

Guidelines for Addressing Pharmacy Robbery in B.C.



British Columbia
Pharmacy Association

Pharmacy — trusted advice, accessible care



COLLEGE OF PHARMACISTS
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Safe and Effective Pharmacy Care

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Disclaimer

These recommendations are based on research and common sense principles and as such are a collection of suggestions for consideration rather than prescriptive rules. Safety should remain the focus and priority at all times: never place yourself in danger. In the event of a robbery do everything you can to preserve safety.

There are no guaranteed responses from either a prevention perspective or with respect to policy/procedure that will inoculate any individual pharmacy from the risk of robbery. Crimes of these types are inevitable, and the thoughts and suggestions recommended here are designed to attempt to manipulate the opportunity presented by pharmacies with respect to robbery with a view to reducing the overall suitability of individual stores as robbery targets. There are no 100% guarantees for prevention so it is important to maintain realistic expectations about the effectiveness of the implementation of any of these approaches.

Introduction

The Pharmacy Robbery Task Force has been working to achieve four goals: (a) raise the profile of pharmacy robbery issues with police forces, (b) develop guidelines for pharmacy robbery prevention, (c) propose a set procedures/policy to be implemented in the event of a robbery, and (d) propose a set of procedures/policy to be implemented in the aftermath of a robbery. This document deals with the last three of these goals. The first will be addressed separately by the task force.

Motivations for Robbery and Complexities Associated with Implementing these Recommendations

Motivations

In broad terms, recent trends in pharmacy robbery in B.C. suggest that the main motivating factor is narcotics, with an emphasis on Oxycontin. It is important to remember that this offending behaviour is likely to be motivated by personal addiction on behalf of the offender, the street value/demand for this drug, and potentially the need to repay outstanding drug-debts. In contrast, cash appears to be a less sought after commodity from pharmacy robbery.

Implementation Complexities

In seeking to implement these recommendations it is crucial to acknowledge the variations between pharmacies. Some examples of relevant differences include: the size of the staff group, the business focus, the range of products for sale, the range of services offered onsite, and the physical size of the pharmacy.

In addition to this, it is important to remember that there is an obvious and understandable discrepancy between the autonomy of larger and smaller stores, which in turn has implications for the implementation of generic robbery-specific recommendations. As such, recommendations should be assessed within the broader context of each individual pharmacy and their utility and practicality determined accordingly.

What to do *before* a Robbery

There are two basic underlying goals to any strategies that are implemented before a robbery has occurred: (1) increase the perceived risk and effort, reduce reward of committing a burglary at the specific location, and (2) increase likelihood of offender apprehension should a robbery occur.

Manipulating the Risk, Reward, and Effort

It is important to understand that there is variation in risk between locations, with some controllable factors likely to influence the risk of any individual pharmacy. For example, it may be possible to do any/all of the following:

- Ensure lighting levels are sufficient, both inside and outside the premises. Utilize high-quality lighting for the interior and exterior of the premise: with the possibility of motion-sensitive lighting on the exterior if appropriate. This will contribute to minimizing/eradicating opportunities for any undetected entry to the premises.
- Ensure adequate staffing levels are onsite at all times. Depending on the assessment of risk and other considerations regarding pharmacy operations, this could include employing staff whose job it is to greet customers as they enter the store, to reduce the anonymity of potential perpetrators. This approach could also extend to employing security guards onsite, depending on the practicality of this approach for each specific pharmacy location.
- Explore the possibility of installing a *silent* panic alarm. Audible alarms are not favoured for robbery offences, as they can induce panic which leads to increased risk from the situation. Local visits to victimized pharmacies would suggest that the presence of these alarms should not give a false sense of security, as the speed of the incident and inability to activate them may prevent them from assisting

in the event of a robbery. It is recommended that you seek professional advice about alarm type, installation, monitoring, and maintenance.

