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Burglary of Retail Establishments

by
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About the Problem-Specific Guides Series

The *Problem-Specific Guides* summarize knowledge about how police can reduce the harm caused by specific crime and disorder problems. They are guides to prevention and to improving the overall response to incidents, not to investigating offenses or handling specific incidents. Neither do they cover all of the technical details about how to implement specific responses. The guides are written for police—of whatever rank or assignment—who must address the specific problem the guides cover. The guides will be most useful to officers who:

- **Understand basic problem-oriented policing principles and methods**. The guides are not primers in problem-oriented policing. They deal only briefly with the initial decision to focus on a particular problem, methods to analyze the problem, and means to assess the results of a problem-oriented policing project. They are designed to help police decide how best to analyze and address a problem they have already identified. (A companion series of *Problem-Solving Tools* guides has been produced to aid in various aspects of problem analysis and assessment.)

- **Can look at a problem in depth**. Depending on the complexity of the problem, you should be prepared to spend perhaps weeks, or even months, analyzing and responding to it. Carefully studying a problem before responding helps you design the right strategy, one that is most likely to work in your community. You should not blindly adopt the responses others have used; you must decide whether they are appropriate to your local situation. What is true in one place may not be true elsewhere; what works in one place may not work everywhere.

- **Are willing to consider new ways of doing police business**. The guides describe responses that other police departments have used or that researchers have tested. While not all of these responses will be appropriate to your particular problem, they should help give a broader view of the kinds of things you could do. You may think you cannot implement some of these responses in your jurisdiction, but perhaps you can. In many places, when police have discovered a more effective response, they have succeeded in having laws and policies changed, improving the response to the problem. (A companion series of *Response Guides* has been produced to help you understand how commonly-used police responses work on a variety of problems.)

- **Understand the value and the limits of research knowledge**. For some types of problems, a lot of useful research is available to the police; for other problems, little is available. Accordingly, some guides in this series summarize existing research whereas other guides illustrate the need for more research on that particular problem. Regardless, research has not provided definitive answers to all the questions you might have about the problem. The research may help get you started in designing your own responses, but it cannot tell you exactly what to do. This will depend greatly on the particular nature of your local problem. In the interest of keeping the guides readable, not every piece of relevant research has been cited, nor has every point been attributed to its sources. To have done so would have overwhelmed and distracted the reader. The references listed at the end of each guide are those drawn on most heavily; they are not a complete bibliography of research on the subject.

- **Are willing to work with others to find effective solutions to the problem**. The police alone cannot implement many of the responses discussed in the guides. They must frequently implement them in partnership with other responsible private and public bodies including other government agencies, non-governmental organizations, private businesses, public utilities, community groups, and individual citizens. An effective problem-solver must know how to forge genuine partnerships with others and be prepared to invest considerable effort in making these partnerships work. Each guide identifies particular individuals or groups in the community with whom police might work to improve the overall response to that problem. Thorough analysis of problems often reveals that individuals and groups other than the police are in a stronger position to address problems and that police ought to shift some greater responsibility to them to do so. Response Guide No. 3, *Shifting and Sharing Responsibility for Public Safety Problems*, provides further discussion of this topic.

The COPS Office defines community policing as "a policing philosophy that promotes and supports organizational strategies to address the causes and reduce the fear of crime and social disorder through problem-solving tactics and police-community partnerships." These guides emphasize problem-solving and police-community partnerships in the context of addressing specific public safety problems. For the most part, the organizational strategies that can facilitate *problem-solving* and *police-community partnerships* vary considerably and discussion of them is beyond the scope of these guides.

These guides have drawn on research findings and police practices in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, and Scandinavia. Even though laws, customs and police

practices vary from country to country, it is apparent that the police everywhere experience common problems. In a world that is becoming increasingly interconnected, it is important that police be aware of research and successful practices beyond the borders of their own countries.

Each guide is informed by a thorough review of the research literature and reported police practice and is anonymously peer-reviewed by line police officers, police executives and researchers prior to publication.

The COPS Office and the authors encourage you to provide feedback on this guide and to report on your own agency's experiences dealing with a similar problem. Your agency may have effectively addressed a problem using responses not considered in these guides and your experiences and knowledge could benefit others. This information will be used to update the guides. If you wish to provide feedback and share your experiences it should be sent via e-mail to cops_pubs@usdoj.gov.

For more information about problem-oriented policing, visit the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing online at www.popcenter.org. This website offers free online access to:

- the Problem-Specific Guides series
- the companion *Response Guides* and *Problem-Solving Tools series*
- instructional information about problem-oriented policing and related topics
- an interactive problem-oriented policing training exercise
- an interactive *Problem Analysis Module*
- a manual for crime analysts
- online access to important police research and practices
- information about problem-oriented policing conferences and award programs.

Acknowledgments

Contents

The Problem of Burglary of Retail Establishments

Retail burglaries are a problem for many communities. A British survey found that stores lose as much to burglars as they do to shoplifters. These losses impact the viability of businesses and, consequently, of the communities around them. Although much research has been conducted on burglary in general, little of it has specifically focused on retail burglaries–break-ins at stores to steal cash or goods.[§] However, the research that has been done points to a number of effective responses to the problem. This guide reviews what is known about retail burglaries, suggests ways to analyze them in your jurisdiction, and provides guidance as to appropriate responses.

