



Guidelines for the Safety of Staff from the Threat of Robbery

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION

Any business handling cash, whether large or small amounts, in town or country, is at risk from robbery. This is also true of premises where drugs are stored, or easily convertible items such as liquor and cigarettes are readily obtainable. It is essential that effective measures are in place to minimise the risk and the potential threat to the safety and well-being of staff and customers from the threat of robbery. It is also essential that all staff in such businesses understand with how they should conduct themselves during a robbery. The specific topics covered in Part 3 dealing with education and training are vital in this respect.

Staff who experience a robbery may have a complex range of reactions which can affect not only their performance and morale at work, but also their home life and personal relationships. Their feelings about their employers, their workplace and their job can all be seriously affected. Those who are traumatised may be disillusioned if they feel their problems are not taken seriously, or if their employer gives them inadequate support. Some may look for transfers to other jobs or even want to leave altogether.

The risk of robbery should be managed like any other business risk; through clear policies, procedures and accountabilities.

Employers' responsibilities under the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992

Employers have a responsibility to make the workplace safe and to ensure the health and safety of those working in or visiting the workplace they control. To achieve this they are expected to:

- Systematically identify hazards
- Systematically manage those hazards by eliminating them, isolating them or minimizing them, in that order
- Manage hazards by eliminating them, isolating them or minimizing them, in that order of preference
- Provide suitable protective clothing and equipment to staff
- Provide safety information to staff
- Provide training or supervision so that work is done safely
- Monitor the health of employees to ensure that their work is not having a detrimental effect on them
- Provide opportunities for employees to participate in all of the above.

Employees' responsibilities under the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992

Employees are required to take all practicable steps to ensure the safety of themselves and others in the workplace. This includes considering the things they do and the things they omit to do (such as not using safety gear).

Employers should make clear to employees their responsibilities to use safety equipment provided and to wear protective clothing. The level of an individual employee's responsibility to look after themselves will often increase with knowledge and seniority, but the employer's overall responsibility to ensure a safe workplace remains.

Practicable steps the employee can take also include reporting to their employer any hazards or incidents, so that the employer is able to investigate and put safeguards in place.

Employee Participation

Employee participation is central to the Health and Safety in Employment Act which provides a range of mechanisms for employee participation.

Where there are 30 or more employees, there must be an agreed employee participation system. Where there are fewer than 30 employees, an agreed employee participation system is mandatory if one or more employees request it. Even if they don't request a system, the employer must still provide opportunities for employee involvement in health and safety issues.

Robbery - section 234 of the Crimes Act 1961:

(1) Robbery is theft accompanied by violence or threats of violence, to any person or property used to extort the property stolen or to prevent or overcome resistance to its being stolen.

(2) Everyone who commits robbery is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years.

1.1 AIMS OF THESE GUIDELINES

These guidelines have been developed to assist business owners and managers to provide a safer workplace. What steps need to be taken to protect staff will vary according to the size and nature of the workplace. Decisions made on the type of security measures to be employed, and the procedures to be followed, should always be appropriate to each individual workplace. To establish the level of protection required, an assessment of the threat should be made and protective measures and contingency plans put in place. In some cases, implementation of measures and procedures to meet these guidelines may involve training and capital costs.

The aims of these guidelines are:

- To provide practical guidance in devising policies and procedures to deter potential robbers; and
- To minimise the effects of a robbery on staff.

1.2 KEY ELEMENTS

A co-ordinated approach to planning for the threat of robbery will determine not only the effectiveness of any preventive strategies, but can also reduce the level of trauma and increase the speed of recovery of any staff involved in an incident.

The approach must recognise and take into account the role of those outside the workplace, for example, the police, the media, and the justice system. Publicity or signage which emphasises the high risk of apprehension can prove an essential adjunct to safety measures taken by the workplaces themselves to deter robbery.

Key elements for ensuring the safety of staff from robbery in the workplace are:

- A risk management process to deter robbery, involving an assessment of the design and operation of workplace and employee protection appropriate to the type, size and location of the workplace.

