**Business Burglary Prevention Tips**

Here are a few tips to help prevent your business from being burglarized. Not all of these tips will apply to every business and this list certainly isn’t exhaustive, but it provides a good starting point from which to build.

**When examining your business to identify potential weaknesses:**

- Look at your physical property from the burglar’s point of view.
  - What’s the easiest way to get in?
  - Is there a place to force entry into the business that can’t be seen from the street?
- Look at your property both in the daylight and at night.
  - Are all the lights working?
  - Are the lights pointed appropriately? They should illuminate doors and windows and places where a burglar might hide.

**Look for the following things first:**

- Heavy objects like river rocks that are used by employees to prop open doors and can also be used to smash in windows.
- Open or unlocked doors, including doors that do not lock well.
- Items or fixtures - like exterior wall-mounted ladders or a high fence - that can provide easy rooftop access.
- If you have fencing, is the fencing in good repair?
  - Note that fencing that is attached to your building may also provide rooftop access.
- Do you have skylights or other rooftop entrance points that are unlocked, unprotected, or not alarmed?
- Does darkness or landscaping create hiding spots for the burglar?
- Have your employees circumvented your security measures for convenience? (for example, sometimes smokers will disable a back door alarm so they can step outside.)

**Windows**

The easiest way to get into your business is through your glass windows. To minimize this vulnerability, you could use metal bars. This may have a negative effect on your overall marketing plan so it may not be a realistic approach for you. If this is the case you can use polycarbonate sheets over glass and glass doors. It recommends you have this professionally installed.
Another more expensive alternative is safety glass. Safety glass is certainly appropriate in certain industries that use pass through windows.

Don’t forget to lock your windows and consider putting a bolt or screw in your window frame to keep them from being lifted out of the tracks or forced open.

**Doors**

The weakest part of a door is the lock. If you don’t use it, it does not work. The lock needs to be a double key deadbolt, with a 1 inch (or more) throw bolt. Look for a lock with a hardened steel insert that will resist sawing.

The strike plate should be attached to the doorframe with screws that measure 3 inches or more. This will help prevent a burglar from kicking the door in.

A double cylinder deadbolt lock requires a key to open both from inside and from outside. This keeps burglars from breaking glass in the door and reaching through to turn the knob from inside. It also prevents them from exiting through the door if they’ve entered through the roof or a window.

Make sure the cylinder of the lock has a steel guard - a ring around the key section. The cylinder guard should be tapered or rotate around the key section (if twisted) to prevent wrenching.

Remember, though, a double cylinder deadbolt can also block your exit in an emergency. Check with your local building inspector to see if these locks are permitted in your area.

**Hinges**

Make absolutely sure that your hinges are on the inside of your business. No hinges should be on the outside if at all possible. If you do have hinges on the outside of your business, then remove the center screw from each side of the hinge and insert a headless screw or metal pin on one side. When the door closes the end of the pin will insert into the hole of the opposite side and prohibit the lifting of the door.

**Padlocks**

Overhead doors, receiving doors, garage doors are typically secured with padlocks and hasps. Look for sturdy padlocks that don’t release the key until the padlock is locked. That way you’ll never leave a padlock unlocked.

Remember that a padlock is only as good as the hasp it is mounted on. The hasp should be secured with bolts and mounted on a metal plate. Be sure bolts are concealed when the padlock is locked. Make sure the padlock is case-hardened with a 3/8-inch shackle so it can resist repeated hammering.

**Door Construction**

Weak doors equal weak protection. Replace hollow core exterior doors. Re-enforce the door frame. If the door can’t be smashed through or kicked in, can it be pried away from the frame? Aluminum or wood door frames are extremely vulnerable to this.
Roof Top Access

Skylights, ventilation ducts, and fire escapes may tempt a burglar because they’re usually not visible from the street. To protect skylights from being used as a point of access, alarm them. A ceiling mounted 360 degree motion detector should be used to cover all of these possible points of entry.

Guards

Guards can be a deterrent. Consider ways to split the cost with other businesses in your area. Look for a reputable security business and check references. Make sure the security staff knows who your employees are, store hours, shoplifting, and internal theft policies.

Lighting

Light may be one of the best crime deterrents. In fact, there is a noticeable decrease in burglary rates during the summer months and many attribute the decrease to shorter hours of evening darkness.