The businesses covered in the guide include shops in downtown areas, in strip malls, in covered malls (or "shopping precincts," as they are known in the United Kingdom), and in retail parks. They also include stand-alone superstores, neighborhood stores and rural stores, as well as restaurants, beauty parlors and off-track betting establishments. Not covered are wholesale warehouses or retail outlets in industrial parks.

Related Problems

The problem of retail burglaries needs to be distinguished from those of (1) other retail thefts and (2) other commercial burglaries. These problems, which should be addressed separately, include:

• robberies of retail establishments
• shoplifting

[§] This guide also covers smash-and-grabs and so-called "ram raids." Smash-and-grabbers rely on the element of surprise to break display windows or showcases and escape before the alarm sounds. Ram raiders use stolen vehicles to smash their way into buildings, usually after hours. They grab what they want and make a quick escape, often in another vehicle.

§ There seem to be no comparable data for the United States, though the commercial burglary rate (calculated for the number of premises at risk) in one large northeastern city in 1968-69 was found to be nearly 10 times higher than the residential burglary rate (Conklin and Bittner 1973).

- stockroom thefts by employees
- thefts by delivery personnel
- insurance frauds involving false burglary reports made by store owners
- burglaries of banks (considered a separate problem due to banks' much greater security)
- burglaries of other commercial spaces such as offices, manufacturing premises, transport facilities, construction sites, and cargo-handling facilities
- false burglar alarms.

Compared with residential burglaries, commercial burglaries–especially retail burglaries–have been the subject of few studies. In part, this is due to the much larger number of residential burglaries, but it is also generally believed that commercial burglaries have less serious consequences for victims and for the community at large. However, growing recognition of the important part small businesses play in urban regeneration has heightened concern about crimes that might reduce their viability.[1] In turn, this has led to more research on crimes against businesses (including retailers), particularly in the United Kingdom, Holland and Australia. As a result, we now know more about retail burglaries, though our knowledge is still patchy. The following are the best-established facts:

- Even though there are considerably fewer retail burglaries than residential burglaries, the risk of retail burglary per number of premises is very high. For example, a national survey in Britain found that, in 1993, 24 percent of retail establishments were burgled, compared with just 4 percent of residences.[2,§] This is because stores tend to be empty at night; may, if big, offer many entry points to burglars; and may contain a lot of goods (and, sometimes, cash).

- Most retail and residential burglars are young men who commit a variety of predatory crimes. Interviews reveal that their main motivation is economic, though some burglars also claim to enjoy the excitement. They do not do much planning, but show some care in selecting "safer" targets. They claim to be little deterred by physical security, but try to avoid being seen. Many have drug or alcohol habits.[3]

- A small number of retail burglars are highly prolific, accounting for many burglaries. Some retail burglars are also more sophisticated in their planning and methods. They work in small gangs and generally rely on disabling the alarm, which allows them more undisturbed time on the premises. They target high-value goods and the safe, which they may remove entirely.

- Most retail burglaries occur at night or on weekends, when stores are closed (while most residential burglaries occur on weekday afternoons, when residents are not likely to be home).[4]

- Retail burglars generally enter the premises through doors or windows. They force door locks, break through doors or side panels, or force/break windows. The use of vehicles to break through doors or windows (ram raiding) is much less common.[§]

- Substantial variations in burglary risks exist among stores, depending on the location, premises, goods sold, and security.

- As with some residences, some stores suffer substantial repeat victimization.[5] This is due to their location or security, the attractiveness of their goods, and the fact that, once successful, burglars may strike the same premises again. National data for Britain show that 2 percent of retail premises experienced a quarter of the retail burglaries in 1993.[6] A repeat burglary can occur soon after the initial one–usually within a month.[7]

[§] For example, the commercial victimization survey conducted by the British government in 1995 found that only 2 percent of break-ins were ram raids (Mirlees-Black and Ross 1995).

- The average financial loss due to burglary is about 20 percent greater for stores than for residences. Perhaps for this reason, a larger proportion of retail burglaries (about 95 percent) are reported to the police than domestic burglaries (80 to 85 percent).[8] According to a national British survey of retailers, stores lose as much to burglary as to shoplifting, and only very rarely recover stolen goods.[9]
- Burglary, especially repeat burglary, can have serious consequences for stores. They can become insolvent, and owners are sometimes forced to lay off staff, increase prices or close the stores. Staff can suffer psychological effects similar to those suffered by people whose homes have been burgled.[10] They report feeling that their personal space has been invaded, and they worry that the offenders might return when they are on the premises.
- Unless burglars are caught in the act, they are very difficult to detect. The clearance rate for burglaries as a whole (figures for retail burglaries are not available) is the lowest for the eight UCR index crimes.

Factors Contributing to Burglary of Retail Establishments

Understanding the factors that contribute to your problem will help you frame your own local analysis questions, determine good measures of effectiveness, recognize key intervention points, and select appropriate responses.

Not all stores face the same burglary risks. Some are in areas with low crime rates, and some are not. Some are open for longer hours, perhaps around the clock. Some sell goods that are less attractive to thieves due to their low value or bulk. Some are located where they receive constant surveillance from passing traffic or pedestrians.

Research tends to confirm these factors' effects on burglary risks, though there are several reasons why we can draw few definitive conclusions:

- As mentioned, researchers have only recently begun to focus on retail burglaries, and we still lack large studies (particularly in the United States) that have adequately measured important risk factors.
- Many of the risk factors overlap. For example, liquor stores in deprived areas might be at greater risk because of their location and the goods they sell. However, owners are aware of the risk, and they might have more security in place than owners of other neighborhood stores or of liquor stores in safer areas. To sort out these relationships would require a very large and complex study.
- Many risk factors, such as the strength of window bars or the ease of driving vehicles to the back of a store, are quite subtle and difficult to measure in large surveys.
- Despite the predictable role of certain risk factors, there is still a considerable element of chance and opportunity in burglary, which is impossible to detect in research. For instance, a particular store might be burgled because a thief happened to overhear an employee talking about a temporary breakdown in store security.

