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AlCrime Reduction Matters

No. 71 8 August 2008

Preventing and dealing with armed robbery through staff training

For businesses that operate outside normal trading hours, staff training is a primary strategy for armed robbery prevention, alongside ongoing improvements to technological security measures. Australian police websites provide prevention information based on the 'crime triangle' approach, which addresses the three aspects of an offender's willingness to commit a robbery: a suitable target, a motivated offender and the absence of a capable guardian (Cohen & Felson 1979). Staff training aims to improve the guardianship element (making it as difficult as possible for the offender) and the motivation element (reducing the reward) of the crime triangle. The Queensland Police Service website (2005) recommends that staff training be undertaken in the following areas:

- cash handling and management procedures
- security routines for business opening and closing
- security practices and procedures
- identifying, reporting and recording suspect activity.

The first area of training relates to reducing the reward available for the offender, and the other three areas relate to making it difficult for the offender to commit the offence.

When an incident is unavoidable, the other important area of staff training – described by police as 'meeting the threat' – involves what to do in the event of an armed robbery. The Queensland Police Service Armed Robbery Awareness Program recommends following a procedure – titled 'CODE A' – to train staff in procedures during an armed robbery. It is explained as:

Calm – try to remain calm. Do not invade the personal space of the offender. Activate the alarm only if you can do so safely.

Obey – obey instructions but do not provide any money or goods that are not asked for. Advise the offender of any movements you have to make to comply with instructions. Do not make any sudden or unexpected movements.

Description – endeavour to make a mental note of the offenders' features, including clothing, scars, tattoos, height, hair colour, accent and speech.

Evidence – be aware of what the offender touched, and do not touch it yourself. After the offender leaves, lock the door of the building and ask any witnesses to await the arrival of police.

Alarm – activate the alarm or call the police only when it is safe to do so.

The Queensland Police Service recommends training when employees commence employment, as a refresher during their career, and when new procedures or new technology are introduced.

References

Cohen LE & Felson M 1979. Social change and crime rate trends: a routine activity approach. *American sociological review* 44: 588–608

Queensland Police Service 2005. *Armed robbery awareness*.
<http://www.police.qld.gov.au/Regional+Policing/metroNorth/robbery/>