- An education and training programme for all staff to establish awareness of safety procedures and behaviour prior to, during, and following a robbery.
- A post-robbery support system which is timely, recognises that reactions of those involved can vary from minor shock to severe trauma, and which seeks to minimise the problems faced.
- A monitoring/audit function to evaluate the effectiveness of the policies and procedures introduced, with processes to use the results for ongoing improvement.
- A public relations strategy which minimises intrusion into the privacy of staff and protects the integrity of the security measures and safety procedures.

The steps to be taken will vary according to the size and nature of the workplace. Decisions made on the type of security measures to be employed, and the procedures to be followed, should always be appropriate to each individual business, bearing in mind that the employer is required to provide and maintain a safe workplace.

PART 2: RISK MANAGEMENT

The workplace should have clear, well-documented policies and procedures for dealing with health and safety issues, setting out who is accountable for each element.

Safety issues relating to the threat of robbery involve everyone. It is a management responsibility to ensure that the right policies and procedures are in place, but it is a general responsibility to see that the policies and procedures operate effectively for that workplace, and that everyone accepts responsibility for carrying them out. Wherever practicable, staff should be given the opportunity to be involved in the developing and reviewing of policies and procedures in accordance with these guidelines.

2.1 POLICIES

A well-defined policy should be in place for dealing with security issues and be available to all staff. It should address:

- identifying, assessing, minimising, and monitoring risks;
- protecting the premises;
- security of cash and/or drugs, and/or other valuables;
- key control;
- opening and closing routines;
- access to the premises;
- training and supervision of staff on safety measures relating to robbery;
- using and maintaining security equipment;
- ongoing assessment of risk following upgrades in technology and business practice;
- action to be taken in the event of a robbery;
- helping staff after a robbery;
- liaising with the police; and
- public relations and communication with the media.

Managers and supervisors should communicate these policies and procedures to staff.

2.2 IDENTIFICATION OF RISK

What measures need to be taken for the safety of staff will vary according to the operations carried out on the premises and the size of the organisation.

Organisations with a network of outlets should select preventive measures to suit particular outlets, based on the risks in each one.

In measuring the risk in order to decide the level and design of security measures to put in place, the following factors need to be taken into account:

- the type of business;
- the types of merchandise stored or sold;
- the range of hours the premises are open to the public, and/or occupied;
- the number of staff working in the premises and their hours of employment;

- siting and location of the workplace;
- the physical characteristics of the premises and its surroundings;
- the incidence of crimes in the area or district;
- past history of robberies of that workplace or similar workplaces in the area.

2.3 PROTECTING THE PREMISES

2.3.1 OUTSIDE THE PREMISES

Each building or site should be assessed for ease of entry, and consideration given to the following, where appropriate:

- doors fitted with tamper-resistant locks, catches and hinges;
- windows locked and barred;
- intruder alarms;
- security lighting;
- closed circuit television;
- signage indicating that a minimal amount of cash/drugs is held on the premises;
- signage relating to security measures and systems protecting the premises
- access to roofs, drains and culverts.

2.3.2 INSIDE THE PREMISES

The class of business, its access to the public and the amount of cash and type of goods carried all play an important part in determining the type and level of security in place.

Security measures which could be considered include:

- intruder alarm systems, whether prominently sited and audible, or silent;
- closed circuit television or still camera surveillance;
- physical protection of the cash area;
- changing the combination for the safe at frequent intervals;
- controlled entry procedures;
- security guards.

Where an alarm system is in place, this may either be prominently sited and give an audible warning of intrusion, or be the silent type designed to advise the remote monitoring (security) service of the intrusion.

2.4 SECURITY OF CASH AND DRUGS

2.4.1 PHYSICAL MEASURES

In the majority of workplaces, the target for criminal activity or attack is the cash-handling area. Effective security measures could include:

- siting the cash-handling area as far as possible from entrances and exits, or where this is not appropriate, giving the cash-handler clear vision of entrances and exits;
- cash-dispensing machines;
- cash-dispensing restrictions, for example:
 1. limited cash holdings;
 2. time delay locked compartments for bulk cash storage; drop safes, day safes;
- cash collection by a licensed security firm (see 2.4.3);
- security screens.

