

Armed Robbery Safety Tips

The Columbia Police Department Crime Prevention Unit believes every business owner, manager, and employee has a role in keeping a business safe. The following are some tips for businesses and employees to avoid robberies, and what to do in the event that a robbery does occur.



I. Procedures for Avoiding an Armed Robbery:

1. Keep front doors and windows clear of signs and posters for good visibility. Employees should be able to see out to spot suspicious persons and passing patrol officers should be able to see into the business for signs of trouble.
2. The outside of the business and parking area should have enough lighting to provide visibility at night. Interior lighting should also provide sufficient illumination throughout the business.
3. Excess cash, especially large bills, should be placed in a safe, preferably a drop safe, or a locked money chest.
4. Be unpredictable about moving money from the business to the bank. Vary times, routes, and methods of concealment, and avoid night deposits.
5. Install an alarm and post the fact that the store has a hold-up alarm.
6. Place a surveillance camera behind the cash register facing the front counter. Replace videotapes regularly.
7. Robbers do not like to be noticed or have personal interaction, so it is a good idea for employees to greet all entering customers politely, look them in the eye, and ask if they can be of some help.
8. Always have two people open and close the store.
9. Employees should use the main entrance to avoid the chance that an alternate door will be left unsecured.
10. Place height markings at the main entrance to help employees gauge the height of a suspect in the event of a robbery.
11. Encourage the police to stop by your business.
12. Use extra care after dark. Be cautious when cleaning the parking lot or taking out the trash at night.
13. Stay alert and know who is in your business and where they are. Watch for people hanging out without making purchases or any suspicious activity outside of it. Write down license numbers of suspicious vehicles if visible from inside your business.
14. If you see something suspicious, immediately call the police. Never try to handle it yourself.
15. Use only one register at night. Leave other registers empty and open.

II. Procedures During a Robbery:

1. Do not resist the robber. The money is not worth risking your life.
2. Keep calm during a robbery. Try to keep customers and employees calm as well.
3. Follow the robber's commands but do not volunteer help.
4. Activate the hold-up alarm only if it can be done without being obvious to the robber.
5. Be observant and plan to be a good witness.

III. Procedures After a Robbery

1. Give the robber time to leave.
2. Never chase the robber out of the building. Instead, try to watch them through a window and note any details you can observe.
3. Secure the doors so the robber cannot reenter and call the police immediately.
4. Try to note the robber's method of escape and direction of travel.