

Security matters

Having the right type of security should be a top priority for pharmacies. We asked the professionals for some insider tips on how best to achieve a safe and secure working environment for you and your staff. By **Christine Brown-Paul**.

For small businesses, crime can be especially devastating. The potential for the loss of profit and merchandise to overwhelm a business is high, not to mention the threat crimes such as robbery pose to the physical safety of customers and employees.

Research points to the vulnerability of pharmacies, in particular, to crime with the Australian Institute of Criminology revealing that pharmacies are second only to liquor outlets as victims of crime in the retail sector.

According to a recent report by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia – ‘Trends in Improved Security Measures: Reducing Armed Robberies in Pharmacies’ – of the businesses targeted for robberies in Australia, pharmacies have special appeal for many offenders due to the availability of money and drugs.

Findings from the research



Pharmacies are particularly vulnerable to crime with robberies posing a threat to the physical safety of customers and employees. Photo courtesy Signature Security Group.

revealed that, although most pharmacies already use a range of risk mitigation strategies, other measures such as time delay safes should also be considered.

Recommendations include that, should an offender enter the pharmacy, the aim must be harm minimisation, with the report stating:

“The pharmacist and his/her staff need to reduce their risk of being assaulted and follow the

guidelines as provided by the police or as developed by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia. As robbery is an infrequent and unpredictable event, currency of training is important to remind all staff of the recommended steps to take in the event of a robbery.”

Group 1 Security

Murry Taylor is the Chief Operating Officer for Group 1 Security, a leading provider of security services to the retail sector and a preferred supplier for the Australian Retail Association.

Group 1 clients include Harvey Norman, Domayne, Aldi, The Reject Shop (Distribution Centre), Go-LO, Crazy Clark’s, Sam’s Warehouse, Retail Adventures Distribution Centres and Dick Smith Electronics National Distribution Centre.

Other clients include Toys ‘R’ Us, Strathfield (Car Radio) Group, Linfox, Urban Pacific, QR Rail, Bovis and Australand.

In terms of pharmacy security what does he see as some of the most important issues?

“A key issue is the mitigation of armed hold-ups. Whilst this is by no means the most common security issue pharmacists face it certainly has the biggest consequence, which, potentially, could be a fatality,” Mr Taylor said,

who adds that other concerns involve the volume of restricted substances held on the premises at any one time.

Key questions also include: ‘Who signs for the stock when it arrives?’ ‘Where is it stored?’ ‘Who is responsible for its storage?’ ‘Is access to these items restricted?’ and ‘How is any out-of-date stock disposed of?’

“When it comes to general precautions there are multitudes of ways staff can greatly increase their safety, including reducing cash holdings in the registers by conducting regular clearances [away from the public where possible], minimising/eliminating vision of any restricted substances to the general public, and keeping windows free of posters/clutter so there is clear vision into the pharmacy,” Mr Taylor said.

“Any offender carrying out an armed hold-up will look for locations where the likelihood of being noticed is minimal. When there is clear vision into the business there is a greater likelihood of being seen and caught.”

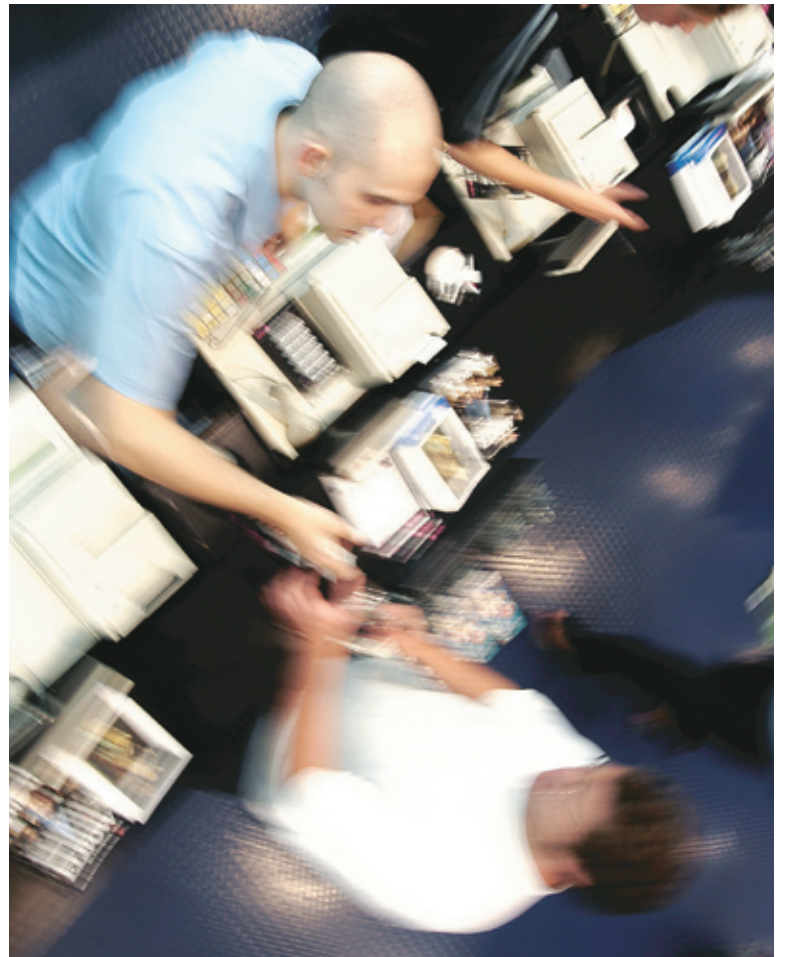
Mr Taylor also advises that fixturing should be set up so as to maximise vision throughout the store, service counters should be elevated to provide greater vision around the business (convex mirrors in the corner of shops with poor vision will



