



PREVENTING AND DEALING WITH PHARMACY ROBBERIES

SDPD Crime Prevention

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This paper provides tips for pharmacies on how to prevent robberies, what to do if a robbery occurs, and what to do after a robbery to help arrest the robber. Most of them apply to both in-store and stand-alone pharmacies. Some apply to one kind, e.g., keeping the front door locked and buzzing in customers would not be practical for in-store pharmacies. Decisions regarding specific measures would be based on a security assessment that takes into account vulnerabilities, likelihood of robberies, costs of prevention measures, possible losses, risks to employees, effects on customers, etc. General tips for preventing retail store burglaries and robberies are in a paper entitled Burglary and Robber Prevention for Retail Stores that can be opened on the Prevention Tips page of the SDPD website at www.sandiego.gov/police/services/prevention/tips. They are not repeated here.

HOW TO PREVENT ROBBERIES

The following tips can help prevent robberies and enhance the safety of your employees. The SDPD Community Relations Officer (CRO) in your area will be glad to assist you in this with a free business security survey. The CRO will identify vulnerabilities and suggest ways to eliminate them. SDPD division addresses and phone numbers are listed at the end of this paper.

Store Design

- Locate the cash register where it is visible from the outside of the store, but far enough away from the window so as not to provoke a quick window-smash and grab.
- Protect cashier with a bullet-resistant glass, plastic, or laminate enclosure or window. And install a secure money pass-through slot or tray. This also applies to drive-through window cashier locations.
- Build counters high enough so robbers cannot jump over them to get into the drug storage and dispensing area.
- Install fast-closing shutters on the counters to prevent robbers from jumping over them.
- Provide two-way visibility in areas open to the public. Keep windows and counters clear. Don't allow them to be cluttered with signs, displays, plants, etc. For stores that sell alcoholic beverages the California Business and Professions Code Sec. 25612.5(c)(7) states that "No more than 33 percent of the square footage of the windows and clear doors of an off-sale premises shall bear advertising or signs of any sort, and all advertising and signage shall be placed and maintained in a manner that ensures that law enforcement personnel have a clear and unobstructed view of the interior of the premises, including the area in which the cash registers are maintained, from the exterior public sidewalk or entrance to the premises."
- Install convex mirrors to enable employees to see people in areas that might be blocked by display shelves, walls, or other obstructions.

- Provide good lighting in the pharmacy area.
- Because lights and other security systems work on electrical power you must take measures to prevent disruption of external power or provide internal backup power. At a minimum, external circuit breakers should be installed in a sturdy box that is locked with a shielded padlock.
- Alarm systems that use phone lines should also have a backup cell-phone feature in case the line is cut.
- Install 180-degree peepholes in all solid doors so employees can identify persons at a door before opening it. Peepholes also enable employees to check that no one is hiding near the door before it's opened, e.g., to take out trash. Or install cameras outside the doors with monitors on the inside that employees can look at to make sure it is safe to open the door.
- Install silent alarm buttons at cashier and other vulnerable employee positions. The alarm would alert your security company to call **911** to report a robbery in progress. It will also tell it to start monitoring your camera imagery, as suggested below.
- Keep the front door locked and install a video intercom so employees can talk to and see people at the door before opening it for them. To prevent tailgating, this door could be mantrap, i.e., a secured space equipped with two interlocking doors to insure that only one person can pass through into the business.
- Businesses with cameras that record people entering the store should keep a file of pictures of people who are known or suspected shoplifters. These pictures could be shared with other businesses in the area so employees can learn to recognize these people and watch them closely if they come into their store in the future. For this and other applications that involve facial recognition, cameras should be mounted at face level.
- Place colored height marks at all exit doors to help estimate the robbers' height. While this won't help prevent a robbery, it will enable employees to better describe a robber.
- Locate the pharmacy in the back of a store so robbers have to go down several aisles to exit the store.
- Store target drugs in excess of the day's prescription fill in a safe or storage locker with a time-delay lock. Employees would not be able to open the safe or locker during the day.

