



# BUSINESS CRIME PREVENTION TIPS FROM THE SANTA CLARA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE



## **Burglary Prevention**

- Make sure all outside entrances and inside security doors have deadbolt locks. If you use padlocks, they should be made of steel and kept locked at all times.
- Windows should have secure locks and burglar-resistant glass.
- Remove all expensive items from window displays at night and make sure you can see easily into your business after closing.
- Light the inside and outside of your business, especially around doors, windows, skylights, or other entry points. Consider installing covers over exterior lights and power sources to deter tampering.
- Keep your cash register open and empty after closing.
- Be sure your safe is fireproof and securely anchored. Leave it open when it's empty, use it to lock up valuables when you close. Remember to change the combination when an employee who has had access to it leaves your business.
- Before you invest in an alarm system, check with several companies and decide what level of security fits your needs.

## **Robbery Prevention**

Robbery doesn't occur as often as other crimes against businesses, but the potential for loss can be much greater from a single incident. Also, robbery involves force or threat of force and can result in serious injury or death.

- Greet every person who enters the business in a friendly manner. Personal contact can discourage a would-be criminal.
- Keep windows clear of displays or signs and make sure your business is well-lighted. Check the layout of your store, eliminating any blind spots that may hide a robbery in progress.
- Provide information about your security systems to employees only on a "need-to-know" basis. Instruct your employees to report any suspicious activity or person immediately to the Sheriff's Office.
- Keep small amounts of cash in the register to reduce losses. Use a drop safe into which large bills and excess cash are dropped by employees and cannot be retrieved by them. Post signs alerting would-be robbers of this procedure.
- Make bank deposits often and during business hours. Don't establish a pattern; take different routes at different times during the day. Contact the Sheriff's Office if you would like an escort to a local bank.
- If you or your employees are confronted by a robber, cooperate. **Merchandise and cash can always be replaced—people can't!**

## **Credit Card Fraud**

- Train employees to follow each credit card company's authorization procedures.
- Be skeptical of a customer with only one credit card and one piece of identification.
- Be aware of the customer who makes several small purchases by check or credit card.
- If you are suspicious of the purchaser, make a note of appearance, companions, any vehicle used, and identification presented and contact the Sheriff's Office.
- Look for "ghost" numbers or letters. Many times criminals will change the numbers and/or name on a stolen card. To do this they either melt the original name and numbers off or file them off. Both of these processes can leave faint imprints of the original characters.
- Examine the signature strip on the credit card. A criminal may cover the real card owner's signature with "White-Out" and sign it on the new strip.
- Check to see if the signature on the card compares favorably with the signature on the sales slip.

## **Check Fraud**

Many fraudulent checks are visibly phony. By paying close attention to a check's appearance, you can often detect a possible bad check before accepting it as payment. When you see one or more of the following telltale signs, you may be looking at a phony check.

- No perforation on check edges, apparent altered writing or erasures, water spots or alterations of check's color or graphic background, Numbered under 500 (new account)
- Post-dated
- Glossy rather than dull finish of magnetic ink
- Signature does not match imprinted name and ID

## **Shoplifting Prevention**

Businesses lose billions of dollars each year to shoplifting, and then often must pass this loss on to the customers through higher prices.

- Train employees in how to reduce opportunities for shoplifting. Contact the Sheriff's Office for a personalized assessment.
- Keep the store neat and orderly. Use mirrors to eliminate "blind spots" in corners that might hide shoplifters. Merchandise should be kept away from store exits to prevent grab-and-run situations.
- Keep displays full and orderly, so employees can see at a glance if something is missing. Keep expensive merchandise in locked cases. Limit the number of items employees remove at any one time for customers to examine.
- Design the exits of the business so all persons must pass by security personnel or store employees.
- The cash register should be inaccessible to customers, locked, and monitored at all times. Place it near the front of the store, so employees can also monitor customers coming and going.

- Dressing rooms and rest rooms should be watched at all times. Keep dressing rooms locked and limit the number of items taken in.

### **Employee Theft Prevention**

Employee theft accounts for a large amount of business losses. Protect your business by following some simple rules:

- Establish a written policy that outlines employee responsibilities, standards of honesty, and general security procedures and consequences for not following them.
- Make sure new employees read it, understand it, and sign it as a condition of employment.
- Follow strict hiring practices. Verify all information and contact all the references listed on an application. Consider running a credit check.
- Keep accurate records on cash flow, inventory, equipment, and supplies. Have it checked regularly by someone other than the person responsible for maintaining it.
- Limit access to keys, the safe, computerized records, and alarm codes, and engrave "DO NOT DUPLICATE" on store keys. Change locks and access codes when an employee is terminated.
- If internal theft is discovered, take action quickly. Contact The Sheriff's Office and be sure to send a message to your employees that theft will not be tolerated.
- Reward employees for uncovering security problems and for doing a good job.

### **Video Surveillance**

Security cameras are a critical component of a business's security. They may deter customer and employee thefts, and may play an important role in assisting law enforcement identify burglary suspects. It's crucial, however, to place the cameras in the right location and point them in the right direction.

Be sure to invest in a security camera system with good quality and resolution. Also ensure that your system is not just live view, but records, with ample storage and power supply.

The following are some of the best places to install security cameras at your business:

- Exits and entrances
- Points of sale
- Reception area
- Exterior and towards the parking lot
- Warehouses
- Secluded Spots

\*For a personal assessment of your individual business, please contact The Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office West Valley Patrol Division at 408.868.6600.