STONEHAWK

StaffSafe®
Intervention | Interaction | Assurance

Making the workplace safer for frontline retail workers

A complimentary general guidance document written by Simon Wilson, high-security and counter measures expert at StoneHawk for StaffSafe®

About Simon Wilson and StoneHawk



As a former Metropolitan Police officer, Simon Wilson has long dedicated his career to ensuring people's safety and security. Since leaving the service, he has continued to build on his expertise in high-security and counter measures and has worked with a range of prestigious organisations and businesses, providing first-class advice on protecting property and staff at high value retail premises, setting up professional training with police and crime partnerships and advising frontline staff on cutting-edge PPE.

His company StoneHawk* is a leading provider of retail security training courses that empower staff to confidently respond to, and significantly reduce, business crime. Their methods leave outdated and stressful crime simulations behind, focus on tailored in-store training sessions that lay the foundations for daily preparedness, and address the security challenges that are unique to your business.

Proactive planning, communication, prioritising retail employee safety and training

Retail is a challenging environment where a minimal number of staff work long hours and can be tasked to 'cover' large areas with multiple customers and entrances/exits. Often brands place the provision of the 'customer experience' higher in priority than security and staff welfare.

It is important for retailers to take the initiative, rather than simply reacting once a crime has happened; presenting a strong awareness and discipline around what may feel the most basic and mundane of tasks, all adds to drive crime away from your store. It could something as simple as ensuring that more staff are on the shop floor and potentially on the 'route' that any suspect would take to flee the store. This works well with jewellers/watch boutiques who are vulnerable to snatches.

Being aware of local crimes, establishing a strong relationship with local security/police groups and implementing effective/functioning security in both physical and electronic form will enhance your efficiency when it comes to all matters of security.

It is vital that regular, effective and concise communication is factored into daily retail operations.

One of the simplest, yet most effective tools, a retailer can have is the use of a code word or phrase. All staff must be aware of it, it should be changed every three months, and it needs to be something that can be factored into a sentence without standing out as obvious. When used, all staff will be aware of what action to take.

Consider your own safety above anything else; 'are the actions that you are about to take, placing you and your colleagues in more danger?' In any situation where there is an 'aggressor', it is paramount to create distance and adopt a posture that is clearly not a threat.

Criminals will go to almost any length to evade capture and can be at their most dangerous at this point. A clear step back and showing open palms (essentially 'hands in the air', but they do not need to be all the way above your head!) goes a long way towards reducing your immediate risk.



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Information sharing

There are many useful ways to receive and share information intelligence to your colleagues, neighbouring stores and the local retail community. Speak to the local police and ask them how to be an effective part of these schemes.

If you give as much information as you receive, these schemes can quickly become very effective and drive crime out of an area.

Retail security assessment checklist

A retail premises security assessment is essential to identifying weaknesses in physical security that might provide an easy opportunity for a crime to occur. While nothing can make your business absolutely crime-proof, these checks and recommendations are intended to create security layers that, if implemented, can serve to reduce criminal opportunity or make it more difficult to force entry into your premises.

A small investment of time and money can make your business premises more secure and less likely to be targeted by criminals. Criminals like easy opportunities. If they have to make a lot of noise, spend a lot of time, or risk being seen, the chances are they won't bother. If they are aware that staff are security conscious, they will be less likely to attempt a criminal act.

Complete this checklist to determine how well your premises is secured:

Perimeter Security

Have you checked all entry points including gates, fences, doors and windows to ensure they have not been tampered with or damaged?
Have you checked all locks are in good condition and can you account for all the keys? They may need to be replaced with good quality standard products. Have you checked all lighting works and replaced bulbs where necessary?

Have you removed the means to commit crime such as climbing aids (wheelie bins, ladders etc,) tools and other loose objects that could be used to force an entry?



Alarm

Have you tested and serviced your security system (including panic attack buttons)?
Have you checked that the grade of alarm monitoring meets your specific needs?

Have you reviewed your keyholders' list and operating procedures in case of an alarm activation? Have any ex-staff still got access to keys?

Have you made sure alarm sensors are not obstructed by Covid screens, signage, or stock?

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CCTV

Does your CCTV system need upgrading? (Recommended to I.S. EN 50132 standard) Have you checked that all CCTV cameras are still working and are not obstructed by Covid screens, signage, or stock (consider overgrown foliage externally)?

Is your DVR Hard Drive secure, including staff access?

Is the system time correct (summertime) and does it have recording capacity for at least 28 days?

Staff

Have you made staff aware of fraud related crimes such as invoice re-direction, change scams, forged notes, credit card scams etc?

Have you ensured all staff receive crime prevention awareness training, especially any newly employed staff?

Have you reviewed your opening and closing procedures?

Have you reviewed cash handling and banking procedures?

Have you put in place appropriate measures to deal with any Covid-related problems around mask wearing etc.?



Stock

Have you ensured clear lines of sight and don't overfill shop floor with stock?

Have you ensured high value goods are kept close to a point of sale, behind counters or security tagged? They should not be sited near the entrance/exit doors.

Have you ensured access to the stock room is tightly controlled?



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Mental health



One of the positive things to come out of the pandemic, is that people are much more open when it comes to their mental health. We all have a 'mental health', but this can often be tested by our domestic and working lives.

All businesses should undertake mental health awareness training for all employees, and then appoint a smaller number of staff to undertake the mental health first aiders course. These two actions alone will significantly increase staff retention, happiness, and support.

Your general practitioner is the first place for any mental health concerns that you may have. The GP is able to signpost you to various areas of support, and potentially prescribe medication if needed. Be strong and share your situation with your employer, they have a duty of care to support you.

Conclusion

Recent positive developments in Scottish law provide a stronger sentencing and give greater protection in law to retail workers, particularly where they are providing goods and services that are age restricted. This is where the law says you can't sell them to someone who is under a particular age. The Bill applies to retail workers while they are doing their jobs (for example, in shops, bars and restaurants). It makes it a specific, new criminal offence to assault them, threaten or abuse them, obstruct, or hinder them.

Currently the UK Government have been slow to adopt the protection into law, but positive progress is being made.

Please note that the information provided in this article is for general guidance only.

Additional resources:

Run, Hide, Tell:
https://www.npcc.police.uk/NPCCBusinessAreas/WeaponAttacksStaySafe.aspx

Association of Convenience Stores:
https://www.acs.org.uk/

Protection of Workers (Retail and Age-restricted Goods and Services) (Scotland) Bill:
https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/protection-of-workers-retail-and-age- restricted-goods-and-services-scotland-bill

UK Government response to call for evidence: violence and abuse toward shop staff:
https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/violence-and-abuse-toward-shop-staff-call-for-evidence/outcome/government-response-to-call-for-evidence-violence-and-abuse-toward-shop-staff-accessible-version

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