



## St Petersburg Police Department Crime Analysis Special Bulletin



### Crime Watch Alert

Two armed and masked suspects have approached 2 convenience stores on 12/01/08 and 12/03/08 just after 10pm and demanded money from the cash registers.

These suspects are aggressive, jump the counter, and in both cases have shot the store clerks without being provoked. One of the suspects will commit the robbery while the other suspect will remain by the door as a lookout.

**Suspect 1:** 6'02", 190lbs., early 20's, shoulder length dreads, ski mask, dark clothing

**Suspect 2:** 5'08"- 6'02", 190lbs., early 20's, black ski mask, dark clothing

**Weapon:** 2 Black Handguns

**Vehicle:** None Seen

2539 Martin Luther King Jr. St. N.



2451 5<sup>th</sup> Ave N.



***Please report any suspicious activity to the St Petersburg Police Department non-emergency number: 727-893-7780***

If you have any information regarding the two recent robberies please contact the Robbery Unit at: (727) 893-7164 or the tip line at: 727-892-5000



## CRIME PREVENTION RECOMMENDATIONS For Convenience Store Owners and Employees



For a variety of reasons, convenience store employees are particularly vulnerable to robbery and studies have suggested that suspects target certain stores based on characteristics which they conclude give them the greatest opportunity to avoid apprehensions. In an effort to reduce the likelihood of becoming victim of a robbery and avoiding possible injury, the St. Petersburg Police Department is providing convenience store owners and employees with the following recommendations:

### **CASH CONTROL**

**CASH.** It's what lures robbers in the first place. Strong cash-handling policies along with good signage can greatly reduce rates of robbery. One study found that robbery rates drop by 80% when potential robbers know that there's \$50 or less in the cash register.

**DROP SAFES.** Install a drop safe and implement cash drop procedures with your employees. Be sure that your employees understand that the procedures are in place to protect them, not just the company's money.

**CASH-AMOUNT SIGNAGE.** Advertise to everyone with signage who walks in your store that there's only \$50 or less in your cash register after dark, and that the employees don't have the keys to the safe.

### **SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS AND SILENT ALARMS**

Technology can play a large role in preventing and prosecuting robberies at your convenience store.

**SILENT PANIC AND HOLDUP ALARMS.** These types of alarms protect your employees in potentially violent robbery situations. They are not useful in preventing robberies but can help to reduce the impact of a robbery in process. Provide proper training on the usage of silent alarms so that employees know how to safely use them.

**SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS.** Highly visible cameras can have a powerful impact on potential robbers. Having cameras properly aimed at the door and at the register can also provide valuable after-the-fact images for use in court. Make sure that the camera recording device is well secure. Upon observing security cameras in a business, some suspects will attempt to take the video recorders with them to avoid having their image given to the police.

### **SECURING THE INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT**

There are a number of measures you can take inside of your store that are proven to reduce the frequency and impact of robberies. Here are several points to consider.

**REMOVE SIGNAGE FROM WINDOWS.** Visibility in and out of a convenience store plays an enormous role on the psychological comfort of the would-be robber. If robbers know they can be seen from the outside then the likelihood of a robbery falls. Keep your windows free and clear of any and all signage.

**KEEP SHELVES STACKED MODERATELY.** Robbers often have a loitering period before they strike when they are getting comfortable inside a store. If they remain visible to employees and the parking lot then they are less likely to get to a point where they are comfortable robbing you.

Further, lower shelves can reduce incidences of shoplifting.

**ELEVATE YOUR EMPLOYEES.** If possible, elevate your employees to provide them with longer range vision within the store. This along with low-stacked shelves will maximize visibility and natural employee surveillance.

**HAVE TWO EMPLOYEES ON DUTY DURING HIGH-RISK TIMES.** Having more than one employee on duty can reduce the risk of robbery during the most high-risk robbery times. It is vital that both are well trained on violence reduction though, as sometimes two employees are more likely to fight back against robbers.

**BE VIGILANT FOR SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY.** Most robbery suspects have some degree of familiarity with the business they rob by either having entered it on some previous date or time, or by sending in an accomplice in just prior to the robbery to check out the security measures, number of clerks and patrons in the store. Employees should be trained to watch customers' actions and be alert to those individuals who seem more interested at looking activities in the store than actually shopping. If at any point an employee becomes suspicious of a person's intent, they should call the police to immediately.

## **SECURING THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT**

How your store appears on the outside can have an enormous impact on overall robbery reductions. This section outlines several external environmental tactics for stopping robberies.

**PROVIDE ADEQUATE LIGHTING.** Adequate lighting is shown to reduce incidents of robbery. Be sure that faces in your parking lot are easily visible from the street. Further, be sure that you're not creating a glare that could reduce visibility. Strong, white lighting outside of your convenience store can also make your customers feel safer.

**LIMIT ACCESS WITH FENCES AND SHRUBS.** Studies show that escape routes are a key consideration for robbers. Control getaway paths - especially for robbers who plan to escape by foot. When possible put up fencing and shrubbery that restricts easy getaway into allies and crowded neighborhoods surrounding your store. Reduce entry and exit points and you will reduce robbery.

**CONSIDER OUTSIDE SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS.** Most robbery suspects approach their target businesses from the side or rear to avoid detection from the main street and to keep their mode of transportation from being seen. This is also an area where those suspects who plan to don masks and gloves will often put them on. Outside security cameras which can be monitored by store employees could alert them to a pending robbery allowing them to secure the doors and alert police before it takes place. Additionally it could provide valuable images of the suspect(s) for use by police.

## **IN THE EVENT OF A ROBBERY**

Above all, take no action which would jeopardize your safety. While a suspect's actions can be unpredictable, fully cooperating with the suspect's demands have proven to be the most reliable mean to avoiding injury. Show your hands and make no sudden movements that might suggest you are reaching for a weapon. Try to remain calm.

For further assistance please contact crime prevention officer Chip Wells at the community awareness office at: 727-893-4993.