For all these reasons, we cannot yet make firm statements about all the risk factors in retail burglaries. However, by piecing together research findings in the United States and abroad, we can be fairly sure that the risks vary with the following store factors: location, premises, size, goods sold, length of time in business, and security precautions.

Location

§ Stores with attractive goods can have higher burglary rates even if they close late (Mirlees-Black and Ross 1995).

Studies of crimes against small U.S. businesses have found that retail burglary rates are highest in deprived inner-city neighborhoods, and lowest in small towns and rural locations. This probably reflects variations in the number of offenders living close to the stores.[11]

Premises

People's presence in and near stores protects them from burglary, and this factor varies with the nature of the premises. For example, several studies have suggested that stand-alone superstores located away from the downtown area are particularly at risk, because the sites are deserted at night. Supermarkets open around the clock are protected from burglary by the staff's constant presence, and mall stores seem to be at reduced risk because they tend to be protected by security guards after hours.§ Shops in busy downtown areas also appear to have lower burglary risks, again due to the constant surveillance passersby provide.[12]

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Stores that are open around the clock are protected from burglary by the constant presence of staff.

Size

National victimization surveys conducted in Australia and the United Kingdom have found that smaller shops have lower burglary rates than larger ones.[13] This may be due partly to location (downtown shops tend to be smaller than those in retail parks or malls), and partly to the smaller number of goods to steal.

Goods Sold

Research has clearly established that shoplifters exhibit strong preferences in the goods they steal, and that stores carrying these goods are particularly at risk (see the *Shoplifting* guide in this series). In the United States, shoplifters favor tobacco products (particularly cigarettes), health and beauty products, recorded music and videos, and clothing (designer, in particular). The more-limited research on retail burglaries shows similar preferences,[14] with some predictable variations resulting from differences in shoplifting and burglary methods. For example, burglars are more likely to target electronic goods, such as videocassette recorders and televisions, than are shoplifters, who would have difficulty taking such goods out of a store without being seen. A comparison of supermarket goods stolen by shoplifters and burglars found that both groups targeted cigarettes, liquor, and health and beauty aids, but as would be expected, the burglars stole these in much larger quantities than did the shoplifters. The burglars also robbed store ATMs.[15]

Length of Time in Business

Newer businesses have higher victimization rates than older businesses.[16] This might indicate that stores become more experienced in preventing crime the longer they are in business–or that store survival depends on resisting crime.

Security Precautions

Stores at greatest risk of burglary tend to take the most precautions, and while these precautions may reduce the risk of burglary, they do not entirely eliminate it. It is also the case that stores often increase their security *after* being burgled. These facts could help explain why some studies have found little statistical relationship between stores' level of security precautions and their rate of burglary.[17] However, evaluations of recent crime prevention projects in Britain (the Safer Cities project and the Small Business and Crime Initiative) have concluded that improved security at recently burgled stores can reduce repeat burglaries and, as a result, overall burglary rates in targeted areas.[18] In addition, some studies have produced evidence of the effectiveness of specific measures, such as installing burglar alarms and hiring security guards. While often falling short of proof, this evidence is reviewed below in the "Responses to the Problem of Retail Burglary" section.

Understanding Your Local Problem

The information provided above is only a generalized description of retail burglaries. You must combine the basic facts with a more specific understanding of your local problem if you are to develop an effective response. In most cases, your burglary problem is likely to involve a group of stores, such as those in a downtown area or in a particular mall. In other cases, your problem might be related to stores of the same general type (say, pharmacies or building supply stores).§ If the problem involves a single store (unless it is a very large store), you might more appropriately deal with it by offering routine crime prevention advice rather than undertaking a full-scale problem-oriented policing project. Your analysis is likely to focus on differential burglary risks among the stores in your group, and the reasons for those differences. Your analysis should address the risks of repeat victimization, as some particularly effective responses are focused on repeat victims. Bear in mind that registers of businesses may use corporate names, which may be different from "doing business as" names. The registers are also frequently out-of-date, and you might need to make your own list.

§ Each of these variations in retail burglaries deserves its own guide, but the information provided here should be sufficiently broad to provide assistance in all cases.

In general, you should seek to establish what kinds of offenders are involved, what kinds of stores they target, how they gain access to the stores, how they deal with security measures, and, finally, how they dispose of stolen goods. Knowledge of these factors will help you design an effective response to the problem.

Police crime reports or calls-for-service data do not generally distinguish the different kinds of nonresidential burglaries. Retail burglaries are lumped together with

burglaries of educational institutions, medical centers, offices, and construction sites. Consequently, gathering information about your local problem can be labor-intensive. It requires a careful review of police records and the identification of retail burglary incidents. Fortunately, the large majority of retail burglaries are reported to police, but it can still be difficult to identify repeat burglaries because locations may not be systematically recorded. For example, the store name might be included in some crime reports, and only the street address in others.

