

Jewelry Store Robbery and Theft Prevention

Crime against jewelry stores and firms result in losses over \$125 million annually. On the average, 10-15 homicides occur annually during jewelry store robberies.

Jewelry stores are high-profile targets for robbers. Retail jewelers are at the greatest risk.

Robbery Prevention Recommendations

- Do not open or close the store alone. One person should lock or unlock the doors, while a second person observes from a safe distance outside with a cellular phone, in order to summon the police if required.
- Never let a stranger into your place of business before or after business hours. Check carefully the identity of all delivery personnel and other workers.
- Use a buzzer system to admit customers to your store. If you feel that locked doors are not appropriate in your community, use a doorbell or chime to alert you that someone has entered your store. Follow fire codes that require a fast release from the inside and that will permit armed robbers a rapid exit so that a violent incident isn't provoked.
- Have at least two employees on the floor at all times. The chance of armed robbery goes up if there is only one person on the floor.
- Look at and greet all customers who enter your store. Criminals casing your store don't like to be noticed.
- Use and properly maintain a visible video camera and recording system in your store. An obvious camera system acts as a deterrent to crime, and helps identify criminals who commit a crime in your store, or even who case your store with the intention of committing a future crime. If you have a second, concealed recorder in your store, you will still have visual evidence of the criminals even if they take the tape from the main recorder after a crime.
- Use display cases that have burglary resistant or reinforced glass on the sides as well as the top. This will further slow down the robber who is smashing cases.
- Have a highly visible one-way mirror installed on your premises so that potential robbers may think that someone is watching them from the other side. Robbers may be deterred by their fear of the "unknown," that is, someone watching them from the other side of the mirror, and by fear of what the unknown person might do.
- Have an "alert system" in place for your store. If you believe you have suspicious persons in your store, have a code word or phrase to alert the other employees in your store that you believe a crime may be about to occur. A phrase such as, "Did Mr. Smith's ring come in today?" will be effective in alerting the staff, and will not disturb genuine customers. Employees should pass along the code word to their fellow employees until the entire staff is on notice of a suspicious situation.
- If you have a suspicious situation but no criminal event is yet underway, have one of your employees walk out of the store in a very visible manner, carrying and dialing a cellular telephone. Suspicious persons will be concerned that they have already been spotted, while genuine customers will scarcely notice. If the employee going outside can do so in a safe manner, he or she should also note car descriptions and license plate numbers.

- Split your higher value merchandise among different display cases. Robbers very frequently smash cases and remove goods themselves, rather than demand that the jeweler open the cases or safe. Time is of the essence for the robber who wants to get out of your store quickly. Making the robber's job slower and more difficult will reduce the amount the robber can easily scoop up and take.
- Consider not displaying a significant percentage of the goods most tempting to criminals, such as high-end diamonds and watches.
- Some jewelers follow the practice of not keeping their valuable diamond inventory in the safe during the day, but rather conceal it elsewhere in the store so that criminals will overlook these diamonds if there is a robbery. These jewelers keep a decoy supply of stones in the safe to use if there is an armed robbery. If your store follows this procedure, be aware that gangs may case your store and ask to see diamonds for the specific purpose of observing where you keep them. They will watch where you go to get the diamonds you are showing.
- Be vigilant for individuals casing your store, that is, observing your premises and procedures as preparation for a robbery. Keep a suspicious incident log in a notebook, giving times, dates, descriptions, license plate numbers and any other details which may later be helpful. Report suspicions to the police. Get to know your local police, and discuss with them the special problems of jewelers.
- Develop a neighborhood alert system, passing along warnings by phone, fax or email to other jewelers in your area.
- During times of special risk at your store, such as during trunk shows or special events calling for unusually high value on your premises, consider hiring an off-duty police officer to serve as a security guard, preferably in is police uniform.

