

Working to fight crime.

The bad news is that all workplaces are vulnerable to crime. And the good news? All workplaces can take steps against crime. Organizations across Alberta – offices, plants, shops, restaurants, warehouses, and even ranches – can lower their risks. The first step is to assess and address these risks. The design of a workplace or business can be changed to reduce the opportunity of crime. Taking part in community crime prevention programs make businesses safer. Employees can be taught to fight fraud. Your local police service can help you work on upgrading your workplace security.

PROTECT YOUR INVESTMENT

Put proper business security in place to prevent crime and provide a safe place to work and do business. And ask your employees and business neighbours to work with you to the common goal of preventing crime.

Consider making changes to the physical environment to reduce the opportunity for a crime to occur. For tips on Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, contact your local police service.

1. GET TO KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY, NEIGHBOURS AND CUSTOMERS

- Take part in or support community crime prevention programs.
- Try to keep similar hours to other business in your area.
- Celebrate Crime Prevention Week by reviewing your business security. Get your staff involved and review safety procedures. Book a security review with a qualified locksmith or security expert and go over your risks and what you can do to lower them.
- Work with other businesses in the area to promote shopper and business safety and address specific community security issues.
- Encourage staff to greet and make eye contact with all people entering your business. This serves to deter those who want to commit a theft.

2. MAKE YOUR PHYSICAL SPACE AS SECURE AS POSSIBLE

Outside:

- No blind spots on the property. Good visibility outside and inside.
- Walkways, landscapes and signs should direct people to the proper entrance and parking.
- Public paths should be clearly marked.
- Keep weeds and shrubs and debris away from windows and doors. Don't provide concealment or climbing platforms for burglars.
- Well-lit sidewalks, doorways and parking areas.
- There should be no easy roof access. Tools and ladders that could help thieves should always be securely stored.
- Don't neglect roof openings, air ducts, skylights, hatchways, doorway transoms, sidewalk, and basement openings.
- At night, light up entrances with vandal-control fixtures. Leave some lights on inside too.
- Natural surveillance means clear visibility from store to street, sidewalk, parking areas, loading areas, and passing vehicles.

Inside:

- Cash registers should be located at the front, near a main entrance and visible from the outside.
- Place height markers at the main entrance so employees can use them to guess the height of suspects. To make it yourself: place strips of differently colored tape at the 5', 5'6" and 6' heights.
- Signs or displays should cover no more than 15 per cent of windows. Interior shelving and displays should be no higher than five feet.
- Restroom doors should be visible from main pedestrian areas and away from outside exits.
- Inspect restrooms regularly during shifts and post an inspection sheet for staff to initial.
- In storage rooms, install locks that can open from the inside and keep an extra key inside. Robbers sometimes lock people in storage rooms. Consider an alarm button for the back room.
- Automatic bank machines (ATM) or drive-through windows should be at the front of banks or businesses, facing main roads. Use reputable ATMs that have been long established.
- Install public phones as call-out only.

Windows and Doors:

- Open entrances should be under visual or electronic surveillance.
- Install roll-shutters for windows and doors.
- Use non-removable hinge pins on all outward swinging doors.
- All fire exit doors should have full-length blocker plates and security hinges and should open to the outside.
- Install deadbolt locks on all outside doors and fire exits. Check once each year – maybe every Crime Prevention Week – to make sure door and window frames and locks are still secure.
- Install glass that is burglar-resistant or use security film. (Note: some glass break sensor alarms don't work with security film).
- Reinforce rear and side doors with crossbars and install grating bars on rear and side windows.

- Vehicles can be backed into glass windows and doors at ground level. Consider steel bars, roll-shutters, concrete abutments or concrete-filled steel posts on pavement in front of the windows.

Employee and Building Safety:

- Night time employees should have access to safe, visible parking close to the entrance.
- Have at least two employees on shift so no one is working alone. For more information on provincial requirements, visit the Employment and Immigration website at www.employment.alberta.ca or call 780-415-8690 (Edmonton and surrounding area) or 1-866-415-8690 (throughout Alberta).
- When the building is empty, ensure that any security devices for locking the panic hardware on exit doors meet Alberta's fire and building codes.
- Make sure padlocks are solidly mounted and never left open – even on an open door. Unlocked padlocks can be removed and replaced by thieves for easy access later.
- Install alarm and/or video surveillance systems. Cameras can provide evidence of crimes. Get estimates from several reputable security companies and check references. Post a notice where it can be easily seen that you have a security system.
- Install a burglar-resistant safe, anchored to the floor in a well-lit, highly visible location.

3. SMALL BUSINESSES ARE ALSO TARGETS

Over half of all commercial burglaries in Alberta happen to small businesses. You can still change your space to make it safer. To assess your property, ask yourself:

- Are there shadows or boxes that would conceal a thief?
- Is there merchandise in the display window that is easy to steal?
- Is there evidence of an alarm?
- Are there hinges on the outside of the door?
- Are the windows or skylights secure?
- Are employee and customer records secured and locked?

