

Northfield Village Police Department
BUSINESS WATCH PROGRAM

CRIME PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Business Watch Guide

Available at www.northfieldvillage-oh.gov



Part Two

What is the Village of Northfield Business Watch Program?

The Northfield Village Police Department is working with the business community to reduce crime and the fear of crime by establishing a Business Watch Program. The Business Watch is an off-shoot from the Neighborhood Block Watch Program with some modifications.

Business Watch is composed of a group of business people who join together with the police in a team effort to practice crime prevention. A Business Watch may be formed in a shopping center, among a row of street-front shops or free-standing shops and businesses. One person will be needed to organize the first meeting. A coordinator will be chosen to be the liaison to the Northfield Village Police Department's Crime Prevention Officer. Reporting suspicious activity is the key feature of the program. We encourage these types of calls since they are a very effective way of preventing crime. Calls to the police do not place the caller in civil or criminal jeopardy. Business Watch does not require owners or employees to confront or apprehend criminals.

Robbery Prevention Strategies

- Keep your front doors and windows clear of signs and posters to allow natural surveillance, two-way visibilities. Employees can see suspicious persons outside. Passers-by and police can see inside.
- Keep the outside of your business well lit at night.
- Make sure your cash register area is clearly visible to outside observers.
- Practice good cash control. Keep a minimum amount of cash in your cash drawer and make regular drops into a safe. Advertise outside that you keep a minimal amount of cash in the register and that you will not accept large bills. Don't keep large bills under the cash drawers. If you do not have a safe, find a less obvious place to hide your extra cash until you go to the bank. Make bank deposits as often as possible and try to vary the times you make these deposits so that potential robbers cannot establish your routine. Money bags are pretty obvious. Carry cash in a variety of ways – a lunch sack, attaché case, gym bag, pocket, etc. Not only should you vary the times, but also the routes that you use to go to the bank. Make deposits as often as possible; never less than once a day.
- Use a safe that the clerk cannot open alone or that requires two keys and post that fact conspicuously, including on the safe itself.
- Use digital surveillance at your business to deter both from robberies and employee theft. Make it well known that surveillance cameras are in place and always have at least two clerks working at night.

- Be alert for “customers” who seem to be glancing around the store while appearing to shop or browse through a magazine. Approach them and ask, “May I help you find something?” or “Are you finding everything you need?” etc.
- Watch for suspicious persons outside the business as well. Such as people sitting in cars, loitering, or others behavior not normal for the circumstances or environment.
- If you see someone who is acting suspicious inside or outside, call the police to have them checked out. Consider locking the doors to your business if someone outside is behaving suspiciously until you know the police have checked them out and the situation is safe.
- At opening time, enter the store and check to see if anything has been disturbed. Try to have two people perform the opening and closing of the business each day. Before closing, check the office, backrooms, and restrooms to make sure no one is hiding inside.
- Keep side and back doors locked. Have employees use the main entrance, if possible. Place height markers at the main entrances so that if robbed, employees can use this to help gauge the height of a robber as he leaves.

What to do during a Robbery

- Try to stay calm and do not make any sudden movements to upset the robber. Do exactly as you are told, unless being instructed to do something that would endanger your life or safety. Do not resist unless you feel you are in imminent danger or abduction or death.
- Activate your alarm ONLY if you can do it secretly and tell the robber about anything that might surprise him, such as someone who is expected to arrive soon. If you have to move or reach for something, tell the robber exactly what you are going to do and why.
- Do not be a hero. It is better to lose your money than your life. If safe to do so, get a good look at the robber so you can describe him later. Give the robber time to leave and do not block his escape. Note his direction of travel when he leaves and try to get a description of his vehicle ONLY if you can do so without exposing yourself to harm.
- DO NOT allow yourself to be abducted or moved to crime scene number two!

