

Commercial Burglary Prevention

[back](#)

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Purpose

According to LPD Crime Analyst statistics, commercial to residential burglaries occur at a rate of about 1 to 6. Nationally, according to the FBI Uniform Crime Report, that rate is about 1 to 3. So even though a residence is more likely to be target for a burglary, commercial establishments are tempting targets because the majority of commercial and retail outlets are known to possess desirable goods, merchandise, and often cash. More planning goes into commercial burglaries as a general rule. Most are targeted on weekends or after hours when the businesses are closed and isolated.

Hardening the Target

The concept of "Problem Oriented Policing" refers to a **Crime Triangle** as seen here. The idea is that there are three things that must occur simultaneously for a crime to occur. There must be an Offender, a Location, and a Victim or Target. In theory, if we can remove or alter one side of the Crime Triangle, we can impact and hopefully reduce crime. The one side of the Crime Triangle that we can most easily control here is the Victim/Target side of the triangle. That is where Target Hardening is our best strategy.



Burglars will generally seek out vulnerable targets where they feel there is a reduced chance of detection and apprehension. There are steps business owners and managers can do to decrease the chance of becoming victimized by increasing or strengthening their exterior and interior security systems. Since the physical security of a business premise is the most significant deterrent variable, target hardening is the primary goal.

A business's level of physical barriers and deterrents that are utilized should generally match the potential risk to the business. There is always a trade-off and one must balance the costs and commitments of target hardening against the risks of financial loss to property or merchandise, and potential risks to employees and customers.

CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design)

CPTED is a concept that is too large to cover here in great detail, so this introduction to CPTED is very elementary. There are many differences between *Target Hardening* concerns of churches, small retail stores, commercial buildings, strip malls, and industrial structures. Here are a few of the basics however.

Natural Surveillance

- Install and use effective lighting at all exterior doors, common areas, and hallways.
- Design windows and exterior doors that are visible from the street or neighboring buildings.
- Avoid overgrown trees and shrubs which reduce visibility of the building from the street.

Natural Access Control

- Clearly define public spaces and entrances with signs, lighting, landscaping or paving.
- Restrict access to roofs by way of a dumpster or others similar apparatus.
- Locks, doors, and windows should be of sufficient quality for the application.
- Territorial Reinforcement
- Differentiate areas which are off limits to the public, or areas considered private.
- Consider signage or security cameras indicating that people are being watched.
- Monitor critical areas with cameras or designated checkpoints and employees.

Maintenance

- Keep areas around the business clean and free of debris. Show someone cares.
- Maintain landscaping and lighting to allow visual observation of the building.
- Keep critical items in a safe and consider a monitored alarm from a professional company.

Other Prevention Measures - Exterior

- Parking lot design, building entrance design, and perimeter fence design should provide barriers to offenders without unduly compromising employee or customer access.
- Use lighting to illuminate potential access points and keep them maintained properly.
- Security cameras and signage for alarms serve as a deterrent. Test alarms often and consult a professional to match an alarm system to your basic needs.
- Doors should be of sufficient quality and designed to control access to entrances with key fobs, touch pads, or high security keys.
- Secure all other openings to the building such as skylights, hatchways, basement openings, balconies, HVAC openings and other vulnerabilities specific to you building.
- Keep windows free of obstructions and make sure they are of sufficient quality to provide adequate security.



Other Prevention Measures - Interior

- Control area access inside the business. Certain interior spaces should be restricted to those possessing special access through restricted keys or access codes.
- Cash registers should be placed where they can be easily monitored and seen by others. They should be empty and open over night, and the money should be in a safe.
- Corridors and offices can provide additional barriers to criminals.

- Safes should be fireproof and burglar resistant and properly secured to a wall or floor. Consult with a professional to determine how your business can best be protected.
- Use inside lighting to allow others to help protect your business assets. Burglars prefer to remain hidden to avoid apprehension.
- Avoid keeping expensive, high-demand items near the front of the store to discourage quick smash-and-grab crimes where the burglar simply breaks a window and quickly grabs items readily accessible. CCTV monitoring/recording devices often provide valuable evidence obtained during the commission of a crime. It may be helpful in identifying an otherwise unknown perpetrator once we share that information with others.



The Lafayette Police Department's Crime Prevention efforts are meant to strengthen the partnership between our members, and the community that we serve. We hope that together, we can make our community safer.