In addition, many important details about the type of business, points of entry and nature of losses may not be included. Thus, you should try to gather systematic information about these details using other data sources. Because gathering and analyzing data can be time-consuming and involve technical problems, you should seek help from your local university, especially one with a criminal justice department. Data collection methods that can provide useful information include the following:

- **Interviewing store owners or managers.** You can obtain much valuable information by interviewing store owners or managers, using a standard set of questions. You should ask about burglary incidents, burglary consequences, security measures in place at the time of burglary, and measures subsequently introduced. Unless you are dealing with a very large number of stores, you should try to conduct face-to-face interviews, since these will generally yield valuable information not directly covered in the questions. Mail or self-completion surveys suffer from low response rates and missing information.
- **Reviewing store records.** Some stores, particularly very large or chain stores, keep records of burglaries.

- **Reviewing security company records.** Large security companies generally maintain records of burglaries on client premises. Apart from asking to review these records, you might interview security personnel familiar with the stores in your group, since they often know whether or not a store is serious about security.
- **Conducting site surveys**. You should conduct site surveys of stores that have been burgled. These should cover the store's location on the block, the rear entrance(s) of the store, the businesses near the store, the amount of natural surveillance and street lighting the store has, the store's distance from main roads, and other site variables related to burglary risks (see "Targets" under "Asking the Right Questions" below).

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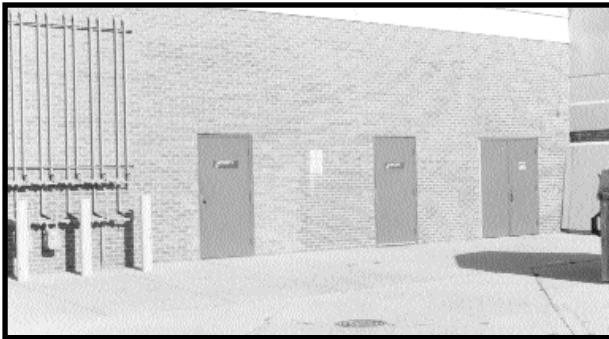
Site surveys of stores should include an assessment of the natural surveillance, lighting and security of the stores' rear entrances.

- **Using computer mapping of incidents.** Computer mapping of retail burglaries can reveal risk patterns and suggest possible reasons for those patterns. For example, burglaries may be clustered near a bar area, a drug market or a public transport hub. Or heavy clusters of repeat burglaries may indicate that a prolific burglar lives nearby. Mapping prolific offenders' addresses in relation to incident clusters may also be helpful.

- **Interviewing burglary investigators.** If burglary investigators are not part of your project team, be sure to interview them. They may have considerable knowledge gained through dealing daily with retail burglary cases.
- **Interviewing burglars**. Systematic interviews with arrested burglars can provide useful information about methods of burglary and disposal of goods.[19] Here, assistance from your local university could be particularly important, because offenders generally talk more openly to researchers.

Asking the Right Questions

The following are some critical questions you should try to answer in analyzing your particular retail burglary problem. Your answers to these and other questions will help you choose the most appropriate set of responses later on.

Offenses

- What is the clearance rate for retail burglaries?
- How often is property recovered?
- What is the ratio of attempted burglaries to completed burglaries?
- What are the usual entry points or methods?
- What proportion of burglaries have been repeat burglaries within the past year?
- What is the typical length of time between repeats?
- How long do burglaries take? How long are burglars in the building/on the property?
- How much is typically lost (dollar value of materials, repair costs, lost business, insurance premium increases)?
- What proportion of burglaries (and attempts) are reported to police?

Offenders

- Are there many different offenders involved, or is a small group of prolific offenders responsible?
- How many of the prolific offenders have records for committing retail burglaries? How many have recently been released from prison?
- How much planning do offenders do?
- Do they work in gangs? How many offenders are in the gangs?
- Do they belong to any particular ethnic, occupational or other group?
- What proportion commit burglaries primarily to support a drug or alcohol habit?
- What proportion are juveniles?
- Do they appear to know the premises burgled? If so, how do they get the information?
- Where are they coming from, and how do they get to the burglary locations? On foot? In vehicles?
- Are they drawn to the area by burglary opportunities, or for some other reason?
- Do they specialize in commercial establishments, or more precisely, retail establishments?
- How do they dispose of stolen goods (exchange them for drugs, sell them at pawnshops or flea markets, sell them to professional fences, etc.)?

Targets

- Which kinds of stores are most at risk of burglary? Which stores are not burgled?
- Which goods are burglars stealing? Are they targeting cash?
- Which stores are being burgled repeatedly? What do they have in common?
- How long have the stores been in business?
- How big are the stores? Are they part of a larger chain? If so, how does the burglary experience vary among stores in the chain? How does it compare with that of similar stores in other chains?

- What time do the stores close? Are there businesses nearby that are open at night and on weekends?
- Is the property isolated? Is lack of natural surveillance a contributory factor?
- What site features facilitate burglary? Corner location? Rear access?
- Is victim carelessness a contributory factor?
- Which structures on the property are most at risk?
- How do burglars typically gain entry?
- How often do they disable alarm systems?
- What security measures have the stores taken to prevent burglary? What special measures have they taken to protect the most valuable merchandise/equipment?
- Do store employees follow correct cash-handling procedures?
- Is there evidence of collusion between staff and burglars?
- Do security guards patrol/check stores after hours? Are they carefully checking the stores' vulnerable areas?

Locations/Times

- When do burglaries usually occur (time of day, day of week, month, season)?
- What is the nature of the surrounding neighborhood?
- Is the problem part of a wider problem of commercial burglary affecting the whole area or jurisdiction?
- Where do events concentrate? Are they clustered near major roads?