The pressure sensitive SecureMat from Group 1 Security activates when stepped on, sending alarm activation to either a person’s mobile phone or an alarm-monitoring bureau.



Anti-theft technologies such as ADT's Sensormatic work to reduce theft of all types.



ADT Security Australia view from CCTV camera.

greatly increase visibility of these areas), and that a reliable CCTV system should be installed.

"IP CCTV [internet protocol closed circuit television] is the future of CCTV, allowing clients to review footage in real time over their smart phone. It's particularly beneficial if you are responsible for multiple sites," he said.

"Currently, we're also experimenting with a product called SecureMat. This is very new technology and Group 1 Security is one of the first companies to be working with the developer of this technology, Perimeter Security Industries.

"We are trialling this product at one of our construction sites. It has the appearance of a mat and sits on the ground in front of doorways, fence lines, etc. It is pressure sensitive and activates when stepped on, sending an alarm activation to either a person's mobile phone or an alarm monitoring bureau.

"We also provide devices such as spider wraps [wire wraps around the product and is attached to an alarm], EAS [electronic article surveillance] systems and merchandise alarms.

"Recently, we've had a lot of success with the implementation of an anonymous reporting hotline

for matters relating to theft and/or fraud. I believe it's proving successful as it gives staff members an avenue for reporting any issues they may see or believe are going on without having to give up their details and without having to talk to a manager within the business.

"We collate this information and provide a report to the business and, where requested, carry out the investigation."

ADT Security Australia

Phil Brown, National Retail Manager, ADT Security Australia believes that having good security can deliver bonuses for pharmacies.

"Due to the volume of high-value items, which are small and easy to conceal, pharmacies are particularly vulnerable to shoplifting and internal theft. Pharmacy inventory losses are becoming increasingly costly because of the rise in prescription drug abuse and the market value of prescription medication," he said.

"Up-to-date retail security is vital for protecting profits. Without it, customer theft and staff fraud are an everyday occurrence. ADT provides pharmacy owners with valuable and innovative solutions for store protection, incorporating visual security to deter thieves."

According to Mr Brown, improved in-store marketing is another

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possible benefit. Using discreetly positioned video sensors and advanced facial detection and tracking technology, it is now possible to analyse, classify and count customer faces automatically.

Using this information, retailers can then better structure messages and place product and promotional items in areas receptive to their target market.

"Electronic article surveillance, in the form of anti-theft tags and

labels, is continuing to be one of the most popular security solutions for retailers looking to protect high value, concealable items. ADT Security has a number of Sensormatic EAS options, which aim to protect merchandise without detracting from the customer's shopping experience or the aesthetic appeal of the item," Mr Brown said.

"Retailers are also casting a very keen eye on exciting developments in the RFID [radio frequency identification] space, where item level intelligence solutions are set to be the next big thing."

In 2011, how important is security at POS and in-store for retailers?

"Traditionally, employee theft has been the largest portion of the retail crime pie and it still is, but we are seeing a shift in employee theft as retailers get better at spotting it. At the same time, the economy is reducing the number of employees in stores and creating more opportunities for shoplifting," Mr Brown said.

"The good news for retailers is that anti-theft technologies like Sensormatic EAS, CCTV, monitored alarms, video analytics, and new innovations such as DNA Guardian, are working to help reduce theft of all kinds.

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“Deterrence is the name of the game and today’s technologies are making criminals think twice. We are continuing to work with our retail customers to help them maximise and add technologies like cameras, video analytics and anti-theft tags to target shoplifters and organised retail criminals.”

In terms of cost considerations, Mr Brown believes that a good security system is worth the cost of the initial outlay in the long term.