What to do after a Robbery

- Call 911 (police) immediately, even if you have already activated the alarm. Close the store and lock the doors. Do not allow anyone to enter other than emergency personnel and do not discuss the details of the robbery with witnesses or fellow employees. Do not discuss the amount of money taken with anyone other than the police. Please ask any witnesses to stay until police arrive and can get their information. If they cannot stay, or if someone involved refuses to stay, get their names, phone numbers and addresses.
- Do not touch anything that the robber may have touched. Block off areas where the robber was, if necessary. Try to recall as much as you can about the robber's appearance – height, weight, eye and hair color, as well as things like speech, mannerisms, jewelry, scars and tattoos, teeth glasses, clothing, shoes, or anything else that may be able to help identify the individual who committed the crime.
- Step outside the store when the police arrive so that they will know the robber is gone and you are safe. Try to relax, calm down, and be as detailed as possible when answering the police officer's questions. Do not be afraid to ask questions of the police, if you have any.

Shoplifting Prevention

Good retailing practices are important:

Improving Store Layout and Displays:

- ✓ Make it easy for staff to exercise effective surveillance.
- ✓ Exits should not be accessible without passing through checkout.
- ✓ Reduce or eliminate the number of exits, blind corners, recesses, alcoves, and hidden areas in the store.
- ✓ Monitor restrooms and changing rooms.
- ✓ Carefully place mirrors and surveillance equipment.
- ✓ Avoid displays that conceal goods and shopper from view.
- ✓ Staff should be able to easily see down aisles from one end.
- ✓ Provide good, even lighting.
- ✓ Eliminate clutter and obstructions.
- ✓ Place goods away from entrances and exits.
- ✓ Reduce height of displays and reduce crowding near displays, especially of high-risk items.

- ✓ Hot products should be moved to higher-security zones with more staff surveillance.
- ✓ Speed up checkout to reduce congestion and waiting.
- ✓ Eliminate possibilities and opportunities for shoppers to exercise concealment of goods.

Tightening Stock Controls:

- ✓ Help managers detect shoplifting patterns.
- ✓ Inventory control procedures must allow shoplifting trends to be detected.
- ✓ Managers must be able to distinguish between shoplifting and employee theft.
- ✓ Without good inventory controls, retailers will be unable to notice, and immediately report, shoplifting and employee thefts.

Improving Retail Security:

- ✓ Standard security must make shoplifting more difficult.
- ✓ Do not allow unaccompanied children in store.
- ✓ Establish clear rules for use of changing rooms and restrooms.
- ✓ Display only the cases in music and video (VHS, DVD, Blue-Ray Discs) stores and only one shoe from a pair of shoes in shoe stores.
- ✓ Keep high value items in locked displays or use cable locks and security hangers.
- ✓ Provide baskets or something similar for shoppers to carry items to eliminate any excuse for putting items in their own bags or pockets.
- ✓ Check receipts against goods as shoppers exit the store.
- ✓ Require proof of purchase for refunds.
- ✓ Post warning notices on high risk merchandise.

Staffing:

- ✓ Hire more and better-trained sales staff:
 - Makes it harder for shoplifters to operate.
- ✓ Hire store detectives:
 - Provides a deterrent, especially to shoplifters.
- ✓ Hire security guards:
 - Provides a deterrent to shoplifters who might otherwise believe they could escape if apprehended by sales staff.

Shoplifting Policies:

- ✓ Using civil recovery
 - Some deterrence; provides retailers with the ability to recover some of the costs.
- ✓ Using informal police sanctions:
 - Unknown deterrent value; saves retailers, police, and the criminal justice system time.
- ✓ Establishing early warning systems:
 - Retailers communicate to one another when known shoplifters are present in the area.
 - Eliminates element of surprise that shoplifters rely on.
- ✓ Banning known shoplifters:
 - Alerts staff to their presence so that they may ask them to leave.
 - Deters known shoplifters from entering store and may deter others.
 - Police may be notified and arrest banned the banned subject for trespassing.
- ✓ Launching public information campaigns:
 - Informs public about the harms of shoplifting.
 - Encourages people to report shoplifting.
 - Increases knowledge about the consequences of apprehension.
- ✓ Adhering to a zero-tolerance policy:
 - 100% of shoplifters are arrested and subject to prosecution.

Technology:

- ✓ Installing and monitoring Closed Circuit Television (CCTV):
 - Increases surveillance abilities.
 - Useful in identifying offenders.
 - Provides evidence for prosecution.
- ✓ Using electronic article surveillance:
 - Detects shoplifters trying to leave the store with concealed goods.
- ✓ Attaching ink tags to merchandise:
 - Removes the rewards of shoplifting by rendering the stolen goods unusable.

