

METROPOLITAN POLICE

Personal Safety & Security

*Practical steps that can be taken by
retail staff to reduce the risk of
commercial robbery and action to be
taken during and after a raid*

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**METROPOLITAN
POLICE**

Working for a safer London

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Crime prevention advice is given free without the intention of creating a contract. Neither does the Home Office nor the Metropolitan Police Service take any other legal responsibility for the advice given.

INTRODUCTION

This publication is directed mainly towards preventative action by staff in connection with armed robberies in retail outlets and other similar premises to which the public have right of access.

A realistic and positive approach to this type of crime will provide the best measures of defence against it. The preparation of such a defence will involve a careful study of the complicated factors involved, the reaction of staff, internal procedures, cash holdings, method of the criminals and above all the protection of staff and customers.

The fear of crime is as much of a problem as crime itself. However, there are many simple precautions that can be taken to increase staff confidence and make it less likely that they will become a victim of crime.

Failure to apprehend criminals is often attributed to inaccurate descriptions, delays in reporting, interference with the scene of crime, vague information of ways and means of escape; all are indications of a lack of security preparation.

Any devised plan must be designed to:

- **secure the safety of employees and customers;**
- **reduce the loss; and**
- **effect the arrest of the criminals.**

No single, set plan can have a universal application. A general plan, known and understood by all, capable of adaptation to each situation, and dictated by local conditions is required.

It must also take account of the many variables which will be found - number and disposition of employees, location of premises, the interior layout, cash holdings, alarm installations, systems of communication and method used by criminals etc. No two hold-ups are exactly alike.

The plan should be divided into three sections:

- **preparation before a robbery;**
- **staff action during a robbery; and**
- **staff action after a robbery.**

Notes on each section also contain, either directly or by inference, advice on what not to do.

PREPARATION BEFORE A ROBBERY

Be Alert

- **Be aware of people hanging around.**
- **Be suspicious of people in vehicles watching the premises; watch for repetition at the same times; take the registration number of vehicles whose occupants act suspiciously.**
- **Be aware of distracting tactics.**
- **Use a log to record details of suspicious persons, events or vehicles. This may be useful at a later date to check on previous sightings.**
- **Report anything suspicious - police do not mind attending false alarms if they are made in good faith.**

Surveillance

- **Make sure you can both see and be seen at all times.**
- **Know where your nearest colleague is working.**
- **Where possible you should have facilities to observe the street from within the premises (description of getaway vehicle and escape route is vital).**
- **Observation of public areas by alert counter staff, security staff or by mechanical/electronic means, e.g. closed circuit television or 35mm cameras, is essential.**

Watch For the Unusual

- **Watch for the person surveying the premises or checking security/camera systems; the stranger seeking change or opening an account with a small deposit; questions asked about staff routine and amounts of cash held.**
- **Watch for the person paying particular attention to till points or cash handling areas.**
- **Pointless enquiries.**
- **Not dressed for the occasion, e.g. large coats in warm weather.**
- **Nervous disposition.**

Ask Questions

- **Most businesses have a policy of helping customers.**
- **If any of the above apply, ask simple non-confrontational questions**
- **Can I help you?**
- **Is everything in order?**
- **Do you need any assistance?**

Dangers of Habit

- **Who is first to arrive at the premises? Vulnerability of cleaners. Consider an opening procedure, which requires two members of staff.**
- **View the street and building before entering. Is everything normal?**
- **Look for any suspicious people or vehicles.**
- **Look for signs of forced entry.**
- **Do not enter if you are suspicious. If satisfied, unlock the door, step in and lock the door quickly. No conversations with the door partly open.**
- **First to enter can easily indicate to others that all is well within. A simple code system can be devised e.g. raising or lowering a blind, removal of a card from window, etc., or the use of mobile telephone.**
- **Mid-day robberies are staged because the time is likely to be more favourable when there is a minimum of staff. Consider staggering meal times and lock away larger amounts of cash.**
- **Closing time robberies gives the raiders more time to operate.**
- **Do not admit after hour's callers.**
- **If they claim to be acting on authority ask for their identification and check it, ring the organisation they claim to represent before allowing access.**
- **Leave the premises with someone else.**

