

Neighbourhood Support New Zealand



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Neighbourhood Support Fact Sheet

Armed Robbery

An armed or aggravated robbery is a traumatic experience for witnesses and victims. All premises and vehicles that handle or carry cash are potential robbery targets.

This information sheet provides practical advice to reduce your chances of becoming a victim of armed robbery. It also tells you what you can do either as a robbery victim or witness to help Police and minimise your risk of being hurt.

Armed Robbery facts

- Armed or aggravated robberies have increased in New Zealand in recent years.
- Armed robberies usually take less than 90 seconds.
- The offender is often hyped-up, stressed and irrational - possibly on drugs.
- Offenders want quick access to cash and consider: the amount of money on the premises; how easy it will be to get away; and how 'visible' they will be while committing the crime.
- 'Armed' can mean use of a firearm, knife, club, iron bar, syringe or any other weapon.
- 'Aggravated' means the offender, at the time of or immediately before or after the robbery, causes grievous (serious) bodily harm to any person.

Be prepared

Your first concern should always be for your own safety and that of your staff, so be security aware and be prepared.

It is wise to plan for the possibility of an armed robbery. Develop a set procedure for all and certain staff to follow. This process can help minimise risk, reduce your loss, prevent injury or even death and help Police apprehend the offender/s.

- Large businesses with high cash flow should have cash collected at all times by a security company.

However, if staff carry out the banking then:

- Never let them carry large sums of money alone.
- Vary the people and number of staff who do the banking.

- Don't wear identifying uniforms or name badges.
- Carry a mobile phone or personal alarm to call Police or attract attention.
- Use different cash carrying bags.
- Conduct banking regularly but at different times.
- Use a vehicle.
- Report any suspicious activity to Police (e.g. by mobile phone).

If cash is usually kept on the premises then the opportunity for robbery can be reduced by:

- Limiting public view and access to the cash register/till.
- Having a secure cash counting area.
- Emptying the till regularly and placing the money in an on-site safe.
- Using a 'dump' safe - a safe with a slot to deposit money; or a controlled- access safe with a time delay lock or dual locking system.
- Installing an EFTPOS system to minimise cash held on-site.
- Changing safe combinations (particularly after staff leave the job or are transferred).
- Advertising that attendant staff cannot open the safe.
- Not telling people where the safe key is or who has it.
- Having regular security cash pick-ups. Advertise this fact e.g. "Minimal Cash Held On Premises".
- An open, uncluttered environment providing a clear, well lit view of the sales area from the outside can be a deterrent.
- Ensure any rear doors and windows are secure.

Other methods of deterring armed robberies and minimising risk include:

- Video surveillance covering 'at risk' internal and external areas. Advertise this fact e.g. "Video Surveillance Cameras In Use".
- Monitored alarm systems.
- Electronic sensors that buzz or ring each time a person enters or leaves the premises.
- Minimising and controlling the number of entrances and exits or creating exit barriers (plants, furniture etc).
- Installing detector lighting around entrances and exits, car parks and routes to premises.
- Operating a 'check-out' system e.g. calling a colleague, friend or family member when about to leave the premises.
- Having more than one staff member working, especially if open 24 hours.
- Always securing the safe after use.
- Having pre-arranged cash-handling and business opening and closing procedures that all staff are familiar and comfortable with.

In the event of a robbery

If an armed robbery occurs on your premises or you witness an armed robbery, the overall aim is to ensure the offender leaves the premises as soon as possible without injury or harm to anyone.

Survival is the number one rule.

- As best you can, remain calm and exercise self-control. Don't play the hero or resist. This can put other people at unnecessary risk.
- Co-operate. Listen carefully and do what you are told without question. DON'T make sudden movements, talk to, or stare at the offender.

- If the offender has a firearm, consider it loaded. Your life and personal safety is far more important than any money.
- Without staring, note the offenders' description - physical features, clothing, weapon/s and actions (see the fact sheet on "Giving a good description").
- If it is safe, note the direction the offenders go following the robbery. If appropriate, also note vehicle details - colour, make, number plates. Don't chase the offender/s.
- Dial 111 and ask for Police as soon as the offender has left. Stay on the line to Police and provide as much information as possible about what happened.
- It's important to preserve the scene for evidential purposes. Restrict entrance after the robbery, isolate the area/s used by the offender and ask witnesses to stay until Police have arrived and spoken with them. Don't touch anything the offender may have touched e.g. doors or a demand note.

If you have specific security concerns or questions, you can discuss these with Police or a reputable security company.