Store Operation

- Put excess cash in a time-lock drop safe. Keep the safe locked when access is not required.
- Never open your store for anyone after you have closed.
- Beware of a caller who says that your store has been broken into and asks you to come and secure it. Get the caller's identity and call back to confirm that it was from a SDPD officer or other trusted person before going to your store. The same applies to a caller who says he or she is from your alarm company.
- Keep all exterior doors locked during store hours except those used by the public. These doors should be monitored by store employees or security personnel. Emergency exits should be alarmed and designated for emergency use only. Employees should close and report any exterior door found open in areas not accessible to the public.
- Keep the front door locked and have customers buzz to be observed and greeted before being admitted.
- Limit quantities of target drugs in the store. Three possibilities are: (1) not stocking the drug, (2) stocking just enough to fill prescriptions to be picked up that day, and (3) stocking more than enough to fill the day's prescriptions but keeping the excess in a safe or storage locker with a time-delay lock.
- Put a tracking device in one of the target drug bottles that would be given to a robber. This would enable the police to locate and arrest the robber.
- Mark all target drug bottles so that a person found with one of these bottle in his or her possession could be investigated for the robbery.
- Install a device that sprays a mist on the robber as he or she leaves the pharmacy. The mist, which the robber cannot notice, contains a plant DNA that is visible only under a special light. Suspects seen with this DNA are thus linked to the robbery and easier to convict.
- Wipe down counters and doors to the drug storage area to keep them clean for fingerprints that might be left by a robber.

Personnel Policies

- Train employees in the operation of security systems, procedures, and measures, i.e., cameras, alarms, safes, etc., and to recognize persons who might be casing the store for a robbery.

- Allow only authorized personnel behind the counter. Check others who say they need access for valid identification. And then call the issuer to verify the information.
- Have at least two employees working at high-risk times.
- Be especially alert at opening and closing times when the store is not crowded.
- Designate two employees to open and close the store. Those opening the store should be trained to call **911** if they see anything suspicious, e.g., a vehicle parked in the lot near the door, and not to enter until the SDPD arrives. Those closing the store should make sure it is safe to leave, either by looking out a peephole or looking at the imagery of a camera covering the area outside the door. If they notice anything suspicious they should call **911** and remain in the safety of the store until an officer arrives. These employees should park as close as possible to the door.
- Request that customers remove hats, hood, and sunglasses. If they refuse, alert store security and the pharmacy, and call **911**.
- Hire your own security personnel or contract with a security company for security services. In the former case you must register with and obtain a Proprietary Private Security Employer (PSE) license from the California Bureau of Security and Investigative Services (CBSIS). You can then hire and train persons who have registered with the CBSIS and have valid Proprietary Private Security Officer (PSO) licenses. A person must pass a criminal history check by the California Department of Justice and the FBI to obtain this license. The PSE must obtain authorization from the CBSIS to provide the initial 16-hour and continuing-education PSO training. To contract for private security services you would deal with a Private Patrol Operator (PPO), who must register with the CBSIS and obtain a PPO license, for which there are numerous requirements. The PPO would provide Security Guards for the security services. Security Guards must also be licensed by the CBSIS. They will need to pass a criminal history check and complete a 40-hour training course.

