

Greater Sudbury
Police Service

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**Robbery
Prevention**



Suggested
Guidelines

STEP 1— LOOK SAFE!

Give the Store a Look that Says— “*We Are Vigilant*”

A half-asleep clerk in a sloppy store invites would-be robbers. To them, a careless scene means that you must also be careless with money. To discourage them, you should:

- Get out from behind the counter when the store is empty.
- Keep the store clean.
- Keep the store well stocked.
- Keep active. Your activity will turn away some robbers simply because it would take too much time for them to get back to the cash register. Robbers prefer quick robberies.

STEP 2— SPOTLIGHT CRIME!

Put the Robber on Stage

Robbers don't want to be visible from outside. They don't want a police officer who may be passing by to see them with weapon in hand, holding you up.

- The store cash register should be located so as to allow a clear view for passing motorists pedestrians and police patrols. In the event of a robbery, a store employee will be able to note car descriptions and direction of travel.
- Both the interior and the exterior of a business should be well illuminated in order to deter potential robbers from hiding in shadows or poorly lit areas. Poorly lit parking areas afford potential robbers with cover while they observe a store. It also restricts the ability of the victim to identify a getaway car.
- After dark, when most robberies occur, block off “hot spots” where robbers could stand without being visible from outside.

Ask your employer about evening changes in the locations of the store signs or displays that may block the visibility of the cash register area from outside the store.

SUMMARY

Robbery is a traumatic experience for any victim. This booklet provides the business owner with basic information that may diminish the chances of becoming a victim.

If the steps are followed after a robbery takes place, you will be able to provide information to assist police officers in arresting the perpetrator and, more importantly, in assuring the protection of an innocent victim.

“CRIME PREVENTION CANNOT BE THE SOLE POLICE RESPONSIBILITY”

A business owner's commitment is vital if robberies are to be reduced. By incorporating the suggestions provided in this booklet, the threat of robbery can be faced and appropriate protection afforded to those concerned.

In businesses where there are a number of employees working in the store, time and effort can be saved if certain tasks are assigned to each employee. Rather than having employees assigned to specific duties in case of a robbery, a “RIP-TAB PAD” may be more effective. Such a “TAB PAD” should be readily available to all employees, so that should a robbery occur, employees (other than the actual victim) would remove a “TAB” each, which would specify a task.

1. (a) secure entrances
(b) admit no one
(c) await arrival of police
2. (a) safeguard cash register area
(b) safeguard note or other objects left by suspect
3. Calm customers—get names of possible witnesses.
4. (a) prepare the list of “Bait Money” taken
(b) estimate loss (if possible, do not disturb register area)

Even where only one employee is present, planning can be effective.

STEP 3— MONITOR DANGER!

Keep a Sharp Lookout at all Times

- From time to time, look at likely “casing” locations, such as outdoor phone booths or cars parked either across the street or in the lot, but off to one side.
- Observe whether anyone seems to be watching or loitering.
- Try to “stare down” anyone who is watching or loitering.
- If the person still doesn’t leave, call the police. Tell them where you are and what you see. Doing it openly may scare away the person. The police welcome such calls, and they often pay off.

STEP 4— BE IN CHARGE!

Greet Each Person Who Comes into the Store

A robber does not want to be identified. It is safer to rob strangers with as little human contact as possible.

- Give a friendly greeting.
- Look each customer directly in the eyes. Such human contact will spoil it for some would-be robbers. It decreases their element of surprise, threatens them with the possibility of being identified later and makes it hard for them to loiter in the store and watch you secretly.
- Keep a friendly eye on each customer.
- Be especially suspicious of persons wearing garments that could conceal weapons, those who come in without having parked a car where you can see it and those who loiter over a trivial item, perhaps waiting for you to be alone.
- Ask the customer ahead of a suspicious person, “Are you together?” This usually causes the customer to turn around and look at the person. Because robbers don’t want to be identifiable, this trick may scare them off.
- If you are alone with a suspicious person, leave the counter on an errand in the store and say, “I’ll be with you in a minute.”

STEP 5— REDUCE CASH!

Limit Money in Cash Register

Keep as little money in the cash register as possible and let the world know it! Unless you let them know otherwise before they start to rob you, robbers will expect a big score.

Use a “drop” safe to avoid the accumulation of large sums of money in the cash register. A drop safe is one equipped with a slot to accept bills while the door remains locked.

If your store is equipped with a drop safe:

- Put all \$20.00 and \$10.00 bills into a drop box or floor safe as soon as you get them. Do so publicly.
- Tell your customers why you are making the drop – “To make the store less attractive to potential robbers.”

Such action will educate the public, including would-be robbers, that robbing stores is no longer worth the risk.

While “casing” your store before a robbery, would-be robbers look into the cash register while it is open during a sale. If they see only silver and small bills, they are not likely to rob you.

Do not count cash in the presence of customers when clearing a register, particularly at closing time. This may provoke a spontaneous robbery, or, if repeated, will allow a potential robber to plan a robbery knowing when and how much money he can expect to take.

In addition:

- Protect the crime scene by keeping customers and other employees from the area of the store where the robbery occurred.
- Lock the door until the police arrive.
- Don’t touch anything that the suspect may have touched.
- Save any note used by the suspect—don’t handle it and don’t allow others to handle it.
- Ask any witnesses to wait until the police arrive. Get their names and addresses if they are unable to remain at the scene.
- Don’t discuss the crime until the police interview you. If there is a delay, make notes or fill out the suspect, vehicle and weapon identification chart while the information is still fresh in your mind.

