



How May We Help You?

15 ways to secure quick-service retail environments

Quick-service retail — from fast food to convenience stores — generally have two things in common: easy access and lots of cash. That makes them a prime target for theft and robbery, from both external and internal threats.

As NFPA 730-2010 (Guidelines for Premises Security, Chapter 18) states: “a security program for retail establishments should be designed to control employee theft, robbery, burglary, shoplifting, fraud and workplace violence.” The challenge is keeping the cash and patrons feeling secure, while maintaining an open, inviting environment.

Elements of the Security Program

Burglars appear to be strongly influenced by the look or feel of their target; thus, if the business appears to reflect attention to security, the burglar will seek an easier opportunity. Case in point: Recent robberies of several fast food locations in South Florida have targeted the drive-through window for easy access to the cash drawer.

The elements of a quick-service retail

security program should address control of cash, access control, security equipment, personnel and employee training.

Equipment includes video surveillance, intrusion detection, and safes and vaults; however, procedures, such as securing expensive items to limit opportunity for theft and having at least two employees on duty during high-risk hours also serve as deterrents.

An intrusion detection system can deter a burglar *if it is turned on*. If used, video surveillance can cover all entrances, exits, elevators, stairwells and parking areas. Video surveillance can be used to record historical data that can assist the police in solving crimes.

According to Francis D’Addario, principal of Crime Prevention Associates and member of the Security Executive Council, and former director of security for Starbucks Coffee Company, it is an industry standard to have video surveillance and DVR systems to provide reliable records and evidence to the police for investigations.

He adds: “Responsible participation by the merchants in the local community means that they cooperate with

police, actively try to deter crime, create a safe work environment so that your child could work there, and they uphold the brand reputation of that franchise.”

15 Best Practices

The following recommendations apply to all quick-service restaurants. These best practices are essential to protecting the cash, patrons, employees and the facility itself while also creating a strong deterrent for robbery and theft.

1. Replace glazing with break-resistant glass that has forced-entry level protection. Replacing glazing with laminated glass is a good return on investment in protection against storms, but also against vandalism and burglary.

2. Place all cash that will be used in the register or coin change trays in a safe or vault at the end of the night. The vault should be alarmed, secured, anchored and monitored. The safe or vault offers greatly increased security over a small, portable cash box.



3. Cash boxes that are used during store hours should be anchored or secured to the counter or appropriate business area so that they cannot be simply lifted and removed, whether by a covert burglary attempt, or an overt robbery attempt. The key to the cash box should be in a lock box or secured key holder, and not in a cup under the counter marked "key."

4. Don't turn off the alarm system at night because of previous false alarms. The crooks are counting on the owner's fear of citations to intimidate them into turning the system off rather than pay potential false alarm fines. The false alarms are very likely prior attempts to break into the store, or testing the response capabilities of the alarm company or local police. False alarm citations are just the cost of doing business. Have the alarm company follow-up and check out the system to make sure there are no defects or short circuits.

5. Have two employees work in the store at high-risk locations and/or during late hours. Two employees should be used to close up the stores to reduce their vulnerability to robbery.

6. Light up garbage and dumpster areas that are the path of travel for employees taking out the trash. If the employee is working alone to close a store and taking out the trash along a dark path with the store keys, or back door left open to get back in, this is an invitation for robbery and, in the very worst case, even murder. Ideally, if one person has to do the trash removal, bag it, seal it and wait until the morning manager comes in to discard it.

7. Cooperate with the police during investigations. Stonewalling investigators is never a good policy and only suggests an internal level of theft or corruption. Accept their invitation for security analysis and review as a step in getting better patrol coverage.

8. Notify the public with signs that say the premises are being monitored and recorded by video surveillance to create a sense of security. This can also include the use of live, public-view monitors, as in this case.

9. Don't use dummy cameras. If a situation arose that the line of sight of a fake camera would have captured a crime and the real ones did not, there is going to be an easy case for premises security negligence, because the owner has created the illusion of security. Employees and store managers should be familiar with how the camera system works and be able to record an incident on a disk or computer file to assist police in their investigation.

