



Association of Business Crime Partnerships

Preventing Burglary

A Good Practice Guide
for Retailers



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The advice contained in this booklet is an outline of the law on theft and a guide to good practice for those dealing with shop theft.

Further advice may be obtained from your local police, legal adviser or trade association.

Introduction

The Home Office does not publish statistics which record burglary of shops or other commercial premises as separate categories of crime. But commercial burglary is a major problem for businesses large and small, and the evidence from Home Office annual reports is that as police efforts to reduce domestic (residential) burglaries have been successful, there are now more non-domestic burglaries than there are residential burglaries. So it is important to recognise that your business – and your livelihood – may be at risk if you do not take adequate precautions to protect your business – before you become a victim.

The definition of burglary is contained in section 9, of the Theft Act, 1968, which says:

- 1) A person is guilty of burglary if –
 - (a) they enter any building or part of a building as a trespasser with intent to commit any such offence as is mentioned in (2) below; or,
 - (b) having entered any building or part of a building as a trespasser they steal or attempt to steal anything in the building or that part of it or inflict or attempt to inflict on any person therein any grievous bodily harm.
- 2) The offences referred to in (1)(a) above are offences of stealing anything in the building or part of a building in question, of inflicting on any person therein any grievous bodily harm or raping any person therein, and of doing any unlawful damage to the building or anything therein.

Burglary takes many forms and all risks should be assessed using our risk analysis form and burglary prevention self assessment questionnaire at the rear of this booklet.

Repeat burglary

Businesses suffer repeat burglary attacks because they have not put right the lessons from the first burglary. Remember, thieves look for the line of least resistance and if you do not make a thorough assessment of your weaknesses from your first burglary and put them right as soon as possible, the probability of being burgled two, three or more times, is high. Statistics show that a small number of properties will account for a high proportion of repeat burglaries. Thieves are comfortable returning to premises where they believe there are repeat rewards and no greater risk.

Ram raids

In many cases the most costly type of burglary is a ram raid where a vehicle is driven into the premises. Frequently the damage exceeds many times over the value of any goods stolen. Serious structural damage, destruction of fittings and damage to remaining stock may mean a substantial additional loss of business.

Smash and Grab

This is a more frequent event by burglars on foot or in vehicles breaking a window and stealing whatever goods are immediately available. Once again, the value of the goods stolen will frequently be less than the cost of the window and additional losses may occur through glass-damaged goods, insurance and loss of business time.

What can you do about it?

If you are a high risk retailer (expensive electrical goods, clothing, alcohol or cigarettes) you should consider what measures you can take to reduce the likelihood of an attack. This may include internal or external shutters, bollards or other pavement or forecourt obstructions (subject to planning consent) and building anti-ram measures into the shop front. You may wish to consider removing vulnerable goods from near the front of the shop.

What can you do about it?

As this is a more common offence, standard measures such as internal or external shutters or grilles, laminated glass, removing high risk goods (especially easy to remove goods such as cigarettes) from open view, are all options that should be considered.

Opportunist burglary

Many burglaries will be committed by local thieves who know you, your routines, the neighbourhood and your store from visits as customers. They may be stealing to fund a drug habit and they may be more likely to cause considerable damage as they break in. This risk may be greater in local communities than in town or city centres and may be higher for convenience stores, off licenses and retailers who generate high volumes of cash.

What can you do about it?

You do need to be more aware of the risk here and take the normal precautions outlined above and below. Cash and cigarettes are 'instant cash' and extra care should be taken over those items. Do not leave cash on the premises if it can be avoided – even safes can be ripped out and removed.

Organised burglary

As domestic burglary has become more difficult, the rewards of business burglary have become more evident to organised criminals. Whilst organised gangs will pick their targets more carefully, the losses are likely to be far higher. If you are a high-value retailer you should be aware of the increased risk of being targeted. If you have only a local alarm without confirmed activation technology, which tells the alarm receiving centre that there is someone on the premises, your response from the police may not be treated in the same manner and this gives the burglars more time to operate.

What can you do about it?

Consider the value of having a central station monitored alarm system if you are a high value retailer. Do not provide the thieves with the opportunity. The same messages apply here as to all other types of burglary. Make sure you assess your risk and take appropriate measures.

Collusive burglary

Your staff can be a weak point, and you need to consider them as part of your risk assessment. Burglaries sometimes occur thanks to a member of staff divulging inside information such as door or alarm codes, helping the burglar by leaving a window unlocked, having duplicate keys made or even gaining employment in order to be able to commit crime against you.

What can you do about it?

Make sure you can trust your staff, especially those who you give responsibility to for closing the business. Check references, call previous employers, do not give authority to new staff or people you do not know. Do not leave keys lying around. Do make sure there is a written locking-up routine which includes checks on all opening windows and other vulnerable points.