Cameras

- Cameras are usually used just to record persons and activities in their fields of view. They should be installed to observe what is happening inside your store, especially the pharmacy counters and any other areas where robbers might go, and outside your store to observe people and vehicles in your parking lot and anyone watching or loitering near your building. The latter should be well-lighted at night for better camera imagery. Dummy cameras should not be used because most criminals can tell the difference between them and real cameras.
- Cameras can be wired or wireless. They can record continually, when motion is detected, at specified times, or on an alarm. After a crime occurs the imagery can be reviewed for usable evidence. Any camera system that is installed should be designed to provide high-quality, color imagery of persons and activities on the premises in any lighting condition for use by the SDPD in investigating crimes. And it should have backup power for at least 12 hours in the event of a power failure. Camera imagery should enable clear and certain identification of any individual on the premises. Its recordings should be kept in a secure place for at least 30 days.
 - Cameras can be analog or digital, viz. closed-circuit television (CCTV) or Internet Protocol (IP). Imagery from both can be stored and monitored on site and viewed remotely over the Internet. Camera imagery can be used in several ways. In one, recorded imagery is stored for use in future crime investigations. In another, imagery is used as it is being recorded to report and deal with crimes in progress. However, because it is unrealistic to expect someone to monitor cameras all the time, the monitoring might be done at random times or when an alarm or alert condition occurs. Monitoring at random times is usually adequate for dealing with crimes that exist for several hours, e.g., illegal lodging on a sidewalk. Monitoring when an alarm or alert condition occurs is necessary for dealing with crimes that could occur at any time and last a few minutes, e.g., a burglary or a robbery.
 - Alarms can be triggered by a break-in, motion in an area covered by cameras, an open door or gate, a robbery, etc. Either CCTV or IP cameras can be used to record on alarms. Alert conditions include motion in and out of an area, an unattended object, objects that have moved or are missing, behavior, e.g., shoplifting, etc. Programmable IP cameras with video-analytics software, so-called “smart” cameras, are needed to record when specific conditions occur. They have other advantages over CCTV cameras. These include higher resolution, better video quality, and video encryption.
 - Robbers may be deterred from entering your store if they know that their actions will be recorded and seen by the alarm company. And if they do attempt to rob the pharmacy and the camera imagery is accessed by the alarm company in real time, personnel there can look at the imagery and see what’s happening. Or it can be accessed by a web-enabled mobile device. This should be done over a secure, password-protected

Internet link. If a crime in progress is seen, **911** would be called and the dispatcher would be given the details. This will lead to a higher call priority and a faster response than would occur for an unverified alarm robbery call. And by relaying real-time information to officers en route to the store, the officers can make better, more-informed tactical decisions in dealing with the suspects. Officers might even arrive in time to arrest them.

- For activities that don't trigger alarms, "smart" IP cameras can be used to record unusual or suspicious activities inside and outside the store. Those activities can be defined by various alert conditions that can be set by day of the week and time of the day. When an alert condition occurs, the imagery would be viewed to see what's happening so appropriate actions can be taken. If a crime in progress is seen, **911** would be called and the dispatcher given the details. If something suspicious is seen, it should be reported to the SDPD on its non-emergency number, **(619) 531-2000** or **(858) 484-3154**.
- Because cameras are susceptible to damage by criminals attempting to hide their actions, measures should be taken to make them less vulnerable. These include the following.
 - Mount cameras on high sturdy poles.
 - Use damage-resistant cameras.
 - Use armored conduits for electrical cables.
 - Install cameras where they are within the field of view of at least one other camera.
 - Use cameras with video analytics that can detect blocking, defocusing, and other tampering.
- Businesses with cameras that record people entering the store should keep a file of pictures of people who are known or suspected shoplifters. These pictures could be shared with other businesses in the area so employees can learn to recognize these people and watch them closely if they come into their store in the future. For this and other applications that involve facial recognition, cameras should be mounted at face level.

Signs

- Unless cameras are monitored all the time, signs regarding cameras should use phrases like **RECORDED VIDEO SURVEILLANCE IN USE** or **ALL ACTIVITIES ARE RECORDED TO AID IN THE PROSECUTION OF CRIMES COMMITTED ON THE PREMISES**. Don't use words like **SECURITY**, **PROTECTION**, or **MONITORING** because they can give people a false sense of security by expecting timely help if they are threatened or attacked, or that they or their property are somehow being protected by the cameras.
- Employees do not have access to any safes.
- Name of the alarm company.
- Camera imagery is recorded off site. This should deter a robber from looking for and retrieving or destroying the recorder.
- Hats, hoods, and sunglasses should be removed when entering your store. This will make robbers more recognizable in your camera imagery.
- Certain drugs are not stocked, or the amount stocked is just sufficient to fill prescriptions being picked up today.

