

# Burglary Prevention Tips

Pharmacy robberies and burglaries appear to be on the rise. Robberies involving opioid medications have pharmacists and pharmacy owners worried.

Effectively implemented robbery and break-in prevention strategies will go a long way in deterring the diversion of opioid medications into the community. The following are recommendations that pharmacy licensees and proprietors can implement to ensure that their workplaces are safe and that staff are not exposed to unnecessary danger.

## Protect the Premises

### Ask the experts

- Use an independent contractor to provide an objective evaluation on safety and security issues. Local police services are an excellent resource and are very willing to come to the pharmacy and provide recommendations to protect the premises and ensure the safety of pharmacy staff.

### Install surveillance equipment

- A noticeable surveillance system can be an effective deterrent, especially if the cameras are visible. Recording devices need to be secured in a hidden area.

### Install an alarm system

- Install a centrally monitored alarm system. Install controls away from areas that are open to the public.

### Display deterrent signage

1. Display signage showing that you are protected by an alarm company. Display the signs on exterior doors and throughout the pharmacy.
2. Consider posting a sign in prominent areas of the pharmacy (entry doors and at dispensary) that says, "This pharmacy stocks only a minimal amount of narcotics or does not stock

at all. We require 24-hour advance notice from our patients requesting these medications."

### Take physical measures

1. Use security vaults that can be programmed for time delay openings. For example, you can program a five minute delay between the time the combination has been entered and when the vault opens. No robber is going to be hanging around waiting for the safe to be opened. Walgreen's in the States has incorporated this type of safe in their 7000-plus pharmacies, and this measure has basically eliminated narcotic robberies in their pharmacies.
2. Consider secondary locations within the dispensary for narcotic inventory and keep inventory to a minimum. Educate your regular customers that when they require large quantities, they need to give you adequate notice.
3. Install deadbolt locks, tamper-resistant door bars, metal or metal clad doors, shatterproof glass or plexiglas, bars over windows and/or metal security gates or curtains.
4. Keep the safe locked at all times that the contents are not being actively handled. Restrict access, keys or combinations, to as few employees as possible.

5. Install interior and exterior security lights. Leave them on overnight or pharmacy closing to pharmacy opening the next day. Some suggested lighting locations for the interior of the pharmacy are:
  - Interior—pharmacy entry areas, cash register areas, pharmacy operations area, the entrance to and the interior of the office area; and
  - Exterior—entries, parking lots, exposed walls. Consider installing “vandal-proof” lenses or protective coverings for outside flood lights.
5. Make deposits often in order to keep minimal amounts of cash on hand. Do not leave cash in registers overnight.
6. Staff should be trained to be alert and observant. They should regularly offer assistance to clients.
7. Train your employees to be aware of suspicious behavior from customers:
  - Is the visitor looking around or up as if to see if they are being watched or observed by a camera?
  - Is the customer spending an excessive amount of time looking at the same high priced merchandise, loitering outside or by the cashier stations or near the pharmacy operations area?
  - Does the customer seem furtive or uneasy when an employee asks if he or she needs assistance?
  - Make either mental or written notes, including descriptions of any of the above noted conditions and report any of these conditions to pharmacy management. Keep a file of these reports.
8. Train the staff on proper procedures to follow after discovering a robbery has occurred.

## Protect patients and staff

### Policies and procedures for staff

1. Management should conduct full background checks, including credit checks and criminal checks, on anyone applying for a pharmacy operations or cash handling job.
2. Management and staff should not discuss pharmacy procedures, cash handling, pharmacy layouts, security systems, etc., with any outsider, even family, other than law enforcement personnel and/or vendors with a valid interest in a particular system.
3. Pharmacy personnel should not discuss inventory controls with anyone. Other pharmacy personnel do not need to know the measures taken to hide targeted drugs. Measures taken to hide targeted drugs should never be discussed where they can be overheard by clients.
4. Deposit cheques and large bills into a time-lock drop safe as often as possible.

### If you discover a burglary

1. Call the police, regardless of whether the alarm has been triggered.

2. Lock the doors to prevent anyone from entering. Preserve the crime scene for the police. Don't touch anything the burglars may have touched and block off any areas where they may have been to preserve any evidence left behind.
3. Post signs on doors that the pharmacy opening will be delayed.
4. When the police arrive, assist them in assessing whether or not the premises are secure, and then turn the matter over to them.
5. If there has been damage to the property, call a contractor to make repairs as soon as possible in order to protect the property from further damage or loss.
6. Call a third party to assess the effectiveness of your alarm system. If it failed, find out why and what can be done to enhance the system.
7. Refer any inquiries from outsiders (media, etc.) to the police.
8. Do not discuss items or amounts taken with anyone other than the police.
9. Call the alarm company to reset or repair the alarm system.
10. Determine the quantity and dollar value of your losses.
11. Call your insurance company to open a claim file.
12. If your losses include controlled drugs and substances, you must complete a Health Canada Loss or Theft Report #HC/SC 4010 and forward it to the Office of the Controlled Substances in Ottawa within 10 days of the incident. You can find the form under *Pharmacist Resources/Forms* on the ACP website.

## If you are being robbed

The advice from law enforcement agencies includes the following:

1. Do not obstruct the intruder.
2. Give the robber what he or she wants.
3. Pay attention to their physical features (mannerism, age, weight, clothing, tattoos, scars, hair colour, and length of hair) and behaviours.
4. Try and see the mode of getaway; record a description of the vehicle, licence number, direction of travel.
5. If a weapon was used, record a description of the weapon.
6. Immediately after the robbers leave, close the pharmacy and obtain names and contact information of witnesses.
7. Call police.
8. Document your observations about the incident and the robber in preparation for giving the information to the investigating officers.