

Economy Fuels Theft and Fraud



Please route to:

- Owner
- General manager
- Service manager
- Office manager

Economic downturn fuels theft and fraud

Unfortunately, bad economic times often translate into an increase in theft, robbery and fraud. When dishonest and desperate people need money, your customers' vehicles are attractive targets. Thieves cruise automotive business lots looking for vehicles with aftermarket stereo systems, wheels and other add-ons that can be removed quickly and sold on the street for a profit. Catalytic converters have also become attractive targets. Often times, thieves steal the entire vehicle and have it "parted out" within a matter of hours. Your customers trust you to protect their vehicles, and it's your responsibility to prevent anything bad from happening to them

Burglaries and vandalism are loss exposures for your property as well. Thieves target employee tools, electronic equipment and cash among other items. All aspects of physical security must be assessed including lot protection, building security, intrusion detection alarms, and vehicle security. Take some time to review the following aspects of your business and determine if improvements can be made in any of these areas:

Vehicle security

- When possible, avoid keeping vehicles overnight.
- As space permits, park all customer vehicles inside the service area.
- If space is scarce, park "target" vehicles inside or in the most secure area available. Target vehicles include SUVs and vehicles with aftermarket stereos, wheels, etc.
- At night, secure all vehicle keys by locking them in a safe, file cabinet or in a technician's toolbox.
- If you provide a "night owl" key drop box, ensure that keys/envelopes cannot be fished out of the slot or pulled under the door.
- Park vehicles closely together and bumper to bumper.
- Remove keys from all unattended vehicles, including customer cars in the service drive

- It is a good idea to post signs reminding customers that your business will not be held responsible for personal articles left inside their vehicles.

Lot security

- The ultimate goal is to deny thieves access to your building, property and customer vehicles.
- Install six-foot chain link fence topped by three strands of barbed wire to enclose property.
- Gates should be reinforced steel equipped with heavy-duty padlocks.
- Install three to six inch diameter posts four to ten feet apart with chain or cable between posts.
- If aesthetics are a concern, use landscaping and natural terrain – ditches and embankments – to protect your business.
- During daylight hours, close all but one entrance to channel traffic through a single point.
- Consider installation of intrusion detection and alarm systems on fences and gates.
- Exterior lighting should illuminate all areas, leaving no shadows or dark areas.
- Contract with a security service to patrol the facilities during non-working hours.
- Ask the local police department to increase patrols of the premises.
- Consider installation of closed circuit surveillance cameras.
- Instruct employees to stop and question any person who enters restricted areas.

Building security

- Illuminate all exterior areas of the building.
- Equip exterior doors with double-cylinder deadbolt locks.
- Ensure that pins on exterior doors are welded or otherwise secured to prevent removal.
- Install heavy metal doors and door frames.

- Protect exterior windows with wire or “burglar bars.”
- Protect skylights and other roof openings against forcible entry.
- Post signs stating that the property is protected by burglar alarms, surveillance cameras, etc.
- Consider installation of burglar alarm systems, monitored by a central station monitoring service, in all buildings
- Use Underwriters Laboratories (UL) approved central station monitoring services.
- Cellular back-up is recommended for all burglar alarm systems.

Employee controls

- Require all prospective employees to fill out an employment application.
- Confirm information supplied by the applicant.
- Contact previous employers.
- Conduct criminal background and credit checks for sensitive positions.

*Not all of these solutions may be applicable in your situation.

Prior to implementing any of these suggestions, contact your city department of code administration.

The ultimate goal is to ensure that your business is protected from thieves. Don't take unnecessary risks with your business property or your customers' trust.



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