

Robbery Prevention

The goal of this bulletin is to assist employers with establishing a robbery prevention program. Studies conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor and the Bureau of Justice Statistics have shown that 75-82% of workplace homicides occur in connection with a robbery. In addition, robberies are one of the leading causes of violent injury among workers. However, physical and behavioral changes at a workplace can substantially reduce the frequency of robberies and severity of any resulting injuries.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has identified a number of factors that may increase a worker's risk for workplace assault. These common risk factors include:

- Contact with public
- Exchange of money
- Working in high crime areas
- Working alone or in small number
- Working late night or early morning hours
- Delivery of passengers, goods or services

Businesses with these common risk factors for robbery include, but are not limited to:

- Restaurants
- Retail establishments
- Banks and credit unions
- Businesses with delivery operations
- Apartment buildings, leasing offices
- Farmers markets/small vendors operating with cash

Elements of a Robbery Prevention Program should include both physical changes (engineering controls) and behavioral changes (administrative controls). Engineering controls remove the hazard from the workplace or create a barrier between the worker and the hazard. The next sections describe physical changes to a workplace that may assist with robbery prevention.

Security and Lighting

- Maintain adequate lighting in work areas, parking areas and other areas where employees go at night.
- Provide surveillance cameras in such areas as parking lots, entrance doors, and registers.
 - Videos should be checked daily/weekly to make sure tapes are in good condition.
 - Digital video recorders should be replaced according to manufacturer's instructions in order to maintain video quality.
- Provide a "panic" button, silent alarm or other means for employees to communicate with police or security, and check regularly to ensure proper working order.
- Control Access
 - Ensure door and access locks work properly.
 - Provide more than one exit that workers can reach in case of emergency.
 - Keep all exterior doors, except those used by customers or visitors, locked during business hours.
 - Doors must open from the inside of the building without a key to allow persons to exit in case of a fire or other emergency.
 - Limit vendor delivery to daytime hours so delivery door can be locked at night.
 - Ensure roof accesses are locked on the inside of the building.
 - Ensure exterior ladders on the side of the building do not provide access to the roof.

Visibility

- Leave a clear, unobstructed view of the cash register from the street.
- Remove clutter from the windows so the interior can easily be seen from the street.
- Install 180 degree peepholes in solid doors to easily identify people on the other side.

- Provide convex mirrors, two-way mirrors, or provide an elevated vantage point to give employees a more complete view of their surroundings.

Postings

- Post signs on windows or doors indicating presence of surveillance cameras and/or security alarms.
- Post signs that the cash register only contains a small amount of cash.
- Place height marks at all exit doors.
- Post emergency phone numbers.
- Make address numbers easy to read from the street.

Administrative controls affect the way employees perform jobs or specific tasks. The following are behavioral controls that assist with robbery prevention.

Cash Handling

- Implement cash handling policies that include using a drop safe and carrying small amounts of cash.
- Prohibit employees from counting out the cash receipts in front of customers.
- Be unpredictable about moving money from your business to the bank by varying times, routes and methods of concealment; never use a bank bag.
- If handling large amounts of cash, consider using a security or armored car service to transport cash and other receipts to the bank.

Opening and Closing

- Have two employees open and close the business.
- Never open your business for anyone after you have closed.
- Set up a buddy system for workers who walk to public transportation and parking areas.
- Check all restrooms and other areas at closing to make sure no one is hiding in them.

Awareness

- Observe all suspicious persons or vehicles carefully and work with nearby businesses to keep an eye out for suspicious activities.

- Establish a protocol for reporting suspicious activity.
- Limit distractions such as loud music or cell phone use so employees can maintain awareness to their surroundings.
- Work with your local law enforcement to identify any special arrangements which might be useful at a particular location.

Once controls have been developed to prevent robberies, employee training should be conducted. Training helps to ensure that employees are aware of the potential for a robbery and informs them of the controls in place to protect them and their co-workers. Employees with different roles in the business may need different types and levels of training. In addition, the need for retraining varies depending on the circumstances. Retraining should be considered for employees who violate policy or who are transferred to new job assignments or locations. Training should include, but is not limited to:

- An overview of the potential risk of robbery.
- The company's physical security measures and administrative controls.
- Specific instructions on what to do during a robbery.
- Post-robbery procedures (see Risk Management Bulletin #164, Post Incident Response to Robbery).
- Provide additional training for managers, supervisors and security personnel to enable them to implement and enforce robbery prevention controls.

Robbery prevention programs benefit greatly from periodic evaluation. Ensure after the evaluation is complete that any resulting changes to the program are communicated to all employees. The evaluation process should involve, but not be limited to:

- Reviewing the following items as related to safety/security:
 - Post-robbery incident reports
 - Audits and inspections
 - Safety committee and staff meetings
 - New strategies to deal with robberies

- Consult with employees before and after making robbery prevention program changes to determine the effectiveness of the interventions.

In summary, your program will only be as effective as the amount of work put into it. Management must plan, organize, and manage the robbery prevention program just as it plans, organizes, and manages production, quality, and costs. In the end, the prevention of robberies will be the final determining factor of your program's success.

If you have more specific questions as you proceed to develop your program, we encourage the use of outside resources, including your local law enforcement agencies and trade associations. In addition, some states have laws aimed to reduce robbery exposure.

For additional information and assistance, please contact your Zenith Safety and Health Consultant.