- Limit the wearing of disguising clothing from being worn inside the shop. This could include store requirements that customers should remove articles of clothing such as hats, sunglasses, helmets, etc. This approach would require active involvement of store staff and would have to be implemented on a discretionary basis.
- Place an emphasis on staff training, both from a preventative perspective and also in the event of a robbery should one occur. This should incorporate formal training and ongoing maintenance of skills for the staff group. This approach could incorporate:
 - Mandatory training for new staff with respect to: (a) operation of security-relevant equipment, such as CCTV, alarms, safes, etc., (b) what to do in the event of a robbery and also how to handle potential precursors to robbery (the presence of suspicious customers and fishing style phone calls).
 - Ongoing scenario-based training for all staff with respect to robbery prevention and also with respect to how to act before and after a robbery should one occur.
 - An iterative approach to security – this is an ongoing issue and should be approached as such.
- Remain vigilant for signs of ‘casing’ – robberies are often preceded by site visits to assess the likelihood of a successful offence.
- Develop a positive working relationship with the local police service.

Specific to Narcotics

There are also a range of strategies that could be implemented that are specific to controlling the risk presented by high-value narcotics. These include:

- Make conscious decisions regarding the volume of narcotics that are kept onsite. This becomes a matter of balancing the demand created by the legitimate health needs associated with these products with the risk associated to the illegitimate demand and value of the drugs. As a consequence of these conflicting demands, a decision is required with respect to the extent to which your store stocks high-value narcotics, with potential outcomes including (but not restricted to): (a) no storage of these types of items, (b) stocking a very minimal quantity of narcotics in a single location, (c) stocking narcotics in a distributed manner throughout the dispensary, (d) stocking narcotics in a locked location, (e) managing prescription fills for established patients, etc. With respect to point (e), this may be achieved by publicizing policies that advanced notice will be required to fill narcotics prescriptions, limiting quantities that will be available per fill, and/or establishing formal arrangements between the prescribing doctor, the patient, and the pharmacy to be sole providers of the narcotic.
- Design the lay-out of the pharmacy to reduce the isolation of points of sale and the points at which the narcotics are stored. These physical designs give the greatest potential that customers and/or staff would be able to observe these areas.

- Consider the use of safes and/or secure locked locations for storing narcotics. Again, there is a range of opinion as to the effectiveness and suitability of these facilities, as there is a risk that any mechanism that inhibits the employee's ability to meet the perpetrator's demands may increase the volatility of the situation. The investigation of the five pharmacy sites in the lower mainland displayed a wide range of variability with respect to storage of narcotics. Across the five sites that were visited, there were five different storage strategies in place. These included the use of safes (kept unlocked during the day), using locked cabinets, distributed in a single place on the shelf, distributed throughout the shelves, and varied use of (and adherence to) signage advising about store-specific narcotic management procedures. Locked safes were considered to be counter-productive in the event of a robbery, as the pharmacists all indicated a desire for the perpetrator to leave the scene as quickly as possible. If the management decision is that narcotics will not be stored onsite, then a decision also needs to be made as to whether signage will be utilized to advertize this fact.
- Have a standard policy for dealing with new prescriptions for narcotics, 'fishing' calls regarding onsite stock levels, etc. This type of policy could direct staff members to ask for a standardized body of information from potential new patients including their name, CareCard number, their prescribing GPs contact details, etc. In addition to this, a standardized policy could be developed to limit the volume of narcotics that any single patient can collect at one time, and also on a necessary delay between initially placing an order and filling their prescription.
- As per the College of Pharmacists of BC's Professional Practice Policy (PPP-65) Narcotic Counts and Reconciliations, ensure that you are meeting the requirements of the policy.
http://www.bcpharmacists.org/library/A-About_Us/A-2_Governance/5003-PGP-PPP65.pdf

Maximizing the Chance of an Apprehension

There are a range of strategies that could be implemented to maximize the likelihood of the police being able to apprehend a perpetrator in the event of a robbery occurring. These include:

- The implementation of closed-circuit television (CCTV) systems. Maintenance and appropriate installation and data storage issues. Although this sounds relatively straight forward, there are issues of complexity associated with this process with respect to: camera quality (which directly impacts on image quality and the likelihood of an apprehension following a robbery), camera installation and appropriateness of camera placement, recording location, back-ups of data, date/time stamps, motion-activated vs. continuous, image storage duration, etc. Professional advice would be beneficial at the implementation stage. It is also advisable to advertise the installation of cameras to increase the awareness of any potential perpetrators that they will be filmed for identification purposes. Such signage can be supported by installation of monitors that demonstrate everyone who enters the store has been captured on CCTV.

