking merchandise. Make sure floor displays do not block the view of the clerk. If you stock firewood, keep it low. After dark, remove any displays a robber could possibly hide behind.

Consider raising your sales counter. The clerk will be more visible. A raised sales counter, besides making the clerk more visible, also gives the clerk, and the customer, the perception that the clerk is more in control. Raised sales counter also allow store personnel to observe customers behind higher gondolas and shelving, thereby reducing the potential for shoplifting losses.

For safety reasons consider automatic outside lights. Busy store employees may not be aware of darkness setting in and may not turn on the lights when it starts to get dark.

Remember, a well lit interior and exterior store is a strong deterrence to a robber.



TELEPHONE

The placement of pay telephones outside the store should not be in a position to allow viewing of the sales clerk and cash handling procedures. Pay phones should be located on the side of the store or distanced from the front windows for this purpose.

CASH REGISTER

Large amounts of cash and its availability are attractive to robbers. The robber will know large amounts of cash are available if he sees large bills in the register or sees the clerk putting large bills into the register. That is why a low cash policy is important. Visibility into the cash register is alright if cash levels are kept low. Low levels of cash may be a good deterrence, versus the robber guessing wrong that the take will be substantial.

ROBBERY DETERRENCE SIGNAGE

Robbery deterrence signage, stickers, decals, etc. are available to let customers and potential robbers know what a store is doing to deter robbery. For instance, placing a height measure by an exit door helps witnesses determine the height of a fleeing robber. Also, to publicize a low cash policy, cards that read “No 20’s” or “No 50’s” can be placed in the cash register drawer. These cards also remind the employee that large amounts of cash go directly into the safe.

But remember, whatever signage you have in place, make sure it is telling a true story. Do not post signage which is not true.

More details on robbery deterrence signage are in the additional resources section of this manual.



MANAGEMENT ROLE

Management will show that the safety of employees and customers is the number one consideration by establishing comprehensive robbery deterrence measures. This chapter elaborates on areas where policies can be established.

Management must determine what they want to do to deter robbery, then the elements of the plan should be communicated to all levels of the company. Coordination with managers responsible for plan execution should be established early in the development of the program, and input solicited. Since the store managers will be the persons who can make the program work, their “ownership” of the plan and commitment to the program are critical to the program’s success.

That is why store managers need to be aware of existing policies and procedures regarding robbery deterrence. Then they can train employees, implement the procedures, and follow up to make sure policies and procedures as established are followed continually.

AREAS TO ESTABLISH POLICIES

There are some specific areas in retail store operations where robbery deterrence policies can be implemented. This section presents those areas by documenting ideas and suggestions used by other retail stores.



THE CASH REGISTER

Establish and enforce policies that limit the maximum amount of money in the cash register to a certain dollar amount.

No more cash should be available than is absolutely necessary to meet customer transactions.

Make sure large bills are “dropped” and not visible at the register. To enforce this policy, each store needs some sort of “drop” safe so that employees can put away cash as it accumulates.

Installing a safe in your store also decreases the likelihood of a holdup since word will get out that there is little cash to be obtained at your stores.

Types of safes include:

- One with a “drop” mechanism in full view of customers, publicized with decals and posters.
- Safe which dispenses pre-packaged tubes of cash at regular intervals

Serious consideration should be given by management to the purchase and installation of time-delay types of money storage containers, which will facilitate frequent drops of cash stripped from the cash register, and recovery of change as needed.

Visibly post signs at the check-out and at the entrance to the store that communicate your low cash policy to all customers and potential robbers. Signs like the following can communicate your low-cash policy:

**Thank you for paying with the smallest possible bill.
We appreciate exact change.
Clerk cannot open this safe.
No more than \$50 is kept in the cash register.
Coin change only after midnight.**



Also, consider posting such signs at your gasoline islands if you sell gasoline. Gasoline islands are another area where robberies occur, and a sign such as:

**Thank you for paying with the
smallest possible bill.**

helps to inform customers and robbers of your low cash policy.

Cash control procedures are an important deterrence to robbery. A potential robber is less likely to commit a crime if it does not look like there will be much cash to take. If people know there is only as much cash available as needed, a safe image is projected. Presented on the next page is a variation of a *Cash Handling Policy* used by other retail stores in a robbery deterrence plan. This can be adapted to fit your company policies.



