



AI Crime Reduction Matters

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Strategies for preventing armed robbery

Over the past 10 years, a range of crime prevention strategies have been developed and employed to reduce armed robbery. The main aims of these strategies have been to secure commercial premises to deter armed robbery attempts and to reduce the possible rewards from armed robbery. Combinations of different methods have been used, but they primarily involve techniques based on situational crime prevention.

Situational crime prevention is an approach that focuses on opportunities and settings for crime, rather than the detection and punishment of offenders. Situational techniques range from simple crime prevention measures to more high-level methods of deterring or discouraging offenders and reducing the attractiveness of specific crime targets (AIC 2003).

When applying this approach to armed robbery, industry sectors have a range of potentially effective situational crime prevention measures available to implement. These include simple yet effective techniques such as high customer visibility inside premises, regular staff training in safe money-handling procedures and limiting the amount of money kept on premises. High-level prevention techniques include security screens, alarms, double security doors and CCTV (Matthews 2002). The implementation of such measures would benefit most industry sectors in attempts to reduce armed robbery.

Figures from the National Armed Robbery Monitoring Program (NARMP) indicate that there have not been any obvious decreases in the incidence of armed robbery in Australia over a three year period. Despite this, there has been displacement among industry sectors. For example, the proportion of robberies at pharmacies has decreased, while increasing at service stations. The proportion of armed robberies has also decreased slightly at banking locations while increasing slightly at licensed premises (Smith & Louis 2009). Consequently, the 'displacement effect' remains one of the key challenges to the prevention and reduction of armed robbery in Australia. Felson and Clarke (1998) highlight that there are five main ways in which displacement can occur:

- Crime can be moved from one location to another (geographical displacement).
- Crime can be moved from one time to another (temporal displacement).
- Crime can be directed away from one target to another (target displacement).
- One method of committing crime can be substituted for another (tactical displacement).
- One type of crime can be substituted for another (crime type displacement).

Displacement effects can be one of the most challenging aspects of using the situational crime prevention perspective. These effects can make it difficult for industry sectors to implement consistent and effective target hardening measures aimed at reducing armed robbery. Ongoing research by NARMP can monitor where and how this displacement occurs.

References

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