office of neighborhood involvement

Enhancing the quality of neighborhoods through community participation

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Crime Prevention Strategies for Businesses

Office of Neighborhood Involvement Crime Prevention Program
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Money Handling

Good money handling policies insure that money received is equal to the merchandise/services going out. It also minimizes the possibility of theft, reduces the amount that can be taken during a robbery and maintains good records.

- Give each employee their own till, and have each till start with exactly the same amount of money (i.e. $150.00).
- Place all bills in the drawer the same way (i.e. heads up and pointing left). This makes it harder to place a bill in the wrong slot, or confuse one denomination with another. This is especially helpful during peak business hours. Place bills larger than a $20.00 under the drawer.
- Remember, debits and charges are the same as cash, so treat them accordingly. In some ways they are worth more than cash money since the card numbers appear on the copies and could potentially be misused.

Money In = Merchandise/Services Out

Establish a means of comparing the amount of funds in a till with the amount of merchandise/services going out.

- Take a “reading” each hour off each register and again when a till is closed. This system of “readings” accomplishes two things: a way to track the volume of business by the hour and a schedule for money drops.
- Inventory your merchandise on a regular basis, as well.

Money Drops

Controlling the amount of money in a till limits the potential loss in a robbery or theft.

- Set up a system for cashiers to do a money drop, either when the till gets above a certain amount or routinely during the day, such as at reading times.
- The cashier or a supervisor can prepare and make the drop. Drops can be made to a “drop safe” (a safe with a slot for inserting envelopes) or the drops can be picked up by a supervisor and taken to a central area.
- Prepare each drop in the same way with the same denominations grouped together, debits and credits grouped together, and all secured together with the till number and cashier’s name, date, time and total amount. It’s good to include the cash register readings, too.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

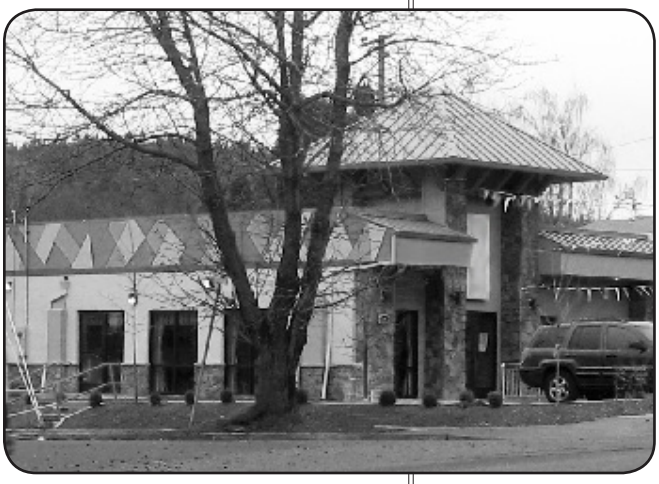
CPTED defined is “The proper design and effective use of the built environment that can lead to a reduction in the fear and incidence of crime and an improvement in the quality of life,” National Crime Prevention Institute (NCPI).

Key elements of CPTED

Natural Surveillance

Crime is less likely to occur if criminals feel that there is a good chance of being observed.

- Keep shrubs trimmed so they do not block the view of windows and doors.
- Prune tree branches to a 4 to 6 foot clearance from the ground.
- Install low-energy usage outdoor lighting along paths.
- Install motion-sensing or photosensitive lighting along the sides of buildings.



In the picture above, notice the windows that look out onto the property, the use of landscaping to distinguish between public and private property, clear visibility of the entrance area, lighting on all sides of the building, few places for someone to hide, and the overall maintenance of the property.

Natural Access Control

- Crime is less likely to occur if the criminal feels it will be hard to get in or that escape routes are blocked.
- Natural – Use of thorny plants, berms, rocks, retaining walls, perimeter flower beds, low shrubs and trees.
- Mechanical – Fencing with locked gates and solid core doors with deadbolt locks.

Territoriality

- Make a psychological impression that someone cares about the property and will defend it.
- Use plantings or fences to create a border and have the surface of the path to a structure different from the public sidewalk. This sends a visual message that your property is private and separate from the public right-of-way.

Activity Support

- Increase and encourage the presence of law-abiding neighbors to decrease the opportunities for criminals.
- Organize a Business Watch.
- Celebrate National Night Out with a block party.
- Organize neighborhood clean-up parties.

Maintenance

- Keep exterior lights in working order.
- Minimize the conflicts between visibility and landscaping as the ground cover, shrubs and trees mature.