Sample Cash Handling Policy

The store manager is responsible for insuring adequate protection of company assets at all times, both during regular business hours and the closed period.

- All money is to be secured during business hours, either in the register (maximum amount of \$40 per register) or in the safe (remainder including change bag.)
- All accumulated cash and checks (that cash not needed for normal operation) as well as extra money orders will be kept in the locked portion of the safe. Any additional accumulation of cash is to be put in this section by way of the drop chute. The store manager will be the only person authorized access to this section. He may delegate this access during his day off.
- The change bag will be kept in the keylocked portion of the safe except for the amount of change needed for that day's operation. However, the safe combination must be kept on day-lock at all times during first and second shifts. Full lock must be used during closed periods and between 11pm and 7am in 24-hour stores.
- In stores with electronic safe cash controllers, the change bag should be kept in the time-locked portion. The manager is responsible for seeing that there is plenty of change available for vending and the "locking bar" is in place on the second and third shifts. The key that activates the timer for the safe door should never be in the store on the second or third shifts.
- All currency, coin, checks, and money orders are to be secured in the safe during closed periods.
- A cash audit must be performed when any employee transfers to another store or terminated employment with the store.
- In money order sales, collect the money and make the drop before printing the money order.
- Keep a \$2 bill and record the serial number. If a robber is caught with stolen money, you can identify it.



SECURITY DEVICES

All security measures and procedures should be “up front” and not a secret. That means no dummy cameras, fake alarm systems, or false signs indicating security measures that are not actually in practice or place. If criminals think you are lying about one aspect of your store security, they will think you are lying about others, such as not having access to certain cash levels. This could lead to violence.

Also, other deterrence measures should be in place before a company invests in sophisticated security equipment. There is not conclusive evidence that video surveillance equipment has functioned as an effective deterrence to armed robbery.

Policies, procedures, training, psychological deterrence, compliance inspections, and selective store target analyses to identify the factors which cause a store to be selected as a frequent robbery target, and developing and implementing methods and systems to ameliorate or eliminate these factors are effective robbery deterrents. Sophisticated hardware amounts to little more than “window dressing.” It may have some limited deterrent value, psychologically, however that is unsubstantiated.

Install appropriate systems consistent with the robbery risk of the area. Contact your local law enforcement for records on the robbery risk of your area.

Again, establishing policies, enforcing procedures and training employees are the best aids in robbery deterrence. What is desired is to discourage a potential without scaring your customers.



BANK DEPOSIT & CASH COUNTING

Establish and enforce robbery deterrence procedures for counting the cash in the register and for transporting cash receipts to the bank. Be discreet when counting large amounts of cash or preparing a bank deposit. It is best to do that when there are no customers, or let someone else handle the register so the employee can prepare the deposits in the back room.

Make frequent bank deposits and vary the time of the day when you make deposits. Hide the money when going to the bank and vary the method of concealment. For instance put the cash in a paper lunch bag, a plastic sandwich container, a knapsack, an empty rock salt bag, etc.

Do not be obvious about going to the bank. Do not wear your uniform, apron, or name tag to the bank. Do not deposit at night if possible. If you have to deposit at night, consider having an employee drive your car to the front of the store. If you have a lot of money to deposit, consider calling an armored car service. (Some police officers will escort an employee to the bank. Remember, law enforcement does not want a robber on their hands either.)

TRAIN YOUR EMPLOYEES

No matter how safe the inside and outside of the store can be, managers and employees must put robbery deterrence rules into effect. Here the emphasis is on the importance of training.

Training is important so an employee can react calmly and quickly in the event of a robbery. Training you personnel and periodically refreshing them on robbery deterrence procedures can curb robbery. It also demonstrates your concern for employees and customers. Training and follow-up will be the key to your program's success. This section highlights training tips used effectively in other retail stores.

Train your employees periodically. Establish a training schedule. An audio-visual component helps to reinforce the robbery deterrence procedures.



ROBBERY DETERRENCE TRAINING MEASURES FOR MANAGERS

These are some rules used by other companies which aid in robbery deterrence. Managers can set their own rules regarding employee behavior, and these sample rules can be adapted to your own situation.

