



San Francisco SAFE, Inc.

ROBBERY PREVENTION TIPS FOR RESTAURANTS

Restaurant robbery has taken on a new face in recent times, in the past, the theft involved the taking of money from the cash register and/or safe, but now, employees and customers are also being robbed (of their belongings) during these violent “take over” robberies.

As a result, some restaurateurs are keeping doors (to their locations) locked in an attempt to screen customers prior to entry; hiring security guards; establishing dress codes prohibiting customers from wearing hooded-clothing, hats and headgear inside premises; placing time-delay drop safes in highly visible areas, along with signage announcing what security controls are in place.

- Robbers during their selection process consider two factors when choosing a location to rob: 1) lots of available cash and 2) the ability to get away clean.
- A large number of restaurant robberies involve current and former employees and their friends.
- It is not unusual for a restaurant to accumulate large amounts of cash, which makes an attractive target for potential robbers.
- The most vulnerable time for robbery is during opening and closing periods, however, any establishment handling cash on a regular basis can be hit at any time.
- Examples of possible deterrents – the number of employees on duty, high customer traffic (witnesses), video surveillance cameras, silent alarm systems, bad escape routes, and the presence of security guards or the police. Employee training is vital.

OPENING AND CLOSING PROCEDURES

- A minimum of two (2) employees should be present during opening and closing times.
- When opening, one employee enters and checks for security-related problems. The other employee waits outside until the “all clear” signal is provided by the employee inside.
- When closing, one employee should exit; proceed to a distance outside from which to observe the location to look for security concerns.

Note: When closing stand-alone structures (buildings with four exterior walls), one employee should exit, proceed to his/her motor vehicle and drive around the restaurant to look for security concerns.

- If no problems are observed by the first exiting employee, the “all clear” signal should be given before other employees leave the restaurant under the observation of the first employee.
- If problems occur during either opening or closing procedures, one employee should always be in a position to call for help (call 9-1-1).
- Limit employee entry/exit to one door, this is especially crucial at opening and closing times.
- No employee should be allowed to work alone in the restaurant.
- Before closing, one employee should check the office, back rooms and rest rooms to make sure no one is hiding inside.
- Rest rooms should not have drop ceilings – could be used to stay behind. Stalls should be checked.
- Be alert for "customers" who seem to be loitering or glancing around the restaurant, or asking what time you close.
- Watch for suspicious persons outside the business - especially when people park to the side of the restaurant and watch your operations.
- If you see someone who is acting suspicious inside or outside, call the police to have them checked out. Employees should be suspicious when people enter the restaurant in a group, then split up and one stands near the door, or when people stay longer than normal near closing.
- **Consider locking all entrance doors later at night, forcing entrants to knock on doors, allowing employees to make decisions on allowing entrance.**
- Educate employees and make staff aware of potential robbery situations in and around the restaurant property.
- Change combinations on keyless pad entry doors after termination of any employee that had access to that code.

BACK DOOR

- The back door should never be left unlocked or propped open unless continuously guarded. This includes loading/receiving areas.
- Install a peephole in the back door to eliminate blind exit.
- Do not take out trash or perform outside activities after dark. Consider creating a trash room that does not require employees to exit to outside to discard refuse.

FRONT DOOR AND WINDOWS

- Increase visibility inside and out. Keep front doors and windows clear of signs, shrubs and posters to allow good, two way visibility. Employees can see suspicious persons outside. Passers-by and police can see inside.
- Keep the outside of business well lit at night, proper lighting can deter crime.
- Use height markers at entrances, and consider the use of chest-high video cameras.
- Consider door announcers for slow periods (minimal customer traffic or limited staff on hand).
- Announcers can be turned off during high volume periods (heavy customer traffic).

CASH HANDLING PROCEDURES (CASH CONTROL)

- Cash in restaurant should be kept to a minimum.
- Do not keep large bills under the cash drawer; keep them in a time-controlled drop safe.
- Practice good cash control. Keep a minimum amount in your cash drawer and make regular drops into a time-controlled drop safe.
- Advertise outside that you keep a minimal amount of cash in the register and that you will not accept large bills.
- Vary your banking routine. Vary the times and routes that you use to go to the bank. Carry deposits in a variety of ways - a pizza box, attaché case, flight bag, pocket, etc. Money bags are obvious.
- Consider armored car services for bank deposits.

ALARM SYSTEM

- Install a hold up/silent alarm with activation buttons strategically located in restaurant, and consider the use of remote transmitters.
- Employees must be thoroughly trained in the use, and circumstances under which the hold-up/silent alarm should be activated.

VIDEO RECORDING EQUIPMENT

Use video camera surveillance and make it well known, with surveillance monitoring offsite or with tapes locked in secure equipment.

- Place large monitors near cash registers, allowing customers to see it in use.
- Camera should be used to monitor loading/receiving areas, trash disposal area and exterior doors.

TIME-LOCK OR TIME-DELAY DROP SAFE

Time-lock or time-delay drop safes require a waiting period to unlock itself after combination is entered (some waiting periods have been set for up to 25 minutes or longer).

- Openly drop large bills in front of customers.
- Signage Ideas: Safe cannot be immediately opened by manager or daily cash deposits can only be retrieved in the presence of an armored car security guard.
- Employees must not discuss sales volumes, cash handling policies, banking information, numbers of employees, as well as opening, closing, and back door procedures with non-employees.
- Employees must keep robbery prevention procedures secret.

We highly recommend organizing a Business Crime Watch program in your area. We also offer customized security audits for any business. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles are applied during site assessments.

San Francisco SAFE, Inc. (Safety Awareness for Everyone) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that works in partnership with the San Francisco Police Department. We offer a variety of crime prevention and public safety awareness services.

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See SAFE's website for **MERCHANTS' ROBBERY PREVENTION TIPS**.