4. USE GOOD PROCEDURES AND SECURITY HABITS

- Train staff for every emergency.
- Employees should feel free to challenge all strangers or people who seem to be in an area they are not supposed to be in.
- Have employees use the main entrance. Lock the rest.
- Check all doors and windows at closing time.
- Don't lock a thief inside when you leave, inspect all closets, bathrooms, in between shelving, and other hiding places.
- Try to have more than one staff member at opening and closing – prime robbery times.
- Watch for parked cars observing your business, loiterers, suspicious behaviour.
- Check references for employees. Take a snapshot for the personnel file.
- Keep purses and wallets in locked drawers.
- Practice good key security. Sign out numbered keys and collect them when employees leave your company. Never label keys indicating what they are for – use a code.
- Call police if you suspect a break-in has happened. Do not enter the building and do not touch anything.

5. BE SMART AT THE TILL

- Train staff to look for fraud and theft.
- Adopt a cash limit. Install a drop safe and have staff deposit money when over a certain amount in the cash register. Post a sign with 'maximum \$50 cash in register' someplace obvious.
- Don't place large bills under the cash register – use a safe or other alternatives.
- Leave empty cash drawers open after hours to show thieves there is nothing in them.
- Do not accept cheques from any customer you don't know.
- Ensure debit card PIN pads are stored in a known location, out of sight when not in use, and locked after closing.

6. HAVE GOOD CASH HABITS

- Keep cash to a minimum.
- Make frequent, irregular bank deposits.
- Deposit incoming cheques and cash each day. Don't keep large sums overnight.
- Adopt and advertise a cash control policy. Have a cash limit for the register and deposit excess in a safe that the cashier can't open.
- Vary your banking routine and camouflage your cash bag.
- Consider using bait money. Record the serial numbers of bait money and keep the record in a safe place. Put the bait money at the bottom of a till section for larger bills, and do not use for regular transactions. If you are robbed, give robbers the bait money.

7. SPECIAL TIPS FOR OFFICES

- Insist delivery drivers check-in with the receptionist before entering.
- Ask all service and repair workers for I.D.
- Have a reception desk so anyone entering must go through reception.
- Keep washrooms locked at all times. Keep the key with the receptionist.
- Consider having a code the receptionist can use to alert staff to a potentially threatening situation.
- Office furniture should be organized to ensure you won't be trapped behind your desk in a threatening situation or blocking your exit through the door.
- Ensure you are seated closer to the door than the customer.

8. KEEP AN ACCURATE INVENTORY OF ALL VALUABLES

- Secure all equipment and computers with security locks.
- Record equipment and software serial numbers and registration data and keep with other important business records in a locked cabinet or locked room.

- Register with Operation Provident, a national business identification program. Putting identifying numbers on company property deters thieves and helps police return stolen property to rightful owners. Your local police service can assign your business an Operation Provident number. You can engrave or stamp this number in plain sight on tools, equipment, business machines, furniture, and other items. You need your own marking kit – standard or heavy-duty engravers or metal stamping dyes will do. Police will provide decals that can be placed on marked items and doors and windows to warn thieves away.

9. ADDRESS LOSS PREVENTION

The loss of assets and inventory are mostly due to three causes: internal theft, shoplifting, and document/vendor errors. Reduce theft by reducing temptation and opportunity.

To prevent internal theft:

- Do frequent cash audits.
- Keep one person to a register.
- Break shifts so that one employee doesn't work cash for the whole shift.
- Do daily reports, bank deposits, retail inventory, and trend sheets to monitor shortages and overages. Also look at number of voids, refunds, readings, and 'no sales' per employee.

To prevent document/vendor errors:

- Watch for a series of suspicious 'mistakes', free samples, swaps, and vendors who want to count product for you.
- Insist on counting product yourself and count all product, not just cases.
- Initial all packing slips indicating the number of items received.
- Check all invoices with a company wholesale price book.

To prevent shoplifting:

- Watch and tend to customers in a pleasant, interested manner.
- Greet and serve customers promptly. Shoplifters do not want your attention.
- If you suspect someone has stolen something, call the manager, police, or security. Watch them, engage them in conversation, and offer to assist them.

- Shoplifters come in all shapes and sizes. Watch for loose clothes, shopping bags, and large handbags or backpacks. Watch for customers who seem to be on drugs or alcohol.
- Do not allow your attention to be diverted by a shoplifter's accomplice. Stay alert and avoid unnecessary conversation.
- Keep displays neat and tidy. Constant attention to stock means staff members spot missing merchandise quickly.
- Lock small or valuable merchandise in display cabinets.
- Sales personnel should have a full view of the entire sales floor area. Rearrange displays, shelving, and lighting to eliminate blind spots.

10. KNOW ARMED ROBBERY SAFETY

- Employees should be trained on armed robbery procedures.
- Cooperate. Don't argue or try to be a hero. The robber may be unstable.
- Do exactly as robbers ask. Be polite and accommodating.
- Don't make sudden moves. Tell them what you are doing if you have to move to do what they want. For instance, tell them you are reaching below a counter to get cash.
- Watch robbers carefully and describe them in your head. Write everything you remember down as soon as you can safely do so after the robbery happens.
- If it's safe, try to get a description of the robbers' car or the license number as they leave.
- Set off the hold-up alarm if you can do so safely without obvious movements.
- Don't touch the hold-up note or anything else robbers may have touched.
- Lock doors immediately after robbers leave and touch as little as possible.

WHAT DO WE HAVE IN COMMON?

Find out more about our common goal for secure workplaces. Your local police service can help you work on upgrading your workplace security. Crime prevention ideas and information are also online at www.crimeprevention.gov.ab.ca