

Crime Prevention for Restaurants

Restaurants are particularly vulnerable to robbery, burglary and theft. It is normal for restaurants to accumulate a large amount of cash on-site. They can be attractive targets of criminal activity.

The following information is provided to serve as a frame of reference for the restaurant industry:

- Eating and drinking establishments comprise the largest segment of the retail industry.
- One out of three adults eats in a restaurant on a typical day.
- Over nine million people are employed in the food service industry in the United States.
- One out of four retail business locations is an eating and/or drinking establishment.

Restaurant Risks and Vulnerabilities

- **Armed Robberies**
 - ✓ Armed robberies offer a great opportunity for injury or death.
 - ✓ Current and former employees and their friends are often involved.
 - ✓ The most vulnerable times for an armed robbery are during opening and closing periods.
 - ✓ Cash in the restaurant should be kept to a minimum.
 - ✓ No one, either hourly employee or manager, should be allowed to be alone in the restaurant.
 - ✓ Employees should enter and leave utilizing the “buddy system.”
 - When opening, one enters and checks for security-related problems.
 - The other employee waits outside until they receive an “all clear” signal.
 - When closing, one employee should exit the restaurant, proceed to his/her motor vehicle and drive around the restaurant to look for any security concerns.
 - If no problems are observed by the first exiting employee, an “all clear” signal should be given before others 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 go for help or call for help.

- **Employee Theft**

Employee theft is the most frequent criminal event in a restaurant.

Employees have the greatest opportunity to steal because they have access to the assets and are familiar with the operation of the restaurant.

Many restaurant operators place too much trust (described as “irresponsible trust”) in those individuals responsible for cash and inventory.

One of the most frequent methods of employee theft of cash is by manipulating sales transactions.

Other means of employee theft include misuse of coupons, gift certificates, complimentary passes and credit cards.

- **Violence**

Incidents of violence can involve both customers and employees. They may range from verbal threats to use of fists, knives or guns by both men and women.

Violence can be the result of street gang and drug activity both inside the restaurant and in the parking lot.

The presence of a manager in the dining room/service area has been found to be effective in defusing and preventing potential acts of violence. Violent acts are more likely to develop and escalate when no one in authority is present.

- **Burglaries**

Burglars are usually after money and the inventory.

Intrusion detection alarm systems should be installed in restaurants to deter burglars.

Elements of a Comprehensive Restaurant Crime Prevention Program

- **Honesty Policy**

Every restaurant, regardless of size and complexity, should have a simple honesty policy applicable to all employees that states clearly and briefly that theft or conversion of any restaurant asset is unacceptable.

Some members of today's workforce believe that unless it is in writing, certain behavior such as theft is acceptable and not subject to punishment.

Employees should sign the honesty policy that they understand it and will comply with it.

- **Prosecution Policy** – Prosecution for all crimes in the restaurant should be fairly and consistently pursued.

- **Loss Reporting** – All losses due to criminal activity should be reported and properly investigated.

- **Employee Screening**

Many restaurant employees are nomadic by nature.

Employment screening procedures should include the conduct of reference checks with previous employers.

Criminal and credit checks should be conducted on any employee with access to the safe or keys to the building.

Employers can be held legally responsible for the violent crimes by employees negligently hired.

- **Training**

Honesty and prosecution policy

Robbery prevention and response procedures

Operation of security systems and equipment

- **Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)**

All nooks and crannies (hiding places) on the exterior of the restaurant should be eliminated.

Landscaping and plant growth within 4 feet of exterior walkways and doors should be no more than 3 foot in height.

Trees should be trimmed at a height of no less than 6 feet from the ground to the lowest foliage.

Outdoor pay telephones should be eliminated.

Exterior lighting should be no less than five (5) footcandles.

The restaurant property should be identified and enclosed with a 3'-4' high wrought iron fence, if possible.

Closed-circuit television cameras may be used to monitor parking lots and other exterior areas.

Exterior motion detection lighting systems should be employed.

Exterior trash or waste containers should be located in a locked enclosure normally accessible only from the inside of the restaurant.

Parking lots should have speed bumps or ripple bumps.

- **Physical Security**

Restaurants should have electronic alarm systems.

- Preventive maintenance (PM) of electronic alarm systems is vital
- Electronic alarm system components will periodically need to be replaced and updated.
- Restaurant electronic alarm systems should be centrally monitored.
- Key restaurant staff need special training in disabling and activation procedures.

CCTV

- Place monitors near cash registers
- Allow customers to see it is in use
- Video recorder should be out of sight.
- Among the exterior areas that may be monitored by CCTV cameras are the loading/receiving area, trash disposal area and exterior doors.
- CCTV systems need preventive maintenance (PM)
- Appropriate restaurant staff should be trained in the use and employment of CCTV systems.

Freezers and Coolers

- May serve as safe rooms
- Should be capable of being unlocked from the inside
- Should have an alarm or communication device inside the freezer and cooler

Restrooms

- Should not have dropped ceilings - could be used by “stay-behinds”
- Stalls should be checked before closing

Exterior Doors

- All solid exterior doors should have through-the-door viewers.

- The rear door leading to the trash or waste containers should have a buzzer to request re-entry. These doors should *never* be propped open.

Drive Through Windows

- Should be equipped with pull-down “bandit barrier” with bullet resistant glazing.

Roof Access

- Any roof access to the restaurant should be locked on the inside of the building.
- Exterior ladders on the side of the building should not provide access to the restaurant roof.

Safe Management

- The combination to a restaurant safe should be changed every time an employee with access to the combination terminates or is terminated.
- Never hide a safe combination in proximity to the safe.
- Always scramble combinations upon closure of a safe.
- Wheels should be removed from safes.