Measuring Your Effectiveness

Measurement allows you to determine to what degree your efforts have succeeded, and suggests how you might modify your responses if they are not producing the intended results. You should take measures of your problem *before* you implement responses, to determine how serious the problem is, and *after* you implement them, to determine whether they have been effective. All measures should be taken in both the target area and the surrounding area. (For more detailed guidance on measuring effectiveness, see the companion guide to this series, *Assessing Responses to Problems: An Introductory Guide for Police Problem-Solvers*.)

The following "outcome" measures can be useful in assessing whether your responses have impacted the retail burglary problem:

• reductions in reported retail burglaries and related calls for service
• fewer repeat victims and offenders
• reductions in burglary-related financial losses and insurance claims
• reductions in business closures resulting from burglary
• greater perception of safety among store owners and managers, among staff of other businesses and among residents (if it is a mixed-use area).

In addition, the following "process" measures might provide some indication of the degree to which selected responses are being properly implemented:

• increased arrests, prosecutions and convictions of retail burglars
• higher proportion of stores following standard security practices, installing security devices and/or using guard services.

Responses to the Problem of Burglary of Retail Establishments

Your analysis of your local problem should give you a better understanding of the factors contributing to it. Once you have analyzed your local problem and established a baseline for measuring effectiveness, you should consider possible responses to address the problem.

The responses discussed below provide a foundation of ideas for addressing your problem. These responses are drawn from a variety of research studies and police reports. Several of them may apply to your particular problem. It is critical that you tailor responses to local circumstances, and that you can justify each response based on reliable analysis.

In most cases, an effective strategy will involve implementing several different responses. Law enforcement responses alone are seldom effective in reducing or solving the problem: you should give careful consideration to who else in your community shares responsibility for the problem and can help police better respond to it. Building a partnership with these various stakeholders can be essential to success. For example, if you decide to target career burglars, you may need the help of parole and probation officers or local prosecutors in securing appropriate prison sentences. If you believe that street lighting must be improved, you will need help from the city and the local utility company. Above all, you will need to persuade individual retailers to take the security measures you will surely find are needed. Local business associations might help you in securing retailers' commitment.

Be aware that chain stores may need to get the head office's approval for any new security measures. Chains are likely to have their own security departments, and security staff will need to be convinced that changes in company practice are needed to meet local conditions. On the other hand, the security departments might help you formulate your response, or put you in touch with local loss prevention specialists.

Several other important considerations should guide your choice of responses:

- You should pay particular attention to repeat burglaries, since focusing on these can provide important dividends for detection as well as prevention.
- You should not overlook the fact that the burglary is only the first stage of the crime. The burglars will subsequently sell or exchange the stolen goods, leading to additional response possibilities.
- You should be alert to the possibility of displacement resulting from the implementation of some responses. In particular, you might expect some displacement to other stores when stores that have been burgled increase their security. If your responses are successful, you might also expect some displacement to nearby areas that fall outside the scope of your measures. However, research has shown that offenders typically do not travel far, and that geographic displacement is rather limited. It is also the case that if stores with the most-attractive goods are given increased protection, burglars will not necessarily rob other stores with less-attractive goods. Finally, research has found that protecting an entire area from burglary can result in a "diffusion of benefits" to surrounding areas, so that their burglary rates decline as well.[20]

- You should remember that, once you have completed your problem-oriented project and moved on to other duties, some responses you have introduced might not be sustained. There is the added danger that a reduction in burglaries will induce complacency and the belief that the problem has been "licked." There are several ways to deal with these threats,[§] but an important one is to make relatively permanent changes in the physical environment, changes whose effectiveness does not depend on human backup. For example, a business watch program and strengthened doors/windows might both result in initial reductions in burglary, but the latter's effect is likely to last longer.

[§] For a discussion, see Curtin et al. (2001).

[§§] For a recent review and discussion, see Novak et al. (1999).

The responses discussed below are organized under three main headings according to the groups with the main role to play in implementing them: the police, retailers and city/local government. It will be clear that research evidence about the effectiveness of most responses is patchy and sometimes inconsistent. If direct evidence of a particular response's effectiveness is lacking, the response assessment is guided by accepted crime prevention principles.

Police Responses

1. Targeting repeat offenders. Police crackdowns can produce reductions in crime, but these reductions may not last long. Research has shown that after the police leave, it is often "business as usual" for the local offenders.[§§] However, a recently published study found that a crackdown on prolific local burglars, followed by a "consolidation" phase in which the properties most at risk were target-hardened, produced reduced *residential* burglary rates in one community in England. The crackdown was not the usual kind, involving heavy police presence in a

§ For a comprehensive assessment of repeat offender programs, see Spelman (1990).

