



WASHINGTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

"Conservators of the Peace"

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Is Your Business a Target for Crime?

During these difficult economic times, the Crime Prevention Unit is especially aware that small business owners are highly motivated to guard and protect their assets. Crimes against businesses are usually crimes of opportunity and many can be avoided by simply laying a foundation for prevention. Start by taking a hard look at your business-it's physical layout, employees, hiring practices, and overall security. Assess vulnerability to all kinds of crime, from burglary to employee theft. Some basic prevention principles include:

- Provide training for all employees-including cleaning staff-so they are familiar with security procedures and know your expectations.
- Use good locks, safes, and alarm systems. If you have questions, contact the Crime Prevention staff.
- Keep detailed, up-to-date records. Store back-up copies off the premises. If you are ever victimized, you can assess losses more easily and provide useful information for law enforcement investigations.
- Establish and enforce clear policies about employee theft, employee substance abuse, crime reporting, opening and closing the business, and other security procedures.
- Mark equipment-registers, adding machines, calculators, computers, typewriters-with an identification number. Use the "Operation ID" format consisting of a driver's license number preceded by "OR" and ending in "DL". For example: "OR1234567DL." Keep a record of all equipment serial numbers off the premises with other important records.
- Consider forming a Business Watch group in your area.

Modeled after the very successful Neighborhood Watch program, Business Watch seeks to reduce commercial crime and the fear of crime from both the shopper's and the shop owner's perspective. Key steps include: getting to know operators of neighboring businesses, watching for and reporting suspicious activity, establishing a communication network among the group, securing business property and assets, engraving equipment with the Operation ID number, and publicizing your Business Watch.

Business Watch groups also form a partnership with local law enforcement and other community partners to reduce crime and disorder through creative problem-solving and shared responsibility. The Sheriff's

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Office Crime Prevention Unit is available to provide ongoing training for businesses on a variety of topics including burglary and robbery prevention, credit card and check fraud, shoplifting prevention, and crime prevention through environmental design. For more information on forming a group, contact the Crime Prevention Unit at (503) 846-2579.