Fraud Prevention

Credit Cards:

- ✓ Check signature on back.
- ✓ Ask to see identification.
- ✓ Make sure name on ID matches name on credit card and that signatures match.
- ✓ Do not accept cards that have been taped together.
- ✓ Do not handle the credit card back to the customer before you have received an approval code.

Checks:

- ✓ Ask to see a photo ID
 - ***Write date of birth and driver's license number on check. The prosecutor has to have this for prosecution.***
- ✓ Compare name on check with name on ID.
- ✓ Do not accept checks without the passer's name printed on the check.
- ✓ Make sure photo ID matches the person using it.
- ✓ Verify funds with issuing bank on large amounts.
- ✓ Use a check verification system/machine.
- ✓ Cash checks for only the amount of the purchase.
- ✓ Never cash a check for anyone – **you are not a bank.**
- ✓ A check passed on to and cashed by a second party who is not the payee constitutes a civil complaint.
- ✓ Keep a list of the names of people who have passed bad checks. Consult this list before accepting any check.
- ✓ **See The Northfield Village Police Department “Bad Check” Policy on next page.**

Northfield Village Police Department “Bad Check” Policy

The Northfield Village Police Department has developed the following check policy for Northfield Village residents and businesses.

Because of the volume of bad checks passed in Northfield Village, the Northfield Village Police Department will only seek criminal prosecution. Those persons who desire only monetary restitution must seek relief in the civil courts.

The Northfield Village Police Department is ready to be of assistance to you pursuant to these guidelines and this policy. The Northfield Village Police Department cannot be a collection agency. Acceptance by you of restitution can possibly negate criminal prosecution at a later date. Before accepting any restitution, consult the Village Prosecutor's office or the Northfield Village Police Department.

This policy is not intended to discourage prosecution on bad check complaints. It is intended, however, to make it possible for the Northfield Village Police Department and the Prosecutor's Office to prosecute those persons who write bad checks.

If you have any questions pertaining to bad checks written within The Village of Northfield, please contact the Northfield Village Police Department's Detective Bureau.

Bad Check Policy – Criminal Case:

What is a "Bad Check" for which a warrant may be obtained?

1. The passing of a stolen, forged, counterfeit and/or altered check, money order, withdrawal slip etc. that constitutes the offense of Uttering & Publishing.
2. Checks written upon banks in which there was "No Account."
3. Checks returned due to "Non-Sufficient Funds" in the account.
The prosecutor will determine the charge for this offense, taking into consideration the value of the check and whether there is any related criminal history.

In all cases involving the prosecution for bad checks, the intent to defraud must be established.

Obtaining a Warrant:

How is a warrant obtained in order to prosecute a bad check?

1. Send a [ten-day notice](#) by certified mail or by personal service, signed for by a responsible person.

Ten-day notices are available at the Northfield Village Police Department or can be downloaded from the Village website: www.northfieldvillage-oh.gov.

2. If the check is not made good within ten days, file a report with the Northfield Village Police Department.

Note: you must make the police report within sixty days of receipt of the check; or there must be explanation for the delay.

3. Present the proof of service, the return of the ten-day notice and the **original check** to the Northfield Village Township Police Department at the time the report is filed.
4. The Northfield Village Police Department will make a complete investigation prior to presentation to Prosecutor's Office.

Bad Check Policy, Not Criminally Prosecutable

Are there situations where a "Bad Check" may not be criminally prosecutable?

Yes. The following are situations where bad checks have been passed and do not constitute a crime. The remedy when accepting checks such as these is through the civil courts.

1. A stop payment check; unless fraud has been involved and can be conclusively proven.
2. A check issued to repay a loan.
3. A post-dated check or one bearing a current date in which the maker requests the payee to hold until a later date.
4. Out of state checks (though some exceptions are made).
5. Illegal debt (such as contraband or a gambling debt).

The mere fact that an individual passes a bad check does not necessarily constitute a crime. It must be shown beyond a reasonable doubt that there was intent to defraud at the time the check was passed.



For questions regarding Bad Checks, the Police Department's Bad Check Policy, and Prosecution issues, contact the Northfield Village Police Department Detective Bureau at (330) 467-7139 Ext. 14.