§§ Experience with these high-tech devices is limited to date, but it appears that they can pose numerous practical problems. For example, store owners/employees often forget to activate the devices when they leave at night, or forget they are activated when they return (Taylor 1999). As with conventional intruder alarms, portable burglar alarms also pose the problem of false alarms (see the *False Burglar Alarms* guide in this series).

particular neighborhood. Instead, it involved concentrated police attention on–including intensified investigation of–burglary suspects in one local area. Police identified, targeted and arrested 14 suspects thought to be among the most prolific local burglars, resulting in a 60 percent reduction in burglaries. There was no evidence of any displacement of burglary to other crimes or to nearby areas; indeed, car thefts dropped in the crackdown area, and burglaries dropped by 50 percent in nearby areas, suggesting that the offenders arrested were responsible for many of those crimes, as well.[21] A combined crackdown and consolidation along these lines could be equally effective in reducing retail burglaries.§

2. Targeting repeatedly burgled stores. There is a large body of evidence that focusing police and crime prevention resources on repeatedly burgled homes can produce substantial declines in burglary. Similar benefits could be obtained by concentrating preventive resources on repeatedly burgled stores.[22] The research also suggests that repeat burglaries are frequently the work of highly prolific offenders, who often return soon after the original burglary. Short-term use of measures focused on recently burgled stores might result in arrests of these offenders. As well as the deployment of directed patrols, such measures include the use of high-tech devices such as portable, covert closed-circuit television (CCTV) (which records pictures and sound only during periods of activity); portable silent alarms (which alert the police when activated); proximity alarms (which loudly sound when premises are approached from a particular direction); and "forensic traps" (such as chemically treated mats to pick up intruders' footprints).§§

3. Disrupting markets for stolen goods. Far too little is known about how offenders dispose of stolen goods, and too little is done to disrupt markets for the goods. It is true that in many jurisdictions, pawnshops are required to report the goods they receive to the police. While this requirement's effectiveness has not been properly evaluated, the best programs seem to be those in which pawnshop records are automated, downloaded daily to the police, and automatically searched against the police records database for hits on stolen property. In any case, burglars can dispose of stolen goods in many other ways, including peddling them on the street, selling them to friends or acquaintances, selling them through newspaper ads or in bars and clubs, exchanging them for drugs, and even selling them door-to-door. Burglars also sell goods to small shops, and police in many areas have undertaken "stings" in which they set up bogus fencing operations in used-goods stores. The popularity of these stings appears to have declined. They are expensive and time-consuming, and research suggests that they can lead to an influx of crime into the area around them.[23] Alternative strategies to disrupt sales of stolen goods to stores include (1) conducting surveillance of suspect stores in your area to gain evidence of thieves' entering and making sales, so as to prosecute both the thieves and the fences; (2) encouraging stores that buy used goods to display signs stating they are part of a crime prevention program to reduce sales of stolen goods; and (3) implementing local ordinances requiring stores to establish proof of ownership for used goods they buy.[24]

4. Establishing business/shop watch programs. Despite their popularity, there is little evidence that neighborhood watch programs are effective deterrents to burglary. Similarly, there is little evidence that business/

shop watch programs produce tangible results beyond some possible public relations benefits.[25] These programs are also difficult to establish.[26] Greater success might result from establishing "cocoon" business/shop watch programs in which police encourage stores close to a recently burgled store to exercise heightened surveillance for a month or two.

Retailer Actions

5. Upgrading external security. This target-hardening option covers a variety of measures, including:

- strengthening locks and reinforcing doors and windows
- installing strengthened glass, shutters or grilles in windows
- installing video cameras to monitor possible entry points
- installing security lighting at entry points
- installing concrete pillars or decorative planters to prevent ram raiding.

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Installing pillars, posts or planters in front of store doors helps prevent burglars from driving vehicles through the doors.

As mentioned, the research evidence regarding these measures' value is unclear and inconsistent. Burglars say they find these measures of little hindrance, and from a police point of view, they may provide little benefit if they merely displace burglary to other stores. Planning authorities may resist some of these measures, particularly shutters and security lighting, because they can make an area less attractive.[27]

That said, there is some limited evidence from recent studies that target hardening can be effective in preventing burglary of particular premises and, if perceived to be widespread, can also protect an entire area.[28] Which measures to use with which stores depends on a variety of cost, convenience and aesthetic considerations; the advice of a professional security consultant might be required.

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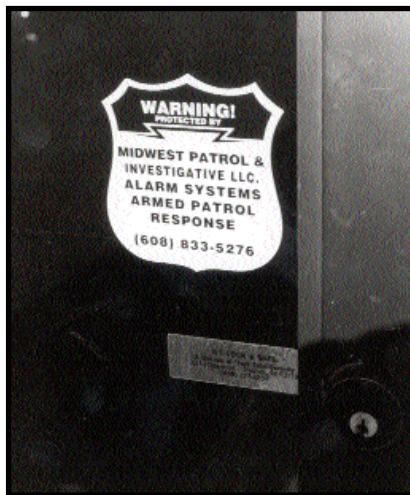
Burglar alarms, private security patrols and safes for especially valuable merchandise, along with signs indicating these security features are present, can all help reduce burglary of retail establishments.

6. Installing burglar alarms. Most stores have burglar alarms, and research suggests these can effectively protect the premises from burglary.[29] One study has found that areas with a higher number of premises with burglar alarms have lower rates of burglary.[30] However, many burglar alarms have unacceptably high rates of false alarms, and more-sophisticated thieves can disable them. Different systems vary considerably in their costs for owners and for the police. For more information on these topics, see the *False Burglar Alarms* guide in this series.

7. Safeguarding cash and valuable stock. This approach falls under the situational prevention category of "target removal." It includes:

- removing high-value goods from window displays
- concealing goods
- minimizing stock with "just in time" deliveries
- using safes or secure cages for the most valuable items in stockrooms
- marking valuable goods such as computers with traceable, hard-to-remove identification numbers
- banking cash each day
- leaving empty cash registers open at night (to prevent their being broken into).