- Installation of height markers on exit doors to assist with identification at a later date. It is worth noting here that it is possible to have a CCTV camera embedded in exit door height markers that capture excellent close-up, eye-height images of everyone who departs the store.

Regardless of which elements from this suite of alternatives each specific location decides to implement, it is crucial that maintenance schedules for robbery prevention and offender apprehension equipment are also adhered to.

What to do *during* a Robbery

Should a robbery occur the fundamental objectives should be to minimize dangers and maximize safety for staff and patrons. The best practice approach to achieving these aims is to be methodical, try to remain calm, and to follow these rules:

- *Do not* be a hero.
- Comply: do as you are told – nothing more and nothing less.
- Utilize non-threatening body language: maintain personal space as much as possible and limit eye contact if you are able.
- Attempt to remember as much as possible about the offender(s): e.g., voice, language, clothing, mannerisms, physical description, and distinguishing features.
- Stay out of danger if you are not directly involved. If a *silent* alarm is available and can be activated without detection, make a judgement about this. Audible alarms are not favoured during robberies and the sound can make offenders panic, increasing the risk and volatility of the situation.
- Ensure that the offender's escape route remains clear.

What to do *after* a Robbery

Immediately following a robbery the following strategies should be implemented:

- Make a note of how the perpetrator exits the area. Consider factors such as movement direction and use of a vehicle (including license plate information, make, model, colour, etc.).
- Immediately close the business: stop store operations, secure the premise and lock all entrances.
- If the police have not already been alerted by a silent alarm, call the police **as soon as it is safe to do so**. Follow police instructions, which will likely be to keep the phone line open until officers arrive at the scene.
- Remember that, after a robbery, the pharmacy has become a crime scene. Do everything you can to maintain the integrity of the crime scene to maximize the likelihood of apprehending the perpetrator.

This could include: (a) avoid touching anything that the offender came into contact with, as this may be able to provide forensic evidence, (b) ask witnesses to remain at the scene until the police can interview them – collect contact details where possible, and (c) ask all witnesses to independently complete the description checklist attached to these recommendations. This checklist has been developed to provide BC pharmacists with a standardized method for capturing robbery-specific information from staff and other witnesses. It is of supreme importance that people work independently when completing this checklist to avoid cross-contamination of memory errors and to ensure each person gives their own account of the event.

- Once police arrive, give full statements and comply with their requests.
- Federal Narcotic Control Regulations state that a pharmacist must report to Health Canada any loss or theft of narcotics within 10 days of discovery. Health Canada's *Loss or Theft Report Form for Controlled Substances and Precursors* can be found at: http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hc-ps/alt_formats/hecs-sesc/pdf/substancontrol/substan/compli-conform/loss-perte/form_4010_eng.pdf
- Notify the College of Pharmacists of BC as soon as possible after the robbery commitments have been completed from the police perspective. The College, based on their assessment of the individual situation and timeliness of reporting, may utilize the PharmaNet 'fan-out' system to communicate an advisory message to other pharmacies within the localized area or throughout the province. The purpose of such messaging, which is limited to approximately 50 words, will be to inform pharmacies of heightened activity and encourage increased vigilance in awareness and prevention procedures. In anticipation of receiving such messages pharmacy managers should have proper processes in place to ensure PharmaNet 'fan-out' communications are read by all staff in a timely manner. Reports to the College should be directed to the Director of PharmaNet at: cameron.egli@bcpharmacists.org or (604) 733-2440.

From a longer-term perspective, following a robbery incident at a pharmacy it is important to:

- Attempt to prevent repeat victimization: if you have been robbed once, do everything you can to make your pharmacy a harder target and manipulate the perceived risk through implementation of the recommendations listed previously.
- Ensure that all the victims take advantage of victim support services that are available. The range of services that are available include (a) the RCMP Victim Support Services (see below for contact details), (b) the BCPhA victim support services for member pharmacists, and (c) any employer-specific commitment to victim support. All avenues should be explored by robbery victims.