What to Do in the Event of a Robbery

The primary advice in the event of a jewelry store robbery is not to resist and to cooperate fully with the robber. The following are an additional number of robbery response recommendations:

- Obey the orders of the robber. Do not say or do anything, or even raise your hands, unless told to do so. Cooperate fully and try not to panic.
- Do not attempt to disarm the robber or reach for a concealed weapon.
- Never do or say anything that would anger the robber. Example: do not stare at him and have him think that you are trying to memorize his facial characteristics.
- The less time the robbers are in the store, the less risk there is of injury. Once the robbers have your merchandise, they can be expected to leave quickly.
- Do not press a holdup alarm, if your premises has one, until the robbers have left the store and you have locked the door. If the police arrive while the robbers are in the store, or if the robbers return, a deadly hostage situation could develop.
- Expect to be threatened. One of the robber's weapons is the fear he creates. Robbers commonly say: "I'll kill you if you make a move!" This is a typical threat. Expect it. Keep calm.
- Frequently the robber will force the jeweler and his staff to a back room or washroom. Expect to be tied up or handcuffed, or told to lie on the floor. Do as you are told.
- If you are out of the robbers sight, in a back room or elsewhere, stay where you are. Do not intrude on the crime scene.
- Do not chase the robbers or follow them out of the store.

- Call the police immediately after the robbers leave and you have locked the door. Do not wipe or try to clean the cases or other surfaces, or otherwise disturb the crime scene before the police respond, because you may destroy fingerprints or other valuable evidence. Try to memorize all the locations touched by the robbers so that you can advise the police about possible fingerprint evidence when they arrive.
- Try to keep witnesses present until the police arrive. At the least obtain the names, addresses and phone numbers of any witnesses.
- Do not talk to the media or allow them to film in your premises. Refuse all media interviews.

Theft Prevention Recommendations

Theft is a broad crime category defined as “the taking of property without force or fear.” Theft in jewelry stores includes crimes such as distraction and sneak theft, grab and runs, smash and grabs, switches, etc.

The following measures or recommendations may help prevent jewelry store thefts:

- Have buzzers or chimes on your doors so that you are alerted when someone enters your premises.
- Make eye contact with each customer who enters your store, greet the customer, and note his or her appearance.
- Have at least two people on the sales floor at all times.
- Wait on only one customer at a time.
- Never turn your back on a customer.
- Never leave a customer alone with merchandise.
- Never leave the showroom unattended, even “just for a minute.”
- Show only one item at a time. If a second item is requested, show it on your own wrist or finger.
- When showing high-end goods to unfamiliar customers, tell them that your insurance requires you to ask for identification before displaying the items.
- Do not bring entire trays of merchandise or diamond wallet to the counter when waiting on a customer. Too much value will be exposed to a grab-and-run theft.
- All wall cases, show windows, display cases and showcases must have locks, and be kept in a locked position except when actually removing or returning goods. It is best to have locks that do not permit the key to be removed unless the case lock is in a “locked” position.
- Keep the keys to the showcases on your person, never on a hook or shelf in plain view. Keep the keys on a wrist or other holder so that it is less likely for you to put them down and forget them.
- Be warned that many showcases have generic keys, that is, keys that fit all showcases of that type. Anyone with a key to that type of showcase may be able to unlock your showcase and steal your goods. If a generic lock will open your showcases, consider installing unique locks.
- Showcase tops sealed with adhesive can be slit by thieves and lifted to remove goods. Make sure your showcases have secure metal edges or other means to secure the top even if the seal is cut. Inspect the tops and sides of showcases several times a day for evidence of tampering or attempts to lift the top.

- After a customer has handled an item, re-examine it to make sure it is the same item before returning it to the showcase. Do not allow a customer to return an item to a tray.
- Keep all jewelry trays completely filled, either with goods or with markers.
- The most difficult showcases for a thief to get into are the cases in which the back flips up. It is easier for thieves to reach into cases that slide open from either side.
- Do not let non-employees into work areas, your safe area, and your rest room or behind your showcases. This can be a trick to gain access to your merchandise, or to case your premises for a future crime.
- Your counter display cases should be built in a way that does not permit someone to crawl under them.
- Make sure there are no blind spots in your store in which visibility from another part of the selling floor is obstructed.
- Have an alert system in place in your store. If a suspicious person or situation is spotted, a code word or phrase can be used to alert the other employees that a crime may be underway.
- If a customer is causing a commotion or engages in a loud disagreement, be alert for a distraction theft by an accomplice, and call another employee to assist you.
- Be particularly careful when customers are wearing or carrying inappropriate clothing, bags or items that could be used to hide goods or block your view while accomplices steal goods. Be especially careful if these items are placed on the showcase counter.