While these techniques are good security practice, nothing is known from research about their effectiveness in preventing retail burglaries. However, cash reduction is a well-proven method of preventing commercial robberies, and removal of coin-fed fuel meters in British homes has been shown to prevent residential burglaries.[31]

8. Locking escape routes. It is good security practice to make it as difficult to get *out* of a store after hours as it

is to get *in*. (Fire exits must not be locked during normal business hours or when the store is otherwise occupied). When leaving at night, store managers should cut off the power supply to loading-bay doors, and make sure other doors and windows cannot be opened from the inside.

9. Screening and training shop staff. It is good security practice (where law permits) to screen prospective employees for criminal records. It is also good practice to train staff in security measures, to clarify their responsibilities (particularly for key security), and to encourage their involvement–for example, by keeping watch for suspicious behavior and unfamiliar vehicles.

Kip Kellogg

Private security patrols around large shopping malls help reduce burglaries to retail establishments located in and around the malls.

10. Employing security guards after hours. Burglars say that security guards pose the greatest threat to their activities.[32] Guards are widely employed in large malls and retail parks, which helps to account for the relatively low burglary rates of stores in these locations. An alternative adopted by some large stores is to employ a night crew that handles cleanup, restocking and display dressing. The store is protected from burglars while this necessary work gets done.

11. Using crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED). CPTED entails changing landscaping and design to (1) discourage access to all but intended users, (2) allow intruders to be spotted, and (3) establish the boundaries between private and public property. While research provides little guide as to CPTED's effectiveness in reducing retail burglaries, the general principles of this approach are widely accepted.[33] If stores in your area are contemplating either major remodeling or construction of new premises, they should consider incorporating CPTED strategies to reduce their future burglary risks. A CPTED survey can be done for an entire area, not just for individual businesses. If a block of businesses or a business district cooperates in paying for a CPTED specialist to undertake a survey and recommend improvements, the cost will be minimal. Information about CPTED can be obtained from the National Crime Prevention Council (www.ncpc.org/cpted.htm) and the International CPTED Association (www.cpted.net).

City Planning Measures

12. Improving street surveillance through lighting and CCTV. Commercial burglars prefer targets that receive little surveillance,[34] and they could be expected to avoid well-lit streets§ and those with CCTV surveillance. Consistent with this, a study in Britain found large reductions in shop burglaries following the introduction of CCTV surveillance in three downtown areas,[35] and a study in Portland, Ore., found that improving the lighting on a commercial strip produced a significant drop in retail burglaries.[36] As with all security measures, lighting has to be carefully designed to provide maximum benefits without unnecessary cost.§§

13. Promoting "living over the shop." In an effort to restore downtown areas' vitality and provide after-hours surveillance of retail properties, the British government is sponsoring a program to encourage people to live in vacant space above shops. The program, which has been adopted by many towns and cities, has the additional benefit of increasing the supply of low-cost housing.[37] A recent evaluation, based on interviews with a variety of interested parties, found that most people supported the program and believed it helped to reduce crime in downtown areas.

14. Promoting business improvement districts (BIDs). Many U.S. cities have designated BIDs formed by coalitions of local businesspeople. The objective is to promote investment in declining business areas. Similar initiatives in Britain fall under the title of "town center management." An important objective of most BIDs[§] is to reduce crime and the fear of crime. To this end, initiatives may include improvements in street lighting, installation of public CCTV systems, regular cleaning of graffiti and repair of vandalism, dedicated patrols by police and security guards, and formation of a force of "city guards" to provide a street presence and assist visitors or tourists. Evaluations of BIDs are currently being undertaken in the United States.[38]

[§] Though not, apparently, of most TCM schemes (Beck and Willis 1995).

Appendix: Summary of Responses to Burglary in Retail Establishments

The table below summarizes the responses to retail burglaries, the mechanism by which they are intended to work, the conditions under which they ought to work best, and some factors you should consider before implementing a particular response. It is critical that you tailor responses to local circumstances, and that you can justify each response based on reliable analysis. In most cases, an effective strategy will involve implementing several different responses. Law enforcement responses alone are seldom effective in reducing or solving the problem.

Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If…	Considerations
Police Responses					
1.	19	Targeting repeat offenders	Incapacitates those offenders responsible for a large portion of burglaries	…police can reliably identify habitual criminals; there is a high proportion of repeat burglaries; courts are willing to award custodial sentences; and crackdowns are consolidated through environmental design changes	Requires the cooperation of prosecutors, courts, probation and parole departments, and city planning departments
2.	20	Targeting repeatedly burgled stores	Concentrates prevention where it is most needed; facilitates the arrest of prolific offenders	…a small proportion of stores experience a large proportion of burglaries, and measures can be put in place quickly	Requires cooperation among police divisions (local officers, crime prevention officers, detectives), business owners and city officials

Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If…	Considerations
3.	21	Disrupting markets for stolen goods	Reduces the incentive for theft by making it difficult for offenders to sell stolen goods	…stolen-goods markets are not widespread	Can be difficult to obtain information about how and where offenders sell or exchange stolen goods; stings are expensive and of doubtful effectiveness; courts often take a lenient view on receiving stolen property charges
4.	21	Establishing business/shop watch programs	Increases offenders' risk of police intervention and/or subsequent identification	…concern about retail burglaries is widely shared among stores	Can be difficult to enlist store owners' participation; a more effective alternative is to establish temporary "cocoon" watch programs around recently burgled premises
Retailer Actions					
5.	22	Upgrading external security	Stops or slows down offenders	…existing security is low, and natural surveillance is poor	Target-hardening solutions need to be carefully tailored to individual stores, often requiring the advice of professional security consultants
6.	24	Installing burglar alarms	Increases offenders' risk of getting caught	…a high proportion of stores are fitted with alarms, and alarms are connected to CCTV systems that allow private security companies to verify that a burglary is taking place before calling the police	Burglars can disable alarms; there are high rates of false alarms, but improved systems are coming on the market

Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If…	Considerations
7.	24	Safeguarding cash and valuable stock	Reduces the rewards of burglary	…burglars' principal target is cash or stock readily convertible to cash	Little research is available on this strategy's effectiveness
8.	24	Locking escape routes	Slows offenders down and increases their risk of getting caught; limits the amount of stock offenders can remove	…stores are located in areas with good natural surveillance, and stolen goods are bulky/heavy	A commonsense approach, but one on which little relevant evaluative research has been done; depends on well-trained and disciplined staff
9.	25	Screening and training shop staff	Reduces the risk of "inside jobs"; increases staff's responsibility for store security	…stores are located in high-crime areas, and staff turnover is high	Laws must permit screening of potential employees; employees must have incentives to share in the security function
10.	25	Employing security guards after hours	Increases offenders' risk of getting caught	…stores are closely clustered together, and guards are constantly or frequently present	Burglars report being most deterred by security guards; a low-cost alternative for larger stores is to employ a night crew to handle cleanup, restocking and display dressing
11.	26	Using crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED)	Makes burglary more difficult; increases offenders' risk of getting caught	…retailers are planning major remodeling or the construction of new buildings	Incorporating CPTED principles need not be costly and can bring long-term benefits; CPTED surveys can be undertaken for an entire business district, as well as for individual premises

Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If…	Considerations
City Planning Measures					
12.	26	Improving street surveillance through lighting and CCTV	Increases offenders' risk of intervention by police and/or security guards; increases offenders' risk of subsequent identification	…stores are located in downtown areas or business districts	U.S. civil liberty groups often oppose the installation of public CCTV systems; lights and CCTV equipment are sometimes vandalized in high-crime areas
13.	27	Promoting "living over the shop"	Increases natural surveillance of stores at night and on weekends	…stores are located in downtown areas or business districts	This initiative is usually part of a wider revitalization program; accommodations sometimes do not provide good surveillance of the stores below; this approach appeals most to singles and young people who are often away from home and therefore provide less surveillance
14.	27	Promoting business improvement districts (BIDs)	Increases natural surveillance in the area	…BIDs have dedicated patrols by security staff	BIDs depend on widespread support from the business community; BIDs' crime prevention value has not yet been demonstrated

Endnotes

[1] Gill (1994); Shapland (1995); Felson and Clarke (1997).
[2] Mirlees-Black and Ross (1995).
[3] Cromwell, Olson and Avary (1991); Butler (1994); Jacques (1994); Wright and Decker
     (1994); Wiersma (1996).
[4] Mirlees-Black and Ross (1995); Butler (1994).
[5] Skogan (1990); Tilley (1993); Mirlees-Black and Ross (1995); Farrell, Chenery and
     Pease (1998).
[6] Mirlees-Black and Ross (1995).
[7] Taylor (1999).
[8] Mirlees-Black and Ross (1995).
[9] Mirlees-Black and Ross (1995).
[10] Redshaw and Mawby (1996); Burrows (1997); Brown (2001).
[11] Reiss (1969); Skogan (1990).
[12] Butler (1994); Walker (1994); Redshaw and Mawby (1996).
[13] Walker (1994); Mirlees-Black and Ross (1995); Perrone (2000).
[14] Mirlees-Black and Ross (1995); Shapland (1995).
[15] Food Marketing Institute (1997).
[16] Hakim and Shachmurove (1996); Perrone (2000).
[17] Mirlees-Black and Ross (1995); Shapland (1995).
[18] Tilley (1993); Tilley and Hopkins (1998).
[19] Cromwell, Olson and Avary (1991); Butler (1994); Jacques (1994); Wright
      and Decker (1994); Wiersma (1996).
[20] Tilley and Hopkins (1998).
[21] Farrell, Chenery and Pease (1998).
[22] Tilley (1993); Tilley and Hopkins (1998); Bowers and Hirschfield (1998);
      Taylor (1999).
[23] Langworthy and LeBeau (1992).
[24] Clarke (1999); Sutton, Schneider and Hetherington (2001).
[25] Beck and Willis (1995).
[26] Tilley and Hopkins (1998).
[27] Jacques (1994); Beck and Willis (1995).

[28] Tilley (1993); Tilley and Hopkins (1998).
[29] Hakim and Blackstone (1997).
[30] Hakim and Blackstone (1997).
[31] Clarke (1997).
[32] Butler (1994).
[33] Crowe (1991); Poyner and Fawcett (1995).
[34] Butler (1994); Wiersma (1996).
[35] Brown (1997).
[36] Griswold (1984).
[37] Beck and Willis (1995).
[38] Greene and Stokes (1998).

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Ronald V. Clarke is a professor at the School of Criminal Justice, Rutgers University. He previously headed the British government's criminological research department, where he had a significant role in developing situational crime prevention and the British Crime Survey. Clarke is the founding editor of Crime Prevention Studies, and his publications include *Designing Out Crime* (HMSO 1980), *The Reasoning Criminal* (Springer-Verlag 1986), *Business and Crime Prevention* (Criminal Justice Press 1997), and *Situational Crime Prevention: Successful Case Studies* (Harrow and Heston 1997). Together with Herman Goldstein, he has recently been working on problem-oriented policing projects for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg (North Carolina) Police Department. Since 1998, he has chaired the