10. Turn off the free open network WiFi system after hours to eliminate loitering and non-customers using the system. The WiFi acts as an attractive magnet for activity; additionally, if televisions are used in stores, turn them off when the store is closed for the same reason.

11. Be conscious of CPTED features that impede on natural surveillance and lines of sight, such as landscaping and planting features; lighting; earth berms that are between the front of the store and the street; and alcoves and hiding spots in the rear areas of the store.

12. Provide sufficient security lighting along the exterior of store on all exposed sides. Stores located within mall structures can still add additional lighting beyond the common area lighting provided by the tenant. If the store is a standalone store, then lighting must be considered for the parking areas and all exterior sides of the store. After-hours lighting should be downgraded but still sufficient to facilitate surveillance by police or security patrols. Interior lighting after hours should be downgraded, but motion sensors should be able to activate alarms and lights for increased surveillance, and to act as a deterrent.

13. Advertise no cash on the premises. Like convenience stores, there should not be more than \$50 in the register at any one time. Excess cash should be placed in a drop safe or placed in the store vault or secured safe.

14. Adjust air-conditioning vents so they are not blowing directly on front display windows. This can cause condensation that fogs up the glass and prevents natural surveillance — with no view inside the store from the outside. Vents can be adjusted or dispersed, or the temperature can be adjusted to change the dew point within the store. Additionally, product displays, posters and advertisements in windows should not obstruct visibility into and out of the store.



15. Follow corporate guidelines and recommendations as the industry standard of care.

Regional Recommendations

Many states have their own retail security recommendations, procedures and best practices. The Florida Convenience Business Security Act, for example, requires that convenience franchises offer training in robbery deterrence; have a drop safe that weighs at least 500 pounds; post notice at the entrance that the cash register contains less than \$50; and that window sign placement allows unobstructed views of sales transaction areas from inside and outside the building. Additionally, the act includes a written cash policy that limits cash on hand in late night hours and requires a silent alarm.

The Franchisor's Role

According to D'Addario, companies cannot defer liability and risk. An example is what happened to BP during the Gulf of Mexico oil spill. No one knew or cared who the local vendors or contractors were or their collaborative role in the spill — what customers did know was that the franchise name

of BP was responsible for its oil rigs.

The “big picture” is that the franchisor has a vested interest to make sure the local stores, business owners, or franchisees comply with industry standards of care when it comes to quality, safety and security. Brand reputation depends on the responsible participation of the franchise within the community, D'Addario says.

The franchises and corporate-level security and loss prevention departments can influence whether franchisees operate their businesses in a reasonably safe and secure manner.

A rogue franchisee can do considerable damage by tarnishing the most important corporate goal: brand reputation. Thus, franchisors must do a better job of monitoring their franchisees so that quality assurance is the top goal for protecting critical assets, and creating a safe work environment. ■



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Success Story: McMegapixel is on the Menu

A 24-hour drive-thru McDonald's restaurant in Dublin has deployed IQinVision HD megapixel cameras managed by the XProtect video platform from Milestone Systems to improve safety and operations. For the protection of staff and customers, McDonald's displays its live megapixel video footage on prominent monitors to successfully deter theft.

McDonald's officials decided on an IP surveillance system because of the image quality achieved both day and night from the megapixel cameras and the ability to log on to the store remotely via Virtual Private Network. IQeye Alliance-mini dome PoE cameras in 1.3 MP and 2 MP cover the restaurant eating areas, counter areas, cash registers,



drive-thru windows, staff areas and kitchens. To monitor outside traffic in the drive-thru, a combination of 2MP IQeye Sentinel PoE cameras were mounted on poles and HD720p IQeye Alliance-mx vandal-resistant domes were positioned to capture registration plates on cars exiting the drive-thru lanes. All 24 cameras record to a Milestone server.

Video surveillance technology helps keep a Dublin McDonald's location secure.

RESOURCES

IQinVision: www.securityinfowatch.com/10214086

Milestone Systems: www.securityinfowatch.com/10214397