WHAT TO DO IF A ROBBERY OCCURS

Every robbery is different. You will need to assess yourself, the robber, and the situation to determine what you should do. Here are some general tips to use in training your employees:

- Act calmly. Do exactly what the robber says, no more or no less. Keep your movements short and smooth to avoid startling the robber. Keep away from the robber and limit eye contact. Give the robber exactly what he or she asks for. Don't offer any more.
- Don't stall. The quicker the robber leaves the less chance of violence.
- Do not resist or try to be a hero. Cooperate for your own safety and the safety of others. Robbers usually are excited and easily provoked. Tell the robber about any movements you plan to make.
- Activate the silent alarm if it can be done safely without alerting the robber.
- Observe carefully. Study the robber's face and clothing and note any distinguishing features including height, weight, race, hair, eyes, nose, scars, tattoos, etc. Be aware that robber might be using physical disguises, e.g., a wig, mustache, etc. Also try to remember as much as possible about the robber's voice, language, accent,

mannerisms, etc. If there is more than one robber, get a good description of one before going to the others. You can get confused if you try to remember too much.

- Get a good description of any weapon used.
- Remember what was taken, where it was put, and how it was carried.
- Watch carefully for any things the robber may touch. Don't disturb or touch them. They may contain fingerprints that can help identify the robber.
- Don't block the robber's escape route in the store.

WHAT TO DO AFTER A ROBBERY

The following will help apprehend the robber.

- Call **911** immediately after the robber leaves and follow all instructions from the dispatcher, e.g., to keep the phone line open until officers arrive. The dispatcher will probably ask for a description of the robber, his or her vehicle, and direction of escape. Be prepared to provide this information. It will be broadcast to the responding officers who may see and be able to stop the robber.
- Observe the direction of escape and the characteristics of any vehicle involved, i.e., its license, make, model, color, etc.
- Close the store. Lock all doors and stop store operations until officers arrive and conduct a preliminary investigation of the scene.
- Preserve the crime scene. Tell your employees not to touch anything the robber may have touched or otherwise contacted, and to keep away from areas where the robber had been.
- Ask all witnesses to remain until officers can interview them. Get their names and contact information if they are unable to remain. Ask to see their driver's licenses or other ID to verify this information.
- Write down everything you can remember about the robbery so you can provide the SDPD with a good description of what happened as well as descriptions of the robber(s), vehicle(s) involved, and weapon(s) used. Have each employee involved do the same. It is important that they do this independently, i.e., without discussing the robbery with other employees.
- Make a list of all drugs that were taken.
- Report the loss of drugs to U. S. Drug Enforcement Agency office in San Diego on DEA Form 106. The instructions for this form can be found at www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/21cfr_reports/theft/index.html.
- Answer all questions of the responding officers and the robbery investigators. Have each employee involved remain in the store and do the same.
- Provide camera imagery to the SDPD. Any camera system that is installed should be designed to provide high-quality, digital imagery of the robbery.
- Offer a reward for the arrest and conviction of the robber and request that other pharmacies in your area post the notice.
- Analyze the robbery and take appropriate measure to prevent recurrence.

SDPD AREA STATIONS

Central	2501 Imperial Ave. SD 92102	(619) 744-9500
Eastern	9225 Aero Dr. SD 92123	(858) 495-7900
Mid-City	4310 Landis St. SD 92105	(619) 516-3000
Northeastern	13396 Salmon River Rd. SD 92129	(858) 538-8000
Northern	4275 Eastgate Mall SD 92037	(858) 552-1700
Northwestern	12592 El Camino Real SD 92130	(858) 523-7000
Southeastern	7222 Skyline Dr. SD 92114	(619) 527-3500
Southern	1120 27th St. SD 92154	(619) 424-0400
Western	5215 Gaines St. SD 92110	(619) 692-4800