- Each clerk on duty should greet every customer entering the store.
- A clerk is to be attentive and alert to things going on outside of the store. Lack of attentiveness of store clerks allows robbers to case the store and take a clerk by surprise.
- Clerks are to maintain a well-kept appearance and maintain good and friendly relations with customers and law enforcement officials.
- Teach your cashier to spend as little time as possible behind the register. Moving around the store is important for several reasons. First, if the clerk is busy taking care of business, the store looks safer than if the employee is just sitting back reading a magazine. More importantly, if the clerk is away from the register, a robbery would take longer and no robber wants to wait. Consider putting a bell or chime on the door so your clerk is aware when someone enters and leaves the store.
- Perform a cash audit when any employee transfers to another store or terminates employment with the store.
- Determine for each store whom the clerk is to call after a robbery and keep the telephone numbers up to date and posted at the register.



EMPLOYEE ROBBERY DETERRENCE MEASURES

Here are some tips to help your employees be “on guard” against robbery. Some stores use these tips to indicate that the clerk on duty is awake, alert and conscientiously following the company’s security guidelines.

- Welcome each and every customer with a friendly face-to-face greeting. Customers appreciate your friendliness and robbers are given the impression they have been seen and remembered.
- If you suspect someone, call the police for a routine patrol check. Consider engaging the suspect in a conversation about his car, for example, showing even further you will remember the person and his car. He has been noticed. (Do not go outside to check these things. Simply call the police and explain the circumstances).
- Observe customers inside and outside the store. Look for anyone who may be watching the store or loitering in or around it. Be aware of cars parked across the street or off to one side of the lot.
- Do not discuss company business with customers and friends.
- Always be security conscious.
- Do not carry a weapon or keep any weapon on store property.
- Here is an early tip-off to a potential problem: An honest customer knows what he wants and goes straight to it when he comes into the store. Robbers tend to poke around—maybe casing for an opportune moment to strike, or waiting for all customers to leave.
- Keep a friendly eye on each customer.
- Be wary of people wearing clothes that could conceal weapons.
- Be wary of people who come in without a car where you can see it.
- Be wary of people lingering in cars near your store.
- Be wary of customers looking at other customers rather than at merchandise.
- Keep the store neat and clean at all times, inside and outside.



- Keep store lighting inside working according to guidelines established by management.
- Keep store lighting outside working according to guidelines established by management.
- Report dark areas and potential danger spots to management.
- Always keep register locked or attended when customers are in the store.
- Keep your cash register open only for the shortest possible time.
- Do not let your attention be diverted when the cash register is open.
- Do not place payment in register until after making change.
- Never leave the bank deposit unattended.
- If you receive a large bill, look at both sides carefully.
- Be familiar with the faces on large bills.
- If someone looks suspicious, ask the customer ahead of the person: “Are you two together?” The customer will usually turn around and look at the person and then might be able to make and identification later if a robbery occurs.
- Operate only one register at night or during hours when you know the store is not very busy. Open the empty register drawer and tip it so everyone can see it is empty.
- Drop bills larger than \$10 into the safe.
- In money order sales, collect the money and make the drop before printing the money order.
- Keep a \$2 bill in the register to serve as “bait” money. Record the serial number.
- Let customers see you making drops, and tell them why you are doing it.
- When your customer wants to purchase merchandise with a large bill, ask the customer for exact change. If they say no, ask them if they mind waiting while you wait for some cash to dispense. Explain why.



APPENDIX



ASSESSING YOUR ROBBERY DETERRENCE PROGRAM

The success of a robbery deterrence program depends upon continuing promotion, inspection and audit. This is not the responsibility of an outside agency, but the responsibility of management.

Management should develop a system of periodic documented robbery deterrence program review, inspection and audit. This will be done for the following purposes:

- The level of program acceptance and compliance at all stores can be determined in a uniform fashion.
- Deficiencies can be identified and corrected.
- The need for possible program changes can be determined.
- The attention given to the program by store management will further enhance its acceptance and appreciation of its importance by store employees.
- Adequacy of training can be determined, and employees identified for refresher training.

The system should include a uniform checklist which provides for audit of each element of the robbery deterrence program and provision for additional general and specific observations by the supervisor conducting the audit as well as a record of follow-up action to correct deficiencies.

The following basic elements are suggested for inclusion on the checklist:

- Cash control compliance.
- Employee awareness, knowledge and understanding of deterrence procedures.
- Condition and use of robbery deterrence equipment.
- Lighting conditions.
- Visibility into the store.
- Deterrence signage—presence and condition.
- Store image and cleanliness.