“While the initial cost may be a deterrent for some smaller retailers in implementing a security system, a more cash-flow friendly rental model could be the solution. A rental package is available across most ADT retail security solution technologies,” he said.

“For example, the Sensormatic Essentials Package brings ADT’s high performance anti-theft tagging systems within affordable reach of smaller retailers. With no upfront establishment or installation costs, small retailers can rent the full range of Sensormatic products including anti-theft tags, labels, pedestals, deactivators and detachers starting from \$19.75 per week [terms and conditions apply].

“ADT also offers the ADT Vision Package,” Mr Brown explains. “Through a low monthly fee, the ADT Vision Package is fully installed with a high-quality digital video

recorder, dome cameras, an LCD screen and web-enabled software, allowing business owners to remotely monitor activity outside of business hours and when they are not on the premises.”

Signature Security Group

With 90,000 customers across Australia and New Zealand, including 400 pharmacies throughout Australia, Signature Security Group is a preferred supplier to the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, supplying both traditional security such as intruder alarms, CCTV surveillance, patrol response, and point-of sale solutions as well as personal security for the aged sector.

Signature’s MyLife Personal Medical Alarm and MyLife in Touch GPS Locator (a tracking system useful for dementia or Alzheimer’s sufferers who have a tendency to wander) can assist families or carers of the elderly or vulnerable to have peace of mind. Pharmacists can recommend and demonstrate these personal security solutions to clients in-store.

Signature designs tailored security systems to meet the unique needs of its clients, as well as providing installation and servicing. The company also operates two fully redundant A1 Graded Alarm Response Centres in Australia and also has an Alarm Response Centre in Auckland. Both centres monitor customers’ premises 24/7.



The inTouch wristwatch is from Signature Security Group’s range of personal security solutions for the aged sector.

“We can also supply a video verification product [Videofied] that assists us to verify a break and enter immediately to gain faster response times from appropriate emergency services if required,” Roger Jowett, CEO Signature Security Group Australia, said.

“The cash nature of the business and the stock of drugs on premises can prove highly attractive to criminals so key issues for all retail, including pharmacy, include shrinkage [internal theft from staff or through any part of the supply chain, distribution or supplier channel], theft [break and enter], hold-up and OHS [duty of care in ensuring a safe working environment].”

Signature lists the top five danger spots in any pharmacy as follows:

- 1) Stock room (where drugs are kept)
- 2) Cash registers
- 3) Blind spots (corners or areas that are somewhat invisible to staff or can’t be seen from the counter)
- 4) Staff rooms
- 5) Areas that have shelf stock that is easily portable or of high value.

“Pharmacists can improve safety in their environment through a combination of factors,” Mr Jowett said.

“These include technical investment [in appropriate security to meet the needs of the pharmacy], promotion and awareness [using signage at the entrance as well as signage saying that CCTV cameras are watching, those stealing from the shop will be prosecuted], ensuring staff know consequences of internal theft,

ensuring staff greet customers as they enter store, regular training and stringent internal controls/ documented processes.”

According to Mr Jowett, fostering positive morale and culture is another key aspect to improving safety in the pharmacy environment as is establishing and maintaining a sound audit trail, and robust management and supervision procedures.

The company provides some of the most cutting edge equipment available on the market, including the Videofied and SecurePath.

The Videofied system is a video verification product that enables Signature’s A1 Graded Alarm Response Centre staff to verify a genuine security emergency within moments of it occurring while its Securepath represents a superior level of alarm monitoring that provides dual pathways in communicating an alarm signal to the Alarm Response Centre even if phone lines are cut.

Signature Security licensed advisors meet and conduct a site assessment with the owner/ manager of a pharmacy to identify the weak spots in their existing security and also to gain an understanding of the specific security issues and/or concerns the pharmacy is dealing with. They then design an appropriate system and have it installed.

Subsequently, the advisor acts as an account manager for that client, liaising on a regular basis to ensure the security continues to meet their ongoing needs. **RP**

Top tips for pharmacy security

According to research by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, comparisons between ‘robbed and not robbed pharmacies’ suggest that to reduce the risk of offenders targeting and entering the pharmacy, pharmacists should:

- 1) Avoid being located within a medical centre (although the reasons behind this difference are not known and require further investigation)
- 2) Avoid being located in an isolated area, where there is limited pedestrian traffic or businesses open at different times or for shorter periods
- 3) Be aware of having easy access, which could assist criminals in quick getaways
- 4) Improve visibility into the premises
- 5) Review opening hours: avoid long hours unless other measures are in place (eg, locked doors with buzzers/intercoms)
- 6) Have a ‘no working alone’ policy.