

DATE: January 2021

Security guidance for closed business premises during the COVID lockdown

Unfortunately, we find ourselves under another lockdown period due to the COVID pandemic. If you have been instructed by the government to close your business in line with the Covid-19 guidance or you have chosen to close for duty of care reasons or staff are working from home, it is a good time for you to review your security to reduce the chances of your premises being targeted by opportunist thieves. Here are 10 crime prevention pointers:

- 1. Property maintenance:** You should check your premises regularly, at least twice a week, to see if there are any obvious signs of an attempted break-in or damage. It is important that premises continue to be well-maintained during this extended period of closure to prevent the spiral of decline. This includes removing litter and graffiti as soon as possible and making sure that landscaping is cut back to assist with surveillance from passers-by and your CCTV system. Remove mail from letter boxes. Flammable and combustible materials and substances should be stored in a secure, lockable container, cage or room. Bins should be securely stored away from the building to prevent arson. Skips and wheelie bins should be stored away to prevent them from being used by offenders to gain access.
- 2. Monitored intruder alarm system:** A monitored intruder alarm system is a deterrent as it increases the likelihood of being caught. Make sure it is regularly maintained, in good working order and is remotely monitored. Clean any external alarm boxes and maintain flashing LEDs. Ensure that staff are familiar with opening and closing procedures to prevent false alarm activations. Update your key holder list and share it where necessary with your intruder alarm company.
- 3. Security fogging system:** A security fogging system is triggered by an alarm sensor and will instantly fill the area you are trying to protect with a dense, harmless fog that reduces visibility, making it virtually impossible for an intruder to access the items they want to steal. If you already have such a system, check with your supplier that it is still in good working order.
- 4. CCTV:** If you have CCTV, make sure it is regularly maintained, in good working order with sufficient storage capacity and as a minimum, is providing coverage of the most vulnerable areas. Views of entry points should be covered. The recording equipment should be kept in a secure cabinet inside a lockable room within the building. If your system is old, consider purchasing or leasing new HD quality equipment. All CCTV should comply with the Information Commissioner's Office guidance, see www.ico.org.uk
- 5. Doors and windows:** Doors and easily accessible windows should be in good working order, free from rot or damage and have good quality locks that have a Kitemark showing that they meet the relevant British Standard. Windows and doors should have multi-point locking mechanisms.
- 6. Roller shutters and grilles:** Roller shutters and grilles can provide additional protection to external doors and windows. If you have them installed and are away from the premises for some time, consider storing something inside behind the shutters to make access even more difficult.
- 7. Lighting:** Motion detection lighting is one of the most important security elements. Offenders are less likely to hang around when a light suddenly exposes them.
- 8. Safe storage of valuables, assets and stock:** Valuables, assets and stock should be either removed from the premises or stored in a secure, lockable container, cage or room and the keys stored in a secure key cabinet or removed entirely from the premises. It is advisable to check the continued performance of essential equipment and services, such as fridge freezers, electrical and water supplies, including central heating pipework. All trace of computers and expensive equipment should be removed from external sight.
- 9. Gaming and vending machines:** Gaming and vending machines should be emptied of all stock and cash and where possible removed from external sight. It is advisable to display a sign on an outside wall to state that machines are empty of stock or cash. There have unfortunately been commercial burglaries for cigarettes and game machine cash.
- 10. Clean and repair!** There is a saying in crime prevention called the 'Smashed Glass Effect'! If the outside looks scruffy, then the chances are the inside is disorganised and an offenders paradise. Clean your doors and windows, replace broken ones; if you make the outside of your property look clean the chances are an offender will think the same time and effort has been spent inside the premises. Replace broken fences. Clean or replace broken signs. A lick of paint can be a wonderful cheap deterrent.

If we can offer any further guidance please do contact us at business.crime.unit@essex.police.uk