- Escape route barriers.
- Elimination of casing points.
- Elimination of weapons in the store.

Such checklists should be completed at least annually, on a scheduled basis, and the results, with indicated follow-up and corrective action, should be consolidated into a comprehensive report for top management review.

Samples of checklists are on the following pages.

STORE SECURITY AND SAFETY: ASSESSMENT AND SURVEY

The following assessment and survey forms are set up for two distinct purposes.

The first assessment is to provide you with a way of looking at your store in terms of what can physically be done to improve its safety and security. This assessment should be done at least annually to insure that there have been no changes in the environment which would affect the security and safety rating.

Second is the store survey which looks at how well employees are complying with the established physical guidelines and how their personal work habits are contributing to their safety. The items on this survey are easily corrected. This survey should be used frequently and the ratings should be feedback to the store employees. Management's use of this survey will reinforce the expectation that the employees will always practice procedures which contribute to their safety.



STORE SECURITY AND SAFETY ASSESSMENT

STORE NUMBER _____

DATE _____

PERSON INTERVIEWED _____

TIME _____

SURVEYED BY _____

ITEM

Recommendations for
improvement and/or action to
be taken with completion
dates.

Daytime pedestrian activity level on local street	
Pedestrian profile	
Nighttime Pedestrian activity level on local street	
Pedestrian profile	
Seasonal pedestrian activity level changes	
Seasonal pedestrian profile changes	
Pedestrian visibility into store – daytime	
Shrubs or other obstructions to visibility.	
Pedestrian visibility into store – nighttime	
Obstruction to lighting effectiveness	
Pay telephone location	



Daytime vehicular traffic Volume on street	
Nighttime vehicular traffic Volume on street	
Types of motorists	
Motorist's visibility into store	
Shrubs or other obstructions to visibility	
Obstruction to lighting effectiveness	
Employee visibility of passing motorists	
Exterior floodlights on the building functioning properly	
Parking lot floodlights functioning properly	
Neighborhood restrictions on lighting	
Shrubs or trees blocking streetlights	
Fences need repair	
Parking spaces visible from inside of store day & night	
Side & rear windows properly barred or locked	



STORE SECURITY AND SAFETY ASSESSMENT

STORE NUMBER _____

DATE _____

PERSON INTERVIEWED _____

TIME _____

SURVEYED BY _____

ITEM

Recommendations for
improvement and/or action to
be taken with completion
dates.

All lights on outside at night?	
All outside lights working properly?	
Is the cash register visible from the outside?	
Could the sides of the store be used as a hiding place for a potential armed robber?	
Are there any ladders, crates, etc that an intruder could use to climb to the roof?	
Do signs, displays, or other materials that block necessary visibility cover the windows?	
Would a robber inside the store at the cash register be visible from the outside?	
Is all robbery prevention signage in place?	
Are emergency phone numbers posted and up to date?	
Is <i>Robber Identification</i> form available to clerk?	
Does clerk on duty greet every customer entering the store?	
Is trash, etc kept a distance from the fence so it cannot be used to climb over the fence?	



Robbery Deterrence Training in effect for all employees prior to being left alone in the store?	
Do you check each night to make sure lights are working?	
Are there large bills visible in the register?	
Does the clerk drop large bills as soon as possible?	
Is the clerk on duty alert and attentive to things outside the store?	
Is trash restricted to a dumpster?	
If premises are fenced, are any repairs needed?	
Are there any signs of people sleeping or drinking near the building?	
Do employees or vendors leave by unauthorized exits?	
Are exits properly marked?	
Are all locks working properly?	
Is back door locked or attended? (Do not violate any fire codes.)	
Are displays blocking the vision of cashiers to observe customers?	
Do ceiling and display lights block visibility?	
Do you know who has the keys to the store?	
If you have seasonal items like firewood, are these blocking the window?	



QUESTIONS FOR EMPLOYEE ON DUTY?

Do you keep all lights on all night?	
Do you have access to a weapon in the store?	
How much money do you have in the register?	
How much money in the second register?	
Is there any other money in the store?	
How much money do you have on you personally?	
Do you have access to the safe key?	
Does the safe work properly?	
Do the police ever come into the store?	

Excerpts taken from Western Behavioral Sciences Institute. Study on robbery deterrence. 1975