Distraction burglary

Some burglars enter stores as customers with a number of associates. Once in, they split up and whilst one or more engage the assistant(s), the others steal goods. Men's and women's clothing stores and similar shops are vulnerable to this type of crime. Whilst this may be seen as a case of shoplifting, if the criteria set out in the Theft Act are satisfied (if they have entered the shop with the intention of stealing, not as real customers), this is in fact burglary.

What can you do about it?

Whilst this is a difficult to deal with as you may be unsure of what is going on until quite late in the event, engaging them in conversation, being firm, calling on any additional staff who may be there to assist and, if your store is a member of a business crime reduction partnership, just asking on the radio for a signal check, may be sufficient for them to leave.

Slow them down

Time is a key element for burglars. The longer and more difficult it is for them to break in, the greater the risk. Once inside, the more difficult it is to locate and remove the goods, whether because they are internally secured or because lighting is activated or high decibel alarms are sounding, the less time they will remain on your premises.

Remember, take all the steps you can to slow down their entry and speed up their exit from your business. This will result in lower losses, less damage and less business interruption.

Staff training

A trained member of staff is a better member of staff. So set out in writing the procedures you expect your staff to follow, including the tasks they need to conclude each and every time they lock up. Train your staff in these procedures and test them at intervals otherwise they will fall into disuse. Try to encourage business loyalty so that if one of them hears something locally or is being pressurised, they can come to you in confidence.

CCTV

CCTV is helpful in providing evidence to police if you are burgled. But please remember:

- n If you are using video tapes, changes them regularly
- n Keep lenses clean
- n Keep the recording device separate so that burglars cannot steal the evidence
- n Seek advice from your local BSIA approved supplier if you need help

Lighting

Since most business burglaries occur during the hours of darkness (or at weekends) internal lighting will increase observation from the street and help to deter crime.



Safes and cash

A good safe is an essential business tool, especially in high cash businesses. But remember, it must comply with your insurance company's requirements for strength and maximum cash kept in it. It must be very securely fastened to the floor to reduce the likelihood of it being ripped out (which may happen if the thieves are able to spend time in your premises). Ideally, do not keep cash on the premises overnight and advertise this with 'no cash kept on premises' notices.



Internal cabinets

If you can store high value goods in secure, locked store-rooms or cabinets, this will slow burglars down and reduce opportunity.

Keys

Keep control of all keys to prevent them falling into the wrong hands. Make sure there is only one set of keys for safes, external doors and other key points. If you have a key cupboard, make sure there are controls over who has access to it.

Locks, bolts, bars

Make sure you have high quality locks and bolts on all external doors and on key internal doors. Ensure that all vulnerable windows which do not have to be open for some reason are securely barred or locked shut. Remember, glass can be broken, so consider polycarbonate sheets for additional security.

Alarms

Consider a central station monitored alarm. Although the costs are greater, the evidence gathered from an activation, either audible or visual, will be used by the central station to inform and guide police quickly to your premises. If you rely on a 'bells only' alarm, you may not receive the same response. Many burglars will be aware of the differences between alarm types.

External security

Make sure that the external perimeter of your store is secure. If you have recessed doorways consider installing a scissor gate flush with the street. Check that there are no bins or other climbing aids and that walls, drainpipes or flat roofs from which access can be gained to your premises from the rear, especially via poorly protected first floor store rooms, are protected. Consider anti-climb paint, motion-detected lighting, chain-link fencing or other obstacles to slow down potential burglars.

Door and window frames

Make sure that door and window frames are of high quality, firmly fixed to the fabric of the building so they cannot easily be pulled out.

Police crime prevention or designing-out crime specialist

Your local police will offer assistance to help you avoid becoming a victim of crime. Details will be in your local telephone book.

Remember, the loss of trading opportunity, repairs, insurance claims and other related aspects of your burglary will frequently cost a lot more than the value of the goods stolen.

**Protect your
property and your
livelihood before it
happens -
Not afterwards.**

Burglary prevention self-assessment questionnaire

			Your risk scores
1	<p>When did you last suffer a burglary?</p> <p>a) Never b) in the last 12 months 3) in the last 3 months</p>	<p>If you have suffered one burglary there is an increased likelihood of you suffering a subsequent burglary in the near future. If you have answered</p> <p>(a) score 0 (b) score 30 (c) score 40</p>	
2	<p>What type is your shop?</p> <p>a) Off licence, convenience store, pharmacy, electrical, mobile phones, clothing, tobacconist b) Music, sports goods c) Books, shoes, jeweller, etc.</p> <p>(If your type of shop is not shown, assess your risk accordingly).</p>	<p>Value of goods and easy disposability are factors in the targeting of stores, as are the likely defences to be overcome.</p> <p>(a) score 15 (b) score 10 (c) score 5</p>	
3	<p>How would you describe the area where your shop is?</p> <p>a) Prosperous b) Average c) Disadvantaged or poor</p>	<p>Poor or disadvantaged neighbourhoods tend to suffer greater crime – frequently from residents of the area.</p> <p>(a) score 0 (b) score 5 (c) score 10</p>	