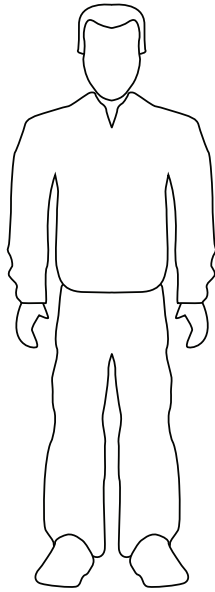
Important Phone Numbers

- Victim support contact details:
<http://www.policevictimservices.bc.ca/?link=victimservices&page=vicserbc>
- Emergency phone number – 911
- Non-emergency phone numbers in BC: <http://www.ecomm.bc.ca/non-emergency-calls.php>
- Crime Stoppers phone number 1 800 222 8477 (tips line)
- College of Pharmacists of BC phone number (604) 733-2440

Reference Locations

- The Center for Problem-Oriented Policing: <http://www.popcenter.org>.
- National Criminal Justice Reference Service: <http://www.ncjrs.gov/whatsncjrs.html>.
- Pharmacy Security Checklist: developed by US National Association of Drug Diversion Investigators (2006, 2007) and available for download at www.rxpatrol.org.
- The Home Office: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/science-research/RDS/?view=Standard>.
- The Australian Institute of Criminology: <http://www.aic.gov.au>.
- The Western Australian Office of Crime Prevention, armed robbery prevention information: <http://www.crimeprevention.wa.gov.au/index.php>.

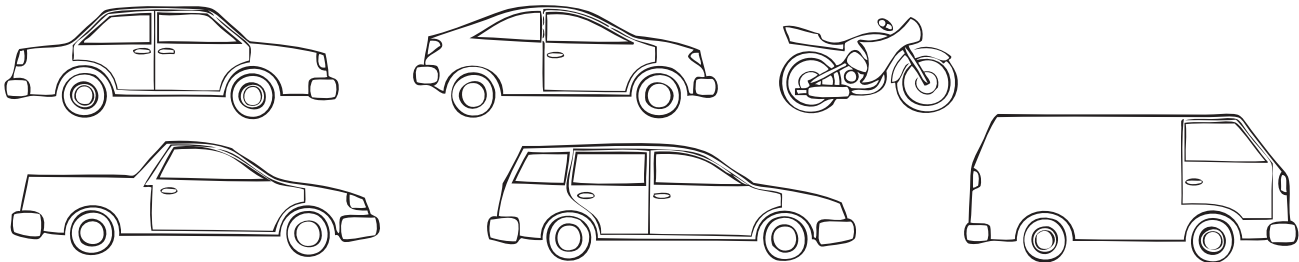
DESCRIPTION OF OFFENDER Don't guess - if you are unsure about any aspect leave blank.



	First offender	Second offender	Third offender
Sex			
Age			
Height			
Build			
Complexion			
Disguise			
Facial Hair			
Tattoos etc.			
Glasses			
Hat			
Gloves			
Shirt			
Tie			
Coat			
Trousers			
Shoes			
Bag etc			
Weapon			
Other characteristics			

DESCRIPTION OF VEHICLE

License plate number	Approximate year
Colour of vehicle	Direction of travel
Vehicle make	Number of occupants
Other distinctive features	
Please circle the image below that best describes the vehicle:	



DESCRIPTION OF WEAPON - Please circle the image below that best describes the weapon:

Type of weapon

LARGE CARVING KNIFE	FLICK KNIFE	BUTCHER'S KNIFE	SCREWDRIVER	SYRINGE
LARGE AUTOMATIC PISTOL	SMALL AUTOMATIC PISTOL	SAWN-OFF BOLT ACTION RIFLE	PUMP ACTION SAWN-OFF SHOTGUN	
LONG BARREL REVOLVER	SNUB NOSE REVOLVER	SAWN-OFF LEVER ACTION RIFLE	AUTOMATIC SAWN-OFF SHOTGUN	
			SINGLE SHOT SAWN-OFF SHOTGUN	