This is the fourth installment of a 12 part series on Crime Prevention for the Drayton Valley area, starting in April 2016 and wrapping up in March 2017. The Drayton Valley RCMP is committed to assisting this community, and the intent of this series is to educate and inform the public on property crime, and what to do when you become a victim of it. While these tips may not solve all of your crime issues in the area, these tips will go a long way in assisting the investigators of your local Detachment in hopefully either recovering property and/or detecting the culprits involved in these crimes.

Part 4: Break and Enters to Businesses

Business owners provide a valuable support to the local economy, and are invested into the communities they serve. When dealing with businesses, and good practices during operation and what to do after a break in, it is hoped these tips will assist in business owners helping both themselves and the Police for what can be done to identify and capture criminals involved in crimes. Where most break ins to houses occur during the daytime, almost all break ins to businesses occur at night, when businesses are closed down.

First and foremost, a good monitored alarm system is essential and limits the amount of time a criminal can spend in a business. If a criminal can get into your business, without it being monitored the criminal can literally take all the time they need and make the damage and/or theft that much worse. There are companies now that will have alerts that can be sent right to the smartphone of the owner and video that can be accessed to see what is happening in real time. It is a good practice to have the owner or person responsible for the alarm to be notified first by the alarm company to ensure there is not a problem with the alarm prior to Police being dispatched. The Town of Drayton Valley and Brazeau County do have a bylaw concerning false alarms, where attended by Police will usually result in a bylaw fine being issued if there is no problem detected. I will however clarify that at no time should business owners be placing themselves at risk- if there is criminal entering or has entered your business call the Police IMMEDIATELY.

Speaking of video, good High Definition video is key in assisting investigators. If an investigator can view that video, and obtain a copy right away, it can certainly narrow down our areas of focus for where the criminal went, preventing wasted time looking at areas which were not accessed, and get the business back to the owners in a shorter time.  There has been a number of times where delays in being able to obtain or view video has had a negative impact on an investigation. It is advantageous to have cameras with the ability to see in the dark as well.

This is where I would like to place people into the shoes of the Police. If you have a break in with a business, one of the most important tasks is to prevent contamination of a crime scene. This means limiting access to the area as much as possible, and keeping people out to preserve as much evidence as possible until Police can arrive and look at the scene. Valuable evidence can be destroyed by people going in, and as noted in last month’s submission, resist cleaning up anything until the Police can come and look at it.

Good lighting inside and outside of the business also deters criminals from breaking in. Darkness conceals the activities of criminals and allows them to remain mostly undetected. With good lighting, comes the inability for criminals to hide their activities.

If you have a safe in the store you operate, no matter how big the safe is, if it is not secured there is some cases where extremely heavy safes have been carted off by motivated thieves, only to be found much later dumped somewhere and usually broken into, as the thieves now have the time to spend defeating the safe. Always take the time to bolt down your safe securely to the building structure to prevent loss and not allow thieves time to complete a theft. Further to this is keeping minimal cash on site at all times, and banking all excess cash each day. At the end of the day the empty cash drawer should be fully opened so if a criminal does get in, they are not breaking into the register as well. A safe should not be visible from the front of the store. If you have an ATM on site you should follow the precautions of your supplier on where to locate it best.

The use of laminated security glass on exterior doors and windows and using good high quality security locks also assists with delaying criminals from entering the business. In addition to locking the back door of the business, where possible a bar system that prevents that back door from opening should be considered.

Businesses that have been open for a while also tend to get a lot of keys floating around- sometimes without the owner’s knowledge. It is always a good practice to employ key controls- and know how many keys you have for your locks. Locksmiths can usually provide the service where the keys and lock cylinder are restricted issue and cannot be cut at a hardware store or other place that provides this service. Keeping a key log will be able to tell you if you can account for all of your keys or not- and if one is lost or stolen then you will need to re-key your business accordingly. Some break ins have occurred where former employees using copied or old keys have gotten in.

Traditionally, property crime tends to have a lower solve rate due to the lack of witness evidence, contamination of evidence on scene or other factors, in some cases simply a lack of verifiable evidence in which to proceed. Following these tips, while not comprehensive, will assist in both preventing break ins and assist the Police when one does happen.

Next Month, in August 2016, we will discuss phone and computer fraud and how to avoid becoming a victim of this increasingly common occurrence.

Yours in Service,

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