As a rule you should try to light up all dark areas, however, before putting up so much as a candle, you should check your local ordinances for a dark sky rules that limit the amount of ambient light visible at night. In some jurisdictions, businesses can be fined for excessive light pollution.

Alarms

Alarms are not a physical barrier to entry like a good lock or door but they are an entry detection and notification tool. They may not keep the burglar out, but they will keep him from staying. If you choose to alarm your business, make sure the alarm has:

• a battery back-up;
• the capability to double as a fire alarm;
• a way to check whether the system is working;
• Monitored by someone with specific instructions to call the police if two or more of the following things are true:
  • there is an activation is after store hours;
  • the owner cannot be reached;
  • more than one zone has activated - for example, there is a front door activation and an interior door or motion detector also activates.

Alarm systems are great tools and can help you sleep at night, but they must be maintained regularly to avoid false alarms.

When an alarm falsely activates, it often requires two police officers to respond and check the structure. Many cities, including Tucson, levy fines for excessive false alarms.

Employee training is the cornerstone to controlling this problem as most false alarms occur when opening and closing your business. If you accidentally trigger your alarm
take steps to make sure that the alarm company has not dispatched the police. If your employee triggers the alarm and cannot shut it off, train them to call you immediately so you can notify the alarm company. Then make sure the alarm company has cancelled the police.

Remember to assign alarm codes to specific people and change them when the employee leaves your company. Never use the numbers from your address or your telephone as the alarm code.

**Cameras**

Cameras are another great tool that often does not get used efficiently or effectively. Cameras do not solve crimes directly - they help police know who to look for and can aid in prosecution. In many cases, the video from a well-placed, well-maintained camera will be the only evidence found at the scene.

Make sure your camera system is working and test the distance from the door to the camera. Have an employee stand at the door or desired area of coverage and be taped. If their face is clear then the camera is properly placed - if you couldn’t identify them from the video, it is unlikely that you could identify a stranger from the video image. Many potentially great tapes show nothing but a blur for a face, rendering the evidence is useless for identifying the suspect.

**Landscaping**

Landscaping can be used as an effective barrier. Short thorny bushes near windows or cactus are another great alternative. Vegetation should be kept trimmed and placed for your advantage. Vegetation should never obscure points of entry (windows and doors) into your business.

**Safes**

Mount your safe to the floor. Bolt it directly to the concrete or consider having it professionally installed. Make sure it is fire proof and use it often. As with alarms codes, change the combination when an employee who had access to the safe leaves the company.

**Cash registers**

Make sure your cash register is emptied at night. Open the drawer and leave it open so that anyone looking in can see that there is nothing in it - this can help prevent criminal damage, because an opportunistic thief might see that there is no cash inside to steal.

**Fencing**

Keep fencing in good repair. Monitor and quickly repair any holes in or under your fence line. Cactus and spiny shrubs are a great tool at the base of your fences, especially on the outside of the fence when possible. If barbed or razor wire is used, then make sure it is multiple strands and repaired as needed. A common technique for defeating wire on top of fences is to lay carpet on it. Take steps to minimize this weakness by using razor
wire in strands of three. A single coil is easy to defeat. Check your local building code to ensure that it is legal to add razor wire to pre-existing fences.

**Operation Identification**

Many burglars have been caught with the victim’s property in their possession but unmarked and unidentifiable property has prevented officers from making an arrest right then and recovering the property. Mark all of you company’s property with your driver's license number or your company name and address. Keep a complete, up-to-date inventory of your merchandise and property, including your office machinery. Put a copy in your safe deposit box or other location away from the business site.

**Remember...**

Establish a routine for "closing up shop," locking doors and windows, and setting alarms. Also have someone inspect the building before opening for business.

Make friends with the businesses or offices that surround you. They are your neighbors. Think about arranging monthly meetings to discuss problems or ideas that will benefit everyone.

If a burglary has occurred:

Train your employees

- Don’t go in the business. The burglar may be in there and/or the police may mistake you for the burglar.
- Don’t open for business. Your job now is to try to protect the scene and the evidence until the police are done.
- Call the police immediately.
- Take an inventory of the loss and get it to the police as soon as possible.