

Work Safety

Many people spend a good portion of their time at work. This means it's just as important to use crime prevention skills in the workplace as it is at home and in the neighborhood. Whether the place of business is corporate headquarters, a restaurant, a store, an auto repair shop, or a person's home, common-sense prevention skills can make the workday safer for everyone.

The manager or owner of a business will have additional concerns as he or she must be on the lookout for vandalism, shoplifting, fraud, and other problems. In addition, employers need to make sure their employees are safe not only from unauthorized "visitors" or angry customers but, at times, from each other. This means employers must be careful in hiring, verifying references and credentials, and doing background checks when appropriate. And every company, no matter how small, should have an emergency plan in place.

Tips

- Keep your purse, wallet, keys, or other valuables with you at all times or locked in a drawer or closet.
- Check the identity of any strangers who are in your office. If anyone makes you uncomfortable, inform security or management immediately.
- Don't stay late if you'll be alone in the office. Create a buddy system for walking to parking lots or public transportation after hours, or ask a security guard to escort you.
- Report any broken or flickering lights, dimly lit corridors, broken windows, and doors that don't lock properly.
- If you notice signs of potential violence in a fellow employee, report this to the appropriate person. Immediately report any incidents of sexual harassment.
- Know your company's emergency plan. If your company does not have such a plan, volunteer to help develop one.
- If the company does not supply an emergency kit, keep your own emergency supplies (flashlight, walking shoes, water bottle, nonperishable food, etc.) in a desk drawer.
- If you work at home, in addition to making your home safe and secure, you should hang window treatments that obstruct the view into your office. You don't want to advertise your expensive office equipment.
- Review your insurance policy—almost all policies require an extra rider to cover a home office.
- Mark your equipment with identification numbers, and keep an updated inventory list (with photos, if possible) in a home safe or a bank safe-deposit box. It's a good idea to keep backups of your work in a secure, separate location as well.
- Follow the same caution with deliveries and pickups that businesses do. Anyone making a delivery to your home office should be properly identified before you open the door. Do not let the person enter your home. If you own the company, take a hard look at your business—physical layout, employees, hiring practices, operating procedures, and special security risks. Assess the company's vulnerability to all kinds of crime, from burglary to embezzlement. Follow basic crime prevention principles, and work with local law enforcement to protect your business.