Crime Prevention 101:

An at-a-glance tip sheet

Violent crime is a serious problem — especially in service industries, such as restaurants and convenience stores. A recent *Violence in the American Workplace* survey found that 52% of working Americans "have witnessed, heard about or have experienced a violent event or an event that can lead to violence at their workplace."

Clearly, there's a need to have tips and tools in hand to help employees feel and be safe from violent crime while at work. As the WorkSafe People, we can help. Use the information below as you develop your own safety program on violent crime prevention.

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Safety basics for convenience stores and other service businesses:

- Consider having a security alarm system and/or security cameras on-site.
- Do not open locked doors for anyone you don't know.
- If your facility has communication devices for employees, consider having a code word or phrase so all employees know that a robbery is in progress.
- Install bright lights in recreational areas, parking lots and garages, and keep them in good working order.
- Conduct regular inspections of the property to ensure door locks and security systems are working.
- Having multiple employees on duty during high-risk periods (typically 11 p.m. to 5 a.m.)
- Install bullet-resistant shielding to protect employees and cash areas.
- Add mirrors to eliminate blind spots in the store and around the doors.
- Install a panic button that automatically calls for help.
- Have cashier areas visible from outside the store.
- Have cashiers or other employees greet each customer who enters the store. Lack of attentiveness allows a robber to case the store and take a cashier or employee by surprise.
- Work with the local police department to organize a Neighborhood Watch program to give employees and guests more security.
- Maximize natural surveillance. Employees should have an optimal view of the entrance and interior of the store.
- Post "No Loitering" signs outside and enforce a no loitering policy.

Don't forget the importance of safe cash handling:

- Don't keep more cash on hand than is needed to do business.
- Install drop safes and have signs in obvious places that say drop safes are used.
- If an employee makes a daily trip to the bank, don't make the trip at the same time each day.
- Don't use a bag labeled "Bank" to carry the money.
- Don't discuss cash-control procedures with friends or customers.
- Conduct cash audits daily or at the end of each shift.
- If armored cars are used, try to have them vary their schedule of pickups and deliveries. If your store has a drive-thru window and the armored car will fit, have them use this window.

And in general …

- If you own the company, take a hard look at your business — physical layout, employees, hiring practices, operating procedures and special security risks.
- Be aware of customers or other strangers — if anyone makes you uncomfortable, inform security or management immediately.
- Identify at least two exit routes from each room, if possible, and be able to find them in the dark.
- Use caution with deliveries and pickups — anyone making a delivery to your workplace should be properly identified before you open the door.
- Follow basic crime prevention principles, and work with local law enforcement to protect your business.

The bottom line is that crime prevention starts with being proactive. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) reinforces that employers have a responsibility for ensuring the safety of their employees — including protection from violence. It's not always easy, and there is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all approach, but it's up to you to take the time to consider the potential risks at your workplace and address them head on.

If you need assistance, Accident Fund is here to help.

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