

Store Security Planning

As a prudent business owner, as well as a health care professional it is incumbent upon you to give store security planning special attention given the high likelihood of a future loss.

There are two basic categories of security that you will need to address; internal and external. Internal security deals mostly with subjects such as; shoplifting & employee dishonesty while external security deals with issues like theft, robbery and break & enter losses.

Since pharmacy has and always will be a high target for external theft given the availability of narcotics, this should be your first priority.

Prevention

Obviously, the best security measures are the ones that prevent break-ins from occurring at all. This can be accomplished in a number of ways, but mostly centre around visual deterrents. A visual deterrent can be described as any measure that is taken to discourage a would-be thief from attempting a break-in. Popular methods include the installation of security bars or fold back scissor style gates covering all windows and doors leading into the store. While they can not prevent break-ins 100% of the time, they certainly make thieves think twice as they will slow down the process and provide the authorities more time and greater opportunity to apprehend the culprits. Let's face it, if your store has bars and the store down the street does not, which store is more likely to be hit?

Alarm Response

Alarm response is critical in the event of a B&E (break & enter). In fact, since all insurance companies require pharmacies to have a monitored alarm system as a condition of coverage, you may null and void your coverage if you are not careful. Your alarm system must protect all openings into the store including windows, doors, transoms, skylights, etc. This can be done with a combination of magnetic contacts, breakage sensors and motion detectors. Have your security company review these items on an annual basis to ensure proper protection and compliance with your alarm warranty.

All alarm signals are sent out via a telephone line. The line can be one of the regular lines used in the Pharmacy, a dedicated line, or even a cellular line. A popular strategy of would-be thieves is to cut the telephone lines thus disabling the alarm system. This is where big losses can happen as they have unlimited time to rob the store. A dedicated line also known as a D-Vac system is the best defense against this problem. With a D-Vac system once the line is cut the monitoring station knows immediately and can call the police right away.

Also, with the new technology available, another alternative would be the installation of a cellular back-up system. Now if your telephone line is cut the alarm system is programmed to automatically roll over to the cellular back-up to call out to the monitoring station. Both systems can prevent the large loss and gives the authorities the opportunity of catching the thieves red handed.

One last point on alarm response, make sure that your call lists are up-to-date and the alarm company is instructed to contact the police right away for all signals known not to be false alarms.

Minimizing Loss

So despite your best efforts in preventing a break-in, the thieves are in, now what? It is important that you accomplish two major objectives in this case; first, is to make sure that your alarm system responds so that the break-in can only last a few minutes and secondly is to make sure that the haul is limited. So often, when thieves are successful in stealing a large value of narcotics and or money & securities they will be back.

I can say without question the absolute best security investment a store can make is to install a heavy-duty Class B rated burglary safe. Unfortunately, many Pharmacists mistake a metal narcotic cabinet with that of a proper safe. While the metal cabinet may be equipped with a combination lock, it can be opened very quickly with a crow bar. A Class B rated safe is made of boiler plate steel with combination locks and often weigh in excess of 400LBs. They are usually bolted to the floor when installed.

There are a number of good safes on the market today. Brand names such as; Strongbox, Cashguard, & Chubb are excellent choices. Please visit the websites of these companies in order to determine the safe that best fits your store.

Remember, that break-ins occur in 95% of the cases for narcotics and controlled drugs as well as money & securities including cash, lottery, bus tokens, stamps etc. By storing these high target items in proper safes, you not only minimize your loss but also almost guarantee the culprits will not be back.

One final note on safes, I encourage people to display their safes in a highly visible area of the store as I am totally convinced that stores are cased out well in advance of the break-in and once they see how you secure your property, they will be off down the street looking for a better target with less security.

Summary

Like it or not, store security is an important part of your business. Most store owners only become interested in security after they have been the victim of a break-in. Be proactive with your store security and maybe you won't be filling out all those narcotic loss reports for Health Canada and looking up invoices for your insurance adjuster to verify your claim.

www.strongboxsafes.com

www.canadiansafe.ca

