

Working Alone

Working Alone - Handling Money

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Who is at risk?

Employees who handle money, prescription drugs, or other valuables are at risk of violence. Workplaces at risk include:

- Taxis.
- Liquor stores.
- Gasoline service stations.
- Pharmacies.
- Convenience stores.
- Jewellery stores.
- Banks or places that dispense cash.

For general information about working alone (such as check-in procedure and assessment strategies), please see the OSH Answers document on [Working Alone - General](#).

What are some steps that can be taken prevent robberies?

These steps can help to minimize the risk of violence or robbery.

Do:

- Greet everyone who enters the store or cab. Be friendly and look briefly into their eyes.

- Move away from the sales counter when there are no customers. Since robbers prefer to enter and leave the store quickly, if the sales staff are not near the counter, the business may be a less attractive target.
- Keep the number of signs and counter-top displays to a minimum. Good visibility around the counter and from the outside will help deter thefts.
- If someone suspicious is standing in line, ask the person ahead of them "Are you together?". The person ahead will usually turn around and look at the other person, and this action may deter the robbery.
- Wear conservative clothes (such as your uniform).
- Look for anyone who appears to be loitering in or around the store. If they do not leave, call the police and ask for a patrol check.
- Hire extra staff or security personnel for tasks or times of day that are assessed to be of higher risk.
- Consider closing during high risk hours (late at night, early in the morning).

Do Not:

- Do not carry weapons of any type, including pepper spray. Weapons can easily be used against you and are illegal in some jurisdictions.
- Do not stare at a person. Prolonged eye contact may be perceived as a challenge or threat.
- Do not wear jewellery that could be a strangulation or theft hazard.
- Do not use the back entrances to let people in.
- Do not leave by exiting into poorly lit, unobserved areas.

What are some tips for the store design and layout?

- Have good visibility. Are you able to see out clearly, and can passers-by see in?
- Design the counter high and deep enough to provide some physical distance from the robber and protection for the employee (while still being able to serve the customer).
- Keep the cash register located where it is clearly visible to people inside and outside the store.
- Keep shelves low for good visibility inside the store.
- Keep all areas - inside and outside - well lit. Check lighting regularly and before it gets dark.

- Lock delivery doors when not in use (but be sure you are not violating local fire code regulations when doing so).
 - Use a security system such as video surveillance cameras, mirrors, height markers, observation windows, etc.
 - Advertise the fact that security systems and measures are used.
 - If necessary, consider the use of protective shielding or barriers.
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What are some tips to know when handling money?

Have a cash control policy in effect.

- Keep the minimum amount in the register or taxi as possible.
 - Encourage the use of electronic payments such as credit or debit cards.
 - Vary the time of day that you empty the cash register.
 - Ask customers for exact change or the smallest bills possible.
 - Remove all large bills (\$50 or \$100) as soon as you receive them.
 - Install and use a locked drop safe.
 - Post visible signs to let customers know that minimum cash (state amount, e.g., less than \$50) is kept on the premises.
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What topics should employee training cover?

Training and education are essential. Training can include:

- Use of robbery prevention programs offered by local police forces (or security firms or consultants).
- Importance of strategies to prevent robberies.
- How to behave during and after a robbery.
- Conflict resolution and non-violent responses.
- Emergency response procedures.
- Security system operation.

Information adapted from:

Alberta Human Resources and Employment Working Alone Safely: A Guide for Employers and Employees (2000) and CCOHS [Violence in the Workplace Prevention Guide](#)

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