When the Police Arrive

Answer questions accurately when being interviewed by the police. Tell only what **YOU** saw or know. If an estimate is necessary, advise them that it is only your opinion and not a definite amount.

Don’t exaggerate when describing your experience or what has been stolen.

Cooperate with police by:

- Making yourself available for an interview;
- Not being reluctant to identify suspects;
- Giving evidence in court when notified to do so.

While cooperation with the police doesn’t always result in the recovery of losses, you may be able to prevent others from becoming victims of robbery.

If approached by news reporters after a robbery, do not divulge the amount of money stolen. When newspapers, television or radio reports indicate a large loss, other robbers will be attracted to your store.

- **Look at the Weapons**
Focus attention on size, type and colour of weapon(s) used.
- **Watch What the Robbers Touch**
Watch what the robbers touch so that it can be preserved for evidence (fingerprints).
- **Tell the Robber about any Surprises**
If you must reach or move in any way, tell the robber what to expect. Robbers may resort to violence when they are startled.
- **Don't Chase or Follow a Robber**
Robbers may shoot at pursuers.
- **Look at the Robber's direction of travel when leaving the Store**

AFTER THE ROBBERY

- **Once the immediate danger has passed, call 911.**

Do not delay in calling the police even if the robber has threatened you; hesitate only long enough to ensure your safety, then call immediately. The faster the police are able to respond, the better the chances the robber will be caught.

By giving you more control of the situation, the above procedures will make you less nervous if a robbery occurs. You will be safer and less of a threat to the robber.

When talking to the police, attempt to provide the following information:

- Direction of travel;
- Time of robbery;
- Whether or not the suspect was armed;
- The number of suspects involved;
- If vehicle used, a description of the vehicle and direction of travel, if known;
- Description of suspect (use suspect and vehicle identification chart as a guide if available).

STEP 6— THE LATE NIGHT STORE!

Special Late Night Steps

Most store robberies occur after dark. At that time you should take special steps to make the store a less attractive target to would-be robbers:

- Keep the amount of money in the cash register at the absolute minimum. Many stores operate with less than a total of fifty dollars between two registers.
- You can run a store on very little money if you request that customers pay for their purchases with the smallest possible bill and with the exact change. If you need any particular denomination of money, ask your customers. They can help you.
- Minimize the available cash by putting large bills in a safe or drop box as soon as you get them.
- Be certain all outside lights are on and working.
- If your business is equipped with a video camera, ensure the system is working, regularly cleaned and inspected to ensure clear taping and proper alignment of the cash register and/or doorway area.

If a business is situated close to a bank, night deposits can be utilized to reduce the amount of cash on hand. When transporting cash or cheques from a business to a bank or depository, do not use pre-marked money bags and avoid drawing attention to the fact that money is being carried. If possible, have someone accompany you and frequently alter your route and time of delivery.

Consider the use of bait money in all registers. Record the series, serial numbers and denominations of a small amount of bills, and in the event of a robbery, give these bills to the robber.

However, ensure that "bait money" is verified on a regular basis. Identification of stolen property is always a problem. Unless ownership can be proven for court purposes, use of "bait money" is useless.

Ask your employer what the minimum amount of money is to keep in the register after dark.

STEP 7— HONESTY IS SAFETY!

Don't Lie to Robbers

- Fake security devices and signs don't help. Robbers soon learn to ignore them.
- Follow the Robbery Prevention Steps carefully and make sure your fellow employees observe them too.

IN THE EVENT OF A ROBBERY!

VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROCEDURES

If you learn and follow the robbery prevention procedures, chances are much better that you'll never be robbed. But if and when a robbery should occur, your main concern must be to prevent violence. Experience has shown that the best way to keep anyone from being hurt is to avoid trying to be heroic. Treat the robber just as you would a customer. Your safety and that of your fellow workers and customers is far more important than the money.

If you are robbed, follow these instructions:

- **Remain calm and stay in control**
Your opportunity to get back at the person who is victimizing you begins now! By remaining calm you can take mental notes of the robber which will help the police in their apprehension once the immediate danger to you has subsided.
- **Keep it Short and Smooth Like a Normal Sales Transaction**
The longer it takes, the more nervous the robber. Nervous robbers are more likely to pull triggers.
- **Obey the Robber's Commands**
Robbers seldom hurt people who cooperate.

- **Don't Argue**

Once the robbery has started, it is too late for robbers to change their minds—but it is not too late for them to get angry and harm you. Don't argue—just cooperate.

- **Don't Fight**

The money isn't worth the risk of someone being hurt. To attack an armed robber is foolhardy, not heroic. Robbers are usually very tense and easily provoked. Sometimes they are under the influence of drugs and very unpredictable.

- **Give only what is asked for**, no more, and include bait money if it is available.

- **Don't Use Weapons**

Weapons breed violence; it is dangerous to even have them in the store. The robber's weapon is already one too many.

- **If You Are Facing a Weapon**

If you are facing a weapon the odds are against you. Some people take risks and turn out to be losers. Robbery has become more common in recent years, and violence has increased.

- **Look at the Robbers**

Notice details to aid you in describing them and their mannerisms. When trying to determine age, height, weight and appearance, compare them to yourself or people you know.

- **Memorize Peculiarities**

Memorize peculiarities such as tattoos, scars and/or other prominent features.

- **Clothing**

Note type of clothing worn, but keep in mind that outer clothing is easily changed.