



*Enhancing the quality of
neighborhoods through
community participation*

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Commercial Burglary Prevention

Office of Neighborhood Involvement Crime Prevention Program
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A commercial burglary is committed when there is unlawful entry of a commercial structure with the intent to commit a crime, usually a theft. It is a non-confrontational crime that occurs when the business is closed and unoccupied. Financial losses due to these crimes can result in layoffs or cutbacks and may also leave staff feeling violated and vulnerable.

There is no one typical burglar, but many share common traits. Burglars may operate alone, in pairs or as part of an organized group or gang. Most burglars are motivated by economic gain and are opportunistic. They tend to target property that is portable, valuable, and can easily be converted to cash and/or readily exchanged for drugs. There are professional burglars who steal merchandise and fence the items by having another party sell it at flea markets or online. In some cases the burglars commit return fraud by taking the stolen items to a store and asking for a refund.

In most cases, burglars forcibly enter through doors, windows, skylights, or other openings by prying them open, smashing glass windows and doors, forcing the locks open, or kicking doors in. Although less common, "ram raids" is a method of entry where a car or other objects are rammed into the building in order to quickly enter and steal items. Since a significant amount of retail crime is attributable to employee theft, burglaries may involve current or ex-employees' participation or collusion with offenders.

Why my property?

Although burglaries may seem random in occurrence, they actually involve a selection process. Burglars generally pick businesses based on a number of key factors:

Goods Sold

Businesses that sell items which can be easily transported and sold either on the internet or flea markets or traded for drugs are more frequently victims of burglaries. Similar to shoplifters, burglars tend to choose retail establishments based on the desirability of merchandise. They tend to choose expensive and portable items.

Occupancy:

Most commercial burglaries happen when businesses are closed and there is little street activity. Usually this occurs after dark and on weekends or holidays.

Visibility or Surveillability:

A burglar's risk of being seen entering or leaving a property influences target selection, making the following businesses more vulnerable to burglary:

Trespass Authorization Program

The Trespass Authorization Program is offered through the Portland Police Bureau. This program allows property owners or managers to authorize Portland Police officers to enter their property for the purpose of enforcing trespass laws against individuals who are trespassing on their property (e.g. individuals loitering on the property). The signer agrees to prosecute if a trespasser is charged with a crime. This is best suited for chronic problem locations.

For more information or to initiate the program, the property owner or manager of lease, must complete a document titled "Trespass Enforcement Agreement." This can be acquired by contacting your Crime Prevention Coordinator or your Neighborhood Response Team Officer.

What to Do If Your Business Has Been Burglarized

Report the crime to the police. Call 9-1-1 to report a crime in progress. If the burglary has already taken place, call the non-emergency number 503-823-3333.

In the event that you observed the suspects, write down any details, activities, and/or modes of transportation used by the suspect(s) immediately following the crime while the details are fresh in your memory. This may include a description of the person and license plates and vehicle information. Ask each of your employees to do the same, but do not compare information.

Talk to your employees and neighboring businesses about what happened. It is important to share information with others so they are aware of any criminal activity in the area. They may also be able to provide you with additional information about the incident.

After a person(s) is (are) arrested, pursue charges against the individual(s). Contact the District Attorney's office at 503-988-3860 to take steps necessary to ensure that these cases are aggressively prosecuted.

Additional Resources:

How to obtain a case number: The officer will provide you with a case number at the time of the report. If you don't receive a case number, call Portland Police Records Division at 503-823-0043.

How to get a copy of a police report: Call the Portland Police Records Division to purchase copies by calling 503-823-0041.

Report additional stolen items: You can report additional items online by visiting www.portlandpolice.com and click on the link for "Submit A Police Report." You can also call the Non-Emergency number at 503-823-3333, select "if you want to make a police report" to be connected to the Telephone Report Unit.

If you locate your stolen property at a pawnshop, yard sale or online: Contact the Non-Emergency number at 503-823-3333 and request an officer. The officer will come to your location. You will need relevant information to establish ownership, such as an original police report, serial numbers, receipts, etc.

Crime Prevention Program

Ask for the Crime Prevention Program Coordinator in your Neighborhood by calling 503-823-4064.

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