CPTED for Offices

- Keep windows and exterior doors to the office visible to the street and by neighboring buildings. Signs and posters should not exceed 15% of the window space.
- Install and use lighting at all exterior doors, common areas, and

hallways. Lighting should fully and evenly illuminate the area and not create any shadows or dark spaces.

- Have restrooms observable from nearby offices, or if in a single office locate them by the reception area.
- Use convex mirrors to gain visibility of blind spot areas.
- Position security or reception areas at the main entrance. A counter or knee wall with a gate helps to define “public” from “private” space.
- Have an announcement device, such as a bell or buzzer, available at the office entrance when the office staff are away from the reception area.
- Keep elevators and stairwells clearly visible from windows and doors.
- Define public entrances by walkways and signage.
- Ensure parking areas and pedestrian walkways are well lit. It is best when parking areas are observable by as many people as possible. If there are no windows facing the parking area, consider installing a security camera that is monitored from the reception area.
- Keep shrubbery against the building to below windowsill height.
- Keep dumpsters visible and avoid creating blind spots or hiding places, or place them in secured corrals or garages.

CPTED for Surface Parking Lots

- Illuminate parking lots with adequate lighting. Keep it uniform to prevent shadowy dark areas and position the lights to prevent glare.
- Trim tree limbs up at least 6 feet to prevent concealment.
- Maintain shrubbery at a height no taller than eighteen inches.
- Secure and position dumpsters under lights and at an angle to minimize concealment.
- Gate or chair off parking lots after business hours whenever possible.
- Discourage trespassing with open metal bar fencing (wrought iron appearance) along the perimeter of the lot.
- Fence off delivery areas and rear portions of buildings that do not have customer entrances to prevent people and vehicles from hiding there.
- Have signage in the parking lot identifying what business(es) it is attached to.
- Post tow policies.
- If fencing is not an option, use border plantings or low fencing to separate the public sidewalk from the private or semi-private space. Keep it no higher than 18 inches to prevent sitting, leaning against, or hiding behind.
- Keep in mind that litter, overflowing trash receptacles, lights that do not work, and overgrown shrubbery create an atmosphere of “anything goes” and attracts unwanted behaviors and criminal activity such as graffiti, prostitution and drug activity. Keeping a clean, well-maintained parking lot shows that the owner cares what happens on their property.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

In the picture below, notice that the windows of the building look out onto the parking lot, the use of landscaping to distinguish between public and private property, fencing that doesn’t hinder visibility but limits access to the lot, few places for someone to hide, and the overall maintenance of the lot.

Key Control

Key Control

When a business has multiple key holders, it can be easy to lose track of the keys. If an employee leaves the company or there is a new hire, it is imperative to have a system in place to ultimately ensure the safety of your business.

- Systematically store all unassigned keys in a strong, locking cabinet.
- Keep records showing the issuance and return of every key, including name of user, date and time so that it is immediately apparent who has a key to any given lock.
- Restrict office keys to those who actually need them.
- Devise a code for each lock and its key, which will not be obvious to someone finding the key, and stamp keys with this code.
- Change the key cylinder of all locks affected when employees are discharged for cause or when departing employees do not immediately surrender keys.
- Re-key locks securing sensitive areas periodically.
- Create written policy mandating the immediate reporting of all lost or stolen keys.
- Immediately re-key the lock of a lost or stolen key.
- Consider installing an electronic lock system.

Shoplift Prevention

Shoplift Prevention

Common Practices

The first key to shoplift prevention is being aware of common shoplifting strategies. Common practices include:

- Concealing stolen goods under clothes, in baby carriages, and shopping bags. A diversion is often created to accomplish concealing the items.
- Wearing an item out of the store, modifying the clothing, claiming to be a “forgetful shopper” or using a newspaper or coat to cover an item.
- Misrepresenting themselves by trying to get a “cash refund” for an item that was just stolen.
- Buying an item and returning it with an empty bag to steal an identical item and ask for a refund.
- Boldly grabbing an item and running, or palming a small item and putting it in their pocket.

Prevention

- Have eye contact with your customers. A good way to do this is by greeting them as they enter the business, make eye contact and ask if you can help them find a particular item. Continue that contact throughout their visit.
- Post signs indicating that “All Shoplifters will be Prosecuted.”
- Control the fitting rooms.
- Change the store layout to improve customer service and limit theft.
- Elevate the cashier area, making sales staff easy to find.
- Illuminate dark areas, being careful not to create shadows and glare.
- Keep sales floor uncluttered.