Cash Handling

- **Cash in tills should be kept to a minimum practical float and large denominations kept at the back of drawers and tills.**
- **Regularly transfer excess cash to a safe or other secure location.**
- **Avoid unnecessary display of cash, count or package it out of sight. Spread the risk by avoiding concentration of large sums in one location. Remember the raider is working against time. If the funds are in one place he may get them all, thieves can often overlook money.**
- **Keep a package of 'bait' money with recorded serial numbers in tills. Details of these can be circulated.**
- **Transport of cash - see appendix 'A'.**

Security Procedures

- **Your company should have written procedures on all aspects of security, you should make yourself familiar with them and always adhere to these set procedures.**

ACTION DURING A ROBBERY

The following recommendations are not designed to meet all circumstances and may vary in importance in each case. Adapt them. Most armed robbers will usually be nervous, remember staff and customer safety must always come first.

Types of hold-up raiders:

- | | |
|----------------|------------------------------------|
| - OPPORTUNIST | - new to this type of theft |
| - PROFESSIONAL | - organised and sometimes ruthless |
| - UNSTABLE | - unpredictable |

THEY ARE ALL DANGEROUS. The opportunist may overreact because he is nervous; the professional to achieve his objective, the unstable is totally unpredictable.

Do Not Take Risks

- Keep still and avoid making sudden movements.
- Do not reach for pockets or handbags.
- Control movements carefully and explain any overt actions you are about to make.

Break Face-to-Face Contact

- Some organisations report good results from breaking face-to-face contact with robbers.
- Other similar methods involve walking away from the immediate area. These methods are only appropriate if there are glass barriers between staff and the offenders.
- In any event staff should avoid confrontational eye contact with the raider.

Do Not Have a Go

- Give the raiders what they want and get them out.
- Remember cash and goods can be replaced.

Do Not Become Involved

- If you are not directly involved keep away from the hold-up. Your intervention could make the raider more nervous.
- If you are out of sight, stay out of sight.

Obey Instructions

- **Do exactly as you are told.**
- **Staff must co-operate and must not endanger themselves needlessly by failing to carry out instructions. If ordered to put their hands up - put them well up.**

Alarm

- **If there is a hold-up alarm installed, activate it, but only if it is safe to do so.**
- **Dial the emergency number (999) for the police, but do not take unnecessary risks.**

Do Remember Details

- **Make a mental note of the appearance of criminals, unless you are ordered to turn away, face the wall or lie on the floor.**
- **Even if the raider is masked, remember all you can about clothing, labelling, shoes, jewellery, tattoos, accent, and mannerisms. Many criminals are eventually convicted because of this type of evidence.**
- **Many raiders have their own peculiar methods during a robbery; study of the method may help police to identify the criminals.**
- **Make a mental note of anything touched or left by the raider.**
- **If possible look for accomplices outside or in a getaway vehicle.**
- **Note the direction of escape and make, model, colour and registration number of the getaway vehicle.**
- **Every detail you can remember may be important.**

Reduce the Loss

The following recommendations are for guidance, but remember the safety and lives of staff and customers are more valuable than the assets of the organisation. If sensible cash management is routinely carried out only small amounts of cash will be available in the tills making the following guidance unnecessary.

- **If ordered to fill a bag with money the small notes should be put in first; careful training in neatness should be forgotten.**
- **Stuff the money into the bag, this way less will go in.**
- **Do not volunteer to put in extra money.**
- **Do not draw attention to the location of cash storage points.**

- **Give coinage as much as possible, it is bulky and heavy and may satisfy the amateur.**
- **Hold back large denomination notes unless instructed by the robber.**

ACTION AFTER A ROBBERY

During a robbery actions are largely determined by the demands of the offenders. After the raid personnel should perform specially allotted tasks systematically and quickly. Speed is vital. The early arrest of the criminals depends on this.