Where time delay locked compartments for bulk cash storage and drop safes/day safes are utilised, there should be notices prominently displayed advertising this fact.

Drugs which are likely to be misused should be stored out of the public view. Minimum amounts of controlled drugs should be kept on the premises.

2.4.2 PROCEDURAL MEASURES

The most fundamental security measure for cash is to keep the level of cash held to an absolute but workable minimum. This may require emptying the till at frequent intervals. Where practicable, this should not be done in front of customers, and the till should be cleared at irregular intervals — not at the same time each day. Cash should always be kept out of the sight of customers where practicable.

The amount of cash available can also be restricted by:

- encouraging the use of credit cards;
- use of EFTPOS;
- always keeping the safe locked;
- regular safe drops to minimise cash in till;
- regular bankings.

Where cash (or drugs) are stored in a safe, it is preferable, wherever practicable, that two key holders are required to open the safe. Keys should not be left on the premises, nor should names and addresses of staff be accessible to any intruder.

2.4.3 TRANSPORT OF CASH

Wherever large sums of money are transported, the involvement of staff should be minimised, and staff made aware of the precautions to be taken for their safety. Consideration should be given to contract out this function to a licensed security firm. Information on the standard of performance which should be expected of a security company is obtainable from the New Zealand Police or the New Zealand Security Industry Association (see Appendix).

Where a security firm is used, staff should be told that the guards employed on cash transit duties should:

- be in the uniform of the security company contracted; and

- display an identification card, which should be presented and checked before collection of the cash.

If the staff member has any suspicion that the guard is not genuine:

- the guard should not be directly confronted; and
- the police and the security company should be alerted at the first opportunity.

Where the transport of cash is not carried out by a security firm, as with many small businesses which carry out regular bankings, the following precautions should be considered, having due regard to the particular circumstances, risks and practicalities:

- Use an unmarked bag or container to carry the cash and/or securities.
- Vary the time of day that the trip to the bank is made.
- Vary the route taken wherever possible.
- Rotate the task so that it is not always the same person.
- Take an escort to accompany the person carrying the money, whose role is to remain as an uninvolved witness who can raise the alarm.
- Travel by vehicle rather than on foot or by public transport. Care should be taken if a taxi is used, as radio communications are open and can alert a person with criminal intent. A reputable taxi firm should be chosen and the specific destination not disclosed.

2.5 OPENING AND CLOSING PROCEDURES

Wherever practicable and having regard to the size of the business, staffing levels and the risks involved, more than one staff member should be involved with the opening, and particularly the closing, of the premises.

2.6 ACCESS TO PREMISES

Staff should be alert at all times to unusual activities inside and outside the premises.

Visitors should not be admitted to the private areas of the premises without suitable identification.

Any after-hours visitors must be turned away if they do not have an appointment, or are not personally known and vouched for by a staff member.

The number of keys issued should be strictly controlled.

PART 3: EDUCATION AND TRAINING

3.1 SAFETY AND SECURITY MEASURES

Every employer is required to ensure that staff are adequately trained and made fully aware of the policies and procedures for safety in the workplace, and that effective monitoring systems are in place to check that safety and security procedures are adhered to. Wherever practicable, staff should have the opportunity to contribute to the development of these procedures.

Procedures must be established for training staff, including temporary and casual staff, in safety and security awareness.

Job descriptions should incorporate safety and security procedures, and adherence to these procedures should be monitored.

Instructions should emphasise the importance of all daily security procedures being carried out at irregular periods, and not to a set timetable.

Employers, managers and supervisors should ensure that all staff involved in cash handling (including temporary or casual staff) are aware of the importance of adhering to procedures, and should check regularly that these procedures are carried out. All staff should be aware of the cash handling processes regardless of their duties.

Staff should be involved in determining the most effective way to operate policies and procedures within the workplace.

Staff should be encouraged to suggest ways of improving safety procedures.

3.1.1 DAILY CHECKS BEFORE ENTERING PREMISES

Staff should be trained:

- to look for anyone loitering around; and
- to check for any signs of attempted entry; and
- if they are not sure, or the premises are not secure, they should not enter, and should advise the police immediately.