			Your risk scores
4	<p>To what extent would neighbours or passers-by notice if an intruder was trying to break in to your shop?</p> <p>a) The shop is overlooked by residents with a clear view front and rear, which is well lit. Anyone trying to break in would be noticed</p> <p>b) The view of the shop is not clear and there are few residents or passers-by. An intruder may go unnoticed</p> <p>c) The shop is not overlooked by residents, is not well lit and is obscured by walls or foliage. An intruder would be protected</p>	<p>Burglars like to work under cover of darkness or obscured from view, where they are not vulnerable to observation, A well maintained and secure perimeter will make it more difficult to break in, increasing the time spent and raising the risk.</p> <p>(a) score 0 (b) score 10 (c) score 15</p>	
5	<p>What type of burglar alarm do you have?</p> <p>a) A modern, well maintained central station alarm to ACPO and British Standard requirements</p> <p>b) A local system, not connected to a central station</p> <p>c) No alarm</p>	<p>A good, modern, well maintained and reliable central station alarm system will provide far better protection and police response. If you are a high risk business, this should be essential.</p> <p>(a) subtract 15 (b) add 5 (c) add 15</p>	

			Your risk scores
6	<p>How well protected are your doors?</p> <p>a) All doors have high quality locks and bolts to current British standards. Any glazing is laminated or protected by grilles or mesh. All door frames are of high quality steel or wood construction, securely fixed to the building. Crow bar protection is built-in</p> <p>b) Any of your doors is less well protected</p> <p>c) Your doors are old, without modern locks or quality frames. Glazing is not protected</p>	<p>Good doors, flush to the building line and difficult to prise open, will deter burglars. Frequently burglars are able to enter with relative ease by taking advantage of old or poorly closing doors.</p> <p>(a) subtract 15 (b) score 0 (c) add 15</p>	
7	<p>How well protected are your windows?</p> <p>a) Display windows are of laminated glass in good quality frames. Any other windows that can be reached (even by ladder) are fitted with bars or lockable grilles</p> <p>b) Any of your windows is less well protected, but you have internal or external grilles or shutters</p> <p>c) Your display windows are of unprotected plate glass. Other vulnerable windows</p>	<p>Value of goods and easy disposability are factors in the targeting of stores, as are the likely defences to be overcome.</p> <p>(a) score 15 (b) score 10 (c) score 5</p>	

			Your risk scores
8	<p>To what extent can passers-by see into your shop when it is closed?</p> <p>a) A well-lit interior with a clear view and reasonable numbers of passers-by</p> <p>b) A poorly lit interior obscured by window posters. Fewer passers-by</p> <p>c) Unlit interior and cluttered window and interior. Almost no passers-by</p>	<p>Burglars do not want to be spotted once they are inside, so will be attracted to quiet locations with little or no light and internal cover.</p> <p>(a) score 0 (b) score 5 (c) score 10</p>	
9	<p>Does your shop have any of these features?</p> <p>a) Scaffolding, fire escapes, flat roofs or other climbing aids. Open spaces, parks, car parks to the rear</p> <p>b) Neighbours overlooking your shop, an occupied flat above the shop. A bus stop outside</p>	<p>The features listed at (a) will assist burglars, whilst those at (b) may help to deter burglars.</p> <p>(a) score 5 (b) subtract 5</p>	



How did you score?

Under 20

You have a relatively low risk or are already well protected and have fewer concerns. But maintain your vigilance and review your defences regularly.

Between 20 and 50

You have a higher risk of being burgled and you can do more to reduce it without spending a large amount of money. Remember, it is nearly always cheaper to take measures before a burglary than afterwards.

Over 50

You have a high risk of burglary and would be well advised to take action now. You are also a high risk of repeat burglary which could increase your insurance premium dramatically or put you out of business.



Remember,

Burglaries do not only happen to other people – they can happen to you. This quick self-assessment questionnaire is designed to highlight some of the major areas of burglary risk. It is not all-encompassing and does not cater for all risks and circumstances. There will be conditions which cannot be catered for here. If you have any concerns, please consult your insurer, the police or your local BSIA approved security adviser who should be able to provide you with further assistance, including an on-site visit if required.





How to Join

For more information on whether there is a BCRP in your area go to the Association of Business Crime Partnerships web site: www.businesscrime.org.uk and click on 'crime partnerships' then telephone or e-mail ABCP for further details.

The web site contains much information about the work of ABCP, so please take some time to see what is being done to support businesses in their fight against crime and see how you can make an active contribution by joining your local BCRP.