

December 2018

## Risk Management Bulletin

### Theft Prevention

**'Tis the season for giving... or for some TAKING...**

*A woman reported that her car was stolen, and mentioned that she left her cell phone in the vehicle. The top flight policeman called the phone and told the guy that answered that he had read an ad in the newspaper and wanted to buy the car. They arranged to meet, and the thief was arrested.*

*A man, wanting to rob a downtown Bank of America, walked into the branch and wrote "this iz a stikkup. Put all your munny in this bag." While standing in line, waiting to give his note to the teller, he began to worry so he left the Bank of America and crossed the street to Wells Fargo. After waiting a few minutes in line, he handed his note to the Wells Fargo teller. She read it and, surmising from his spelling errors that he was not the brightest, told him that she could not accept his note because it was written on a Bank of America deposit slip and that he would either have to fill out a Wells Fargo deposit slip or go back to Bank of America. Looking somewhat defeated, the man said "OK" and left. The Wells Fargo teller then called the police who arrested the man a few minutes later, as he was waiting in line at the Bank of America.*

*A West Texas man busted into a church and stole the safe. He only got a short distance before dropping the 100+ pound safe on a neighbor's lawn, where he tried to crack it open. That's when he was confronted by the home owner—a police officer (a little Christmas Justice...).*

Unfortunately, not all criminals are this stupid, and many thieves prey on unsuspecting victims during the holiday season. There are two distinct categories of crime theft- internal (employees and third party contractors working "on behalf" of the company) and external (unrelated third parties). This month's newsletter highlights some of the things that can be done to reduce the organizations risk to crime and theft related incidents.

**Internal theft.** Surprisingly, we see employee dishonesty claims from some of the most trusted employees in the organization. Individuals with access to company bank accounts or inventory due to spouse layoffs, medical bills, or other financial issues resort to unlawful acts to address their need for cash. Controls are pretty simple, but do take a bit of time to implement:

- 1) Trust but verify... Conduct internal audits and inventory at least annually
- 2) Develop procedures including on-line and wire transfers for dispersing cash and for purchase orders to ensure there are checks and balances in place for financial transactions

**External theft.** Criminal minds are quite devious and seem to always find a new way to steal cash and goods. Vehicle theft continues to be an issue, ranging from catalytic converters, Christmas presents or laptops on the front seat, or theft of the vehicle itself. There are several keys (pun intended) to reducing crime losses.



- 1) Lights, lights, lights – Studies have shown that adequate lighting is the greatest deterrent to theft. Parking vehicles in well lit areas is a good first step. Avoid low visibility areas or the dark perimeter of a parking lot.
- 2) Physical barriers – Most criminals are looking for easy prey, so the more time it takes to access an area to less likely the potential crime. Parking arrangements, locks, & high fencing are all good deterrents.
- 3) Video surveillance and GPS – Technology tools can be helpful, but are largely designed to catch the criminal versus prevent the crime. Of course catching the crook and putting them behind bars is a good thing!

- 4) Lastly... Take the keys out of your vehicle! According to the National Insurance Crime Bureau, over 700,000 were stolen last year. Studies have shown that as many as 50% of these thefts involve vehicles with the keys being left in the vehicle. And it's the law... Texas Transportation Code Section 545.404 prohibits drivers from leaving their car unattended without stopping the engine and removing the key from the ignition, punishable by a fine of up to \$200 and / or 30 days in jail.

Don't be a victim this holiday season, keep a watchful eye for suspicious activity and take a few basic steps to prevent theft incidents.

If you have questions or if I can offer any assistance with addressing the theft exposure for your operations, please let me know.

Happy Holidays, Merry Christmas and have a Blessed 2019!

Thanks,

Mark

For more information about Theft Prevention and other solutions from Marsh Wortham, contact your local representative or:

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