



Robbery Prevention Guide for RxA Members

Unfortunately, there has been a noted increase in pharmacy robberies in Alberta. This is a problem that can't be ignored, and as a result, RxA has compiled this guide based on commonly used procedures. By following some basic guidelines, you can greatly reduce the chances of an incident occurring. Regardless if you are the owner, manager or employee, everyone can play a role in robbery prevention.

Robbery Prevention and Management consists of the following basic factors:

1. Deter robbery attempts
2. Make a robbery attempt as difficult as possible
3. Minimize danger to staff and customers
4. Minimize loss of product and finances
5. Increase the chances for the police to apprehend the suspect

1. Deter robbery attempts

Access to the store, physical layout of the store/building, lighting and appearance all play a role in how 'attractive' a store looks to a robber. It is suggested to review the outside and inside of the building and use physical controls, such as signage, lighting and equipment to help deter robbery attempts. Robbers do not like to be easily seen and visibility in all areas makes it riskier for a robber.

- Is it easy to see in or out of the store (windows not covered, low displays, etc)? If you have clear line of sight, you can notice suspicious people outside.
- Does the outside of your building have hiding places such as bushes?
- Can you see most areas of the store easily and can you be seen?
- Does the store have good lighting inside and outside?
- Does your store have video camera surveillance and are signs posted to inform customers of it? Do you know where the cameras are and the best 'spots' for a good camera shot?
- Does your store have clearly visible signage such as: limited amount of cash on hand, no large bills, limited amounts of Oxycontin, etc.?
- Always be alert and watch for suspicious people. Learn how to spot unusual behaviour.

2. Make a robbery as difficult as possible

- Are back exits or alternate exits locked or not accessible from the outside without keys?
- Does your store use a safe or cash drop safe? Is access to your dispensary area restricted? How easily accessible are narcotics and other 'high risk' medications?

- Are there usually at least two staff working, especially during opening and closing hours?
- If possible vary the times of bank deposits and deliveries. Make bank deposits often.
- If someone suspicious is standing in line, ask the customer ahead of the suspicious person "Are you together?". The customer usually will turn around and look at the other person and then may be able to help make an identification.
- Ask those who are alone if they need assistance. Customers like the attention and robbers don't.

3. Minimize danger to staff and customers

Even with the best possible prevention planning, an incident may not be avoided. When someone tries to rob your pharmacy, remember to play it safe! **Don't be a hero!** Supplies and merchandise can be replaced; YOU CANNOT!

During a robbery:

Stay calm

- Stay calm and cautiously observe as much as possible about the robber.
- Keep it short and smooth. Speak only when spoken to. The longer the robbery takes, the more nervous the robber becomes.
- Avoid direct eye contact.
- Handle the whole procedure as if you were making a sale to a customer.

Tell the suspect what you are going to do

- Avoid surprises. Keep your hands in sight and don't make any sudden moves.
- If you reach for something or move in any way, tell the robber what to expect.
- If someone is in the backroom or expected in the store, tell the robber.

Obey the suspect demands

- Even if you cannot see a weapon, assume there is one.
- Your chances of getting hurt are less if you cooperate.
- Let the robber know that you intend to comply to his/her demands.
- If you do not understand what the robber is telling you to do, ask for clarification.
- Don't argue or fight a robber. Once a robbery has started, it is too late for the robber to change his or her mind.

4. Minimize loss of product and finances

- The store should have good cash control procedures. A minimum amount of cash should be kept in the cash drawer and regular cash drops into a safe should be made.
- Use a safe (or narcotics storage area) that one staff member alone cannot open or that requires two keys. Post the information on a visible sign, including the safe itself.



- Limit the amount of narcotics on the premises, especially the type a robber might find most attractive. Can certain narcotic prescriptions be picked up only by appointment? Post signs stating this.
- Mark or identify your products with a sign unique to your store to assist in possible product recovery.

5. Increase the chances for the police to apprehend the suspect.

Remember the suspect description

- Observe what the robber looks like: height, weight, age, facial hair, hair colour, clothing, jewelry, logos or any other unusual marking.
- Take note of any weapon(s) being used.
- Note the offenders conversation including any accent, indecent language, speech impediments or nicknames.
- If it is safe to do so, observe the direction of travel taken by the robber when leaving the premises.
- If it is safe to do so, note if a vehicle is being used, if there are any other occupants and the make, model, colour of the vehicle. Note the registration number.
- If your store uses coloured height charts, determine the height of the suspect.

Evidence – Protect any evidence left at the scene

- Once the suspect has left, lock the doors and call 911. Provide the name and address of the store, suspect description, vehicle (if any) and the direction of travel. Follow the instructions of the police.
- Call your supervisor or employer and report the robbery.
- Ask any witnesses to stay until the police arrives. Try to make them as comfortable as you can.
- Protect the crime scene. Do not touch anything that may be considered evidence.
- Write down exactly what the robber said, a description of the robber and other relevant information.
- Let the police talk to the media. Do not discuss details with outsiders. (Note: details of store operations should never be discussed with non-employees at any time).

The information in this guide contains basic and general information about robbery prevention and management guidelines.

The key to any effective program is staff and management working together. Know the policies and procedures for your store. See your store (and the outside of the building) through the eye of a potential robber and make suggestions to your management. Be involved.

If you do find yourself in the situation of a robbery attempt, remember the key points:

Stay calm
Tell the suspect what you are going to do
Obey the suspect demands

Remember: Your safety (and the safety of your customers) is more important than any merchandise.

