

Preventing robbery at your business: a few tips.

After hearing of a number of robberies in my own neighborhood, I began to think about what business owners could do to prevent robberies of their business. I found a few tips from the Houston Police Department that may assist in keeping your business and your employees safe.

Robbery Prevention for Businesses

Be Observant

Employees and employers should remain alert and observant.

Things to watch for:

- a) Suspicious persons or vehicles around your business locations, especially at opening and closing time.
- b) People wearing inappropriate clothing for the weather, such as heavy coats during warm weather.

Have A Plan.

Have regular safety meetings to develop and discuss your "plan". Some of the elements of a good plan include:

- a) Employee demeanor during a robbery (do not resist)
- b) How to notify the police
- c) Escape routes from the premises
- d) How to obtain a suspect description
- e) How to obtain a vehicle description and license plate number
- f) Have prearranged signals between employees
- g) How to activate alarms
- h) When not to activate an alarm

Mentally review as often as possible the actions you and your employees must perform if confronted with an emergency. The plan should become "second nature" to you and your employees.

Physical Deterrents

Always keep the inside of your business well lit, especially the entrances and exits.

The cash register should be visible from outside the store. A clear view to the register from the street or parking lot assists police officers to see inside as they patrol the area. If the windows are blocked, they cannot see in.

Mark the edge of the main doorway with measuring tape. This will help in obtaining a more accurate height of the robber.

Keep cash at a minimum, and post notices in the doorway of this fact.

Consider the installation of video cameras or alarm systems.

Periodically test video surveillance equipment to verify it is in proper working order.

Bank Deposit Procedures

Do not advertise that you are carrying the bank deposit.

Avoid wearing name tags or clothing advertising your business when you are carrying the deposit.

Make deposits during the daylight hours.

When making bank deposits, go directly to the bank. Do not make other stops along the way. Do not take the same route to the bank each time you go, and do not go at the same time each day.

Two employees should go to make the deposit

Never leave a deposit unattended, in a vehicle or otherwise

Keep doors of the vehicle locked when carrying deposits

Be alert to any vehicle that may be following you to the bank

Conceal the cash when transferring it from the vehicle to the bank. Don't carry a money bag in view of anyone

If you go to the bank and pick up cash, then follow these same precautions for your return to your business.

Opening and Closing Procedures

Two employees should open and close the business.

Before opening the business, one employee should check outside areas for possible break-ins. Also look to see that there are no suspicious persons hanging around. Garbage dumpsters are prime places where robbers hide, awaiting your arrival. Also note suspicious vehicles.

When closing, check all areas inside for possible persons hiding in the business.

Keep a spare key in a prearranged room, in case an employee is locked inside after a robbery. Keep a phone hidden for such an emergency.

Do not admit customers after store hours.

Keep the telephone number of your police department near the phone.

Be aware that sometimes merchants are followed back to their businesses or to their homes by robbers. Certain safety precautions should be followed regarding vehicles and home safety. Do not always travel the same routes to and from work. Be observant and check often to see if you are followed.

Know where police stations and fire stations are in your area. These locations are places of safety where you can go should you suspect that you are being followed.

Write down the license plate number of any suspicious vehicles. It is better to throw it away because you don't need it, than to wish you had it.

Business Robbery Tips / During the Robbery

REMAIN CALM. DO NOT RESIST.

Do not try to be a hero. Take no action that would jeopardize your own safety or the safety of others.

Follow the robber's directions, but do not volunteer more than he or she asks for.

Advise the robber of any unusual moves you must make. Assure him or her that you will cooperate.

If the robber used a hold-up note, try to retain it, and handle it as little as possible.

If possible, activate the alarm only if you can do so safely without detection.

Attempt to alert other employees by use of prearranged signals, but only if safe to do so.

MAKE MENTAL NOTES -- Make a mental note of the robber's race, age, height sex, clothing, complexion, color of hair and eyes, etc. Note anything unusual about the robber, such as scars or tattoos.

Note the number of accomplices and how they left the premises, direction of travel, type and color of the car and the license number.

Note type, size and color of the weapon.

Watch where the robber puts his or her hands or whether he or she touches anything. Fingerprints might be left behind.

Business Robbery Tips - After the Robbery

Call the police immediately after the robbery. The person who calls the police should be able to stay on the phone if the dispatcher requests that he do so.

Lock all doors and ask all witnesses to remain until the officers arrive. If a witness must leave, obtain his or her name, address and telephone number as well as their email address.

All witnesses should write down a description of all the suspects. Do not discuss the robbery or compare notes about the robber's appearance with anyone.

Protect the crime scene. Do not touch anything.

If you or your employees were given a note by the robber, handle it carefully. Hold it by the edges so that any fingerprints that may be on the paper will not be smeared. Put it in a safe place and keep it for the police. This is an important piece of evidence.

Be Prepared

Actively participate in all training sessions offered to become thoroughly familiar with company policies and procedures.

This article was written by Seth J. Hinkley. Mr. Hinkley has been advising entrepreneurs on multiple aspects of corporate and business law since 1997. This is not legal advice and does not give rise to an attorney-client relationship. If you have any questions regarding the issues discussed in this article please contact Mr. Hinkley at:

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