3.1.2 DAILY CHECKS BEFORE LEAVING PREMISES

Staff should be trained:

- to ensure that time locks are activated, and that the safe is securely locked;
- to check no unauthorised person is still on the premises;
- to securely lock the doors and windows;
- to note any person loitering outside the premises, and if suspicions are aroused to inform the police;
- to activate the alarm system where appropriate; and

- to secure the last door after exiting.

3.2 ROBBERY AWARENESS

All staff involved in cash-handling or in premises where drugs are stored should be trained in what to expect in the event of a robbery, including:

3.3 DURING A ROBBERY

- what reactions are likely to occur;
- what to do if they are victims or witnesses of an robbery;
- what actions to take in notifying police, preserving the scene, etc.;
- to have worked out in advance the responsibilities of each staff member should a robbery occur; and
- how to minimise the risk to personal safety.

Staff should be trained to:

- follow workplace procedures;
- keep calm and make no sudden movements;
- do what the offender demands;
- memorise as many details about the offender as possible; and
- note the method and direction of escape.

Each member of staff will experience a robbery differently and will cope with it differently.

Staff perception of the risk to themselves or others will be the main influence on the extent to which they are traumatised. Whether a weapon is real or not is irrelevant — the issue is whether or not they experience an incident which they consider is potentially life-threatening.

The risk of reactions developing can be reduced if staff are adequately trained in security procedures and receive appropriate support immediately after the incident.

3.4 AFTER THE ROBBERY

Employers, managers, supervisors and colleagues must have an awareness of the complexity of reactions to robberies. Reactions to shock can manifest immediately or later, and can include:

- anger, or a general mistrust of strangers, and wariness of customers;
- fear and anxiety attacks, especially about returning to work;
- feelings of helplessness, isolation, frustration or even guilt;
- loss of confidence, loss of concentration and sometimes loss of memory;
- physical symptoms, which might include sleeping difficulties, loss of appetite, trembling or outbursts of crying.

Even those absent at the time of the robbery can be affected by it. Some feel guilty that they were not there to share the experience with their colleagues.

Staff who experience a robbery should have a sensitively conducted debriefing as soon as practicable after the robbery. This may include the need for debriefing and counselling by a professionally qualified person.

Group debriefing can play an important part in the recovery process. If conducted properly, the debriefing should give all those involved an opportunity to talk openly about their experience of the incident, express how they feel, and think constructively about what support they may want from family, friends and other staff.

Managers should ensure that staff know that individual counselling following an robbery is positively encouraged, and is available, within the financial limitations of the business, for all who would benefit from it.

Individuals will respond differently over time to the shock and trauma of robbery. Some who appear relatively unaffected at the time may suffer symptoms after days, weeks or months have elapsed. Managers should be alert to these symptoms and immediately provide the necessary assistance. Steps should be taken to ensure staff are not placed in situations that could "restart" these symptoms.

A professional counselling service could be made available by the employer. Otherwise, Victim Support can provide valuable support and advice following a robbery.

It is important that only trauma-related problems are addressed and not other unrelated matters that are more properly the domain of private referrals. A counselling service should provide timely support following an incident. The service should be independent and confidential. However, where the ability of staff to function fully may impact their job, brief details will need to be discussed with the appropriate management staff.

A counselling service should be:

- independent and confidential, and for the benefit of staff; and
- distinct from any management debriefing session to discuss the events of the robbery.

Counselling is not the whole answer to the problem; support from management and colleagues is as important to the recovery process as counselling.

PART 4: OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES FOLLOWING A ROBBERY

4.1 NOTIFYING THE POLICE

The police must be notified as soon as it is safe to do so, using the 111 service.

The police will ask you to do the following:

1. Tell them the time lapse between the incident and your call to NZ Police
2. Describe what has happened.
3. Explain whether the offender/s is/are still present or if not, in what direction they left.
4. Describe how the offender/s left the premises (e.g. on foot; by bike; by car).
5. To describe the bike, car etc.
6. To describe the offender/s.
7. Tell them any other relevant information.

If possible, the telephone line with the police should be left open until the police arrive, in order to maintain contact and enable instructions and information to be passed without delay.

4.2 BEFORE THE POLICE ARRIVE

While waiting for the police to arrive, the following basic measures need to be followed:

- If required, first aid should be rendered to any victims, and confirmation given that professional help is on the way.
- Shut and lock the outside doors and post a member of staff there to allow urgent access for the emergency services when the police arrive.
- Preserve the scene and the evidence. As far as possible, avoid touching anywhere the robbers may have left fingerprints, footmarks or other evidence.
- Discourage witnesses from leaving before the police have arrived and spoken to them, or take their names and addresses and give them to the police.
- Ensure those present do not discuss the events prior to being interviewed by the police. Written descriptions of the offender(s), such as height, build, clothing, footwear, speech, mannerisms, name(s) used, jewellery worn, other distinguishing features such as tattoos, description of weapon(s), vehicle used and registration number should be separately recorded by each witness.

4.3 WHEN THE POLICE ARRIVE:

- Help them as much as possible.
- The police will need to interview all witnesses including staff as appropriate. Police should be asked to ensure that the amount stolen is not released to the media.

- Make an inventory of stolen money or property and give it to the police as soon as possible.
- Discuss and agree arrangements for liaison with the media, and do not release private details of staff.

Staff should be told that in order to preserve the scene, the police may ask to conduct all interviews at a police station or in a place away from the premises that have been robbed.

4.4 ON BEING A WITNESS

Where a matter proceeds to court, staff may be required to give evidence in court. Victim Support is available to provide support for a witness along with Police. Both organisations will ensure that a witness understands the court process, what happens in a court room and what giving evidence actually means.

It is natural to feel nervous at the prospect of giving evidence. The various support groups available will help the witness with this process.

PART 5: MONITORING/AUDIT FUNCTION

It is a management responsibility to ensure:

- that written policies and procedures are up-to-date and easily available;
- that staff know and carry out the correct procedures;
- that security and safety equipment are properly maintained;
- that cash-dispensing restrictions are adhered to; and
- that procedures are monitored and reviewed at regular intervals.

Checks of all security-related matters should be made randomly and not predictably.

PART 6: PUBLIC RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATION WITH THE MEDIA

All release of information to the media should have the following objectives:

- to provide basic facts about the event to facilitate responsible, authoritative and factual reporting of the aggravated robbery;
- to minimise the distress and suffering of victims of such incidents;
- to preclude publicity which could have the effect of either encouraging other such incidents or providing information of value to potential offenders; and

6.1 AUTHORISED SPOKESPERSON

Any reports on the robbery should be made by an authorised spokesperson only. Information should be strictly controlled in order to avoid inadvertent disclosure of confidential security measures, and to avoid additional stress on staff at the scene.

6.2 REPORTING

Reporting Information should be factual, and brief. Plan your media comments in advance, and if possible, provide a written copy. Speculative publicity merely adds to the distress suffered by victims, and encourages further robberies. Be aware that any comment could be taken out of context.

6.3 VICTIMS

Victims of robberies, both staff and members of the public, should not be identified. Where photographs of the robbery are published, the features of persons other than the offender(s) should be kept indistinct.

PART 7: REVIEW AND EVALUATION

The implementation of this risk management approach, as with any successful systematic process, does not end with the implementation of some change. The effectiveness of the measures introduced needs to be reviewed regularly to ensure that the objectives are being met and that there are no unforeseen problems.

In addition to the regular internal evaluations undertaken to ensure that the key elements of the guidelines are being met, it is recommended that the guidelines are fully reviewed every three years.

APPENDIX: SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The following printed advice is available:

Code of Practice for the Carriage of Cash and Valuables, from the NZ Police or the New Zealand Security Industry Association.

A variety of resources from the Ministry of Justice, including their site <http://www.victimsinfo.govt.nz/>



⇒ More information

www.dol.govt.nz

0800 20 90 20

Information, examples and answers to your questions about the topics covered here can be found on our website www.dol.govt.nz or by calling us free on 0800 20 90 20.