Initial Action

- **Secure the premises.**
- **Assist staff or customers who may be injured or suffering from shock.**
- **Telephone the police using the emergency number, remember you may have to dial 9 for an outside line before dialling 999. You will have to ask the operator for the police.**
- **Say to the police “There has been an armed robbery”.**
- **Give the name and address of your company and whether anyone has been injured.**
- **Give description of offender(s) and vehicle with details of means and direction of escape.**
- **Notify your organisations security department.**

Stop Trading

- **Stop trading and securely close the branch. This will give Police scene examiners the best possible chance of finding forensic evidence. It will also prevent inquisitive members of the public and local press reporters from entering.**

Do Not Touch Anything

- **Avoid obliterating traces left by the raiders e.g. fingerprints, palm prints and shoemarks. Do not try to determine the loss at once if you have to handle drawers or cash containers touched by the raiders.**
- **Preserve untouched anything left behind by the criminals e.g. note pushed across the counter, containers for money, newspapers or magazines, weapons etc.**

Record Details

- **Record details and the sequence of events, this is important.**
- **Write down the descriptions of the criminals, but do not confer with others. The dominant personality may alter the impressions of others. It is useful to**

have a pre-prepared prompt sheet listing the details of suspect(s) and vehicle descriptions required - see appendix 'B'.

- **Keep customers on the premises, they may be essential witnesses. Take names and addresses of customers if they adamantly insist on leaving.**

Secure Video Evidence

- **Ensure one person is responsible for securing any video or photographic evidence.**
- **Under no circumstances should a member of staff be allowed to rewind or playback the video recording of the incident. This will affect the usefulness of the video for evidential purposes and greatly detract from the value of the witness's evidence.**
- **Ensure police are aware that video or photographic evidence exists.**

Look After Colleagues and Customers

- **Do look after staff and customers after a raid.**
- **Robbery is a traumatic experience and if required referral should be made to a qualified counsellor, Victim Support or General Practitioner.**

General

- **Do not allow press reporters to jam telephone lines and tell the police what has been said to the press.**
- **Do not disclose to the press addresses of staff or witnesses, the value of the property stolen or any amount of cash overlooked by the raiders.**

Appendix A

TRANSPORT OF CASH

If large amounts of cash need to be banked or collected on a regular basis, then the safest method is to employ a recognised cash carrying company. If you do undertake your own banking or bank on behalf of your employer, be especially careful. Remember you are most vulnerable at the start or finish of your journey.

- Choose the right staff. Only physically fit persons should be used.
- Survey the route before use and establish those vulnerable spots so that extra vigilance can be exercised on approach.
- Frequent changes of times, routes and collection and delivery may offer security advantages. Preferably use a busy route rather than a quiet one. Establish alternative routes, if possible.
- Consider using cash carrying case or secure container, but do not draw attention to it. Fastening cash cases to the body can enhance the risk of injury being caused to the carrier.
- An able-bodied escort should be considered when large amounts of money are being moved.
- The carrier should walk in the centre of the pavement facing on-coming traffic thereby reducing the risk of a surprise attack from behind. An escort should always walk a few yards behind.
- Know the location of public telephones and the identity of trade's people on route.
- Never use public transport.
- If you use a car, try not to use the same one each time. If possible use a decoy vehicle as well.
- Make sure all vehicles are well maintained. Keep all doors locked and do not make unnecessary stops or leave the vehicle before you reach your destination.
- Consider installing a boot car safe or ring bolts to secure cash carrying equipment.
- Special care is needed when using a night safe. Any escort should stand with his back to the safe to observe the surrounding area.
- If you are attacked - surrender the cash. **NEVER HAVE A GO.**

Appendix B

CRIME RECORDING FORM

Please complete the details for each suspect immediately following an incident and hand it to the first police officer on the scene. It is important that the description form is completed without reference to any other person's recollections.

WITNESS

Name

Date & time of incident

Date & time you made these notes

Where were these notes made, business/home address or elsewhere
.....

Signature of witness

FIRST SUSPECT

Name used (if any)

Male/Female

Colour of skin Age

Height Hair colour

Hair type (style, length etc.)

EyesGlasses Yes No

Build

Words used

Accent

Complexion

Facial hair

Tattoos/marks/scars

Jewellery

Clothing

.....

Disguises

Peculiarities

Bags/items carried

SECOND SUSPECT

Name used (if any)

Male/Female

Colour of skin Age

Height Hair colour

Hair type (style, length etc.)

EyesGlasses Yes No
Build
Words used
Accent
Complexion
Facial hair
Tattoos/marks/scars
Jewellery
Clothing
.....
Disguises
Peculiarities
Bags/items carried

VEHICLE

Registration No.
Type (car, m/cycle, van etc.)
Make
Colour
Model
Damage or other identifying features
.....
Accessories on the vehicle

Date & time form handed to Police
Name & number of Police Officer
.....
Signature of Officer

NOTES