

# Burglary Prevention

Crime and Violence Prevention Center • California Attorney General's Office



## BUSINESS SECURITY

If you own or operate a business, make sure it is safe and secure. Your customers want to feel safe when they visit, and they are likely to return if their visit is positive. Law enforcement encourages businesses to subscribe to the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) concept as an easy way to ensure that their business is safe and secure. What is the secret to CPTED? It is the design and layout of the business that eliminates or reduces criminal behavior and at the same time encourages people to “keep an eye out” for each other. The National Crime Prevention Institute defines the purpose of CPTED as:

*“The proper design and effective use of the built environment can lead to a reduction of fear and incidence of crime, and an improvement in the quality of life.”*

With this in mind, apply these CPTED principles to your business:

- Locate check-out counters near the front of the store, clearly visible from the outside so that employees can better watch all activities.
- Clearly mark public paths. Make private areas harder for non-employees to access.
- Use signs to direct patrons to parking and entrances.
- Prevent easy access to the roof or fire escape from the ground by trimming trees adjacent to the building. Secure roof access and fire escape ladders with locking covers.
- Provide rear access to shops if rear parking is offered.
- If possible, install rear windows to face parking areas for increased visibility.
- Do not cover up windows with advertising or display material.
- Use interior shelving and displays no higher than five feet, even lower in front of windows.
- Fully illuminate the exterior of the building and grounds at night.
- Design loading areas that avoid creating hiding places for people and merchandise.
- Maintain clear visibility from the store to the street, sidewalk, parking areas and passing vehicles.
- Place all entrances under visual surveillance.
- Place any pay telephones within clear view of employees.
- Consider installing an alarm system.

## Maintaining your property

This is an important part of your over-all security. A run-down business can attract criminals. Follow these simple suggestions to maintain a customer-friendly business:

- Keep buildings and walks clean and repaired.
- Maintain parking areas to a high standard without pot-holes or trash.
- Remove faded posters, broken signs, and other displays that are beyond their useful lives.
- Keep plants and all landscaping in good condition.

## Consider the “nuts and bolts” of security

The following are suggestions to provide a burglar-resistant environment for you and your employees:

- Utilize deadbolt locks with a minimum 1" throw bolt containing a hardened, saw-resistant steel insert on all exterior doors. If you choose double cylinder deadbolts, check with your local building inspector or fire department to see if these locks are permitted.

- Pin the hinges on any exterior doors that swing out. Simply remove the center screw from each side of the hinge and insert a metal pin or headless screw on one side. This will prevent the door from being removed.
- Replace hollow-core doors with solidcore doors. Replace weak door frames or reinforce them with steel or concrete. Protect glass in the door with mesh or a polycarbonate sheet.
- To secure windows, consider adding clear polycarbonate sheets. If this is too expensive, consider roll down covers, grates or bars. Remember to check with your local fire department or building inspector on these additions.
- If you are considering purchasing an alarm system, contact several reputable companies and get a full assessment of your needs. If you do purchase an alarm system, consider adding the following features:
  - Panic buttons (in case of robbery)
  - Fire/smoke detectors
  - Monitored system (contacts law enforcement if alarm is activated)

## **Burglary Prevention**

Your best protection against a burglar is visibility: well-lit open spaces, low counters, and large, uncluttered display windows. Put your cash register up front so that the burglar's activity will be visible from the outside. When closing your business, empty your cash drawers and leave them open so a burglar won't be tempted to break them open. Anchor safes in concrete.

Additionally, you should:

- Contact the crime prevention unit of your local law enforcement agency for a free security survey of your business. Also request additional information on Business Watch and Operation Identification.
- Keep a complete, up-to-date inventory of your merchandise and property: office machinery, personal belongings, etc. Put a copy in your safety deposit box or at a location away from your business site.

If you suspect your business has been burglarized:

- Immediately call your local law enforcement agency or dial 9-1-1.
- Don't go in – the burglar may still be inside.
- Don't open for business – your employees and customers may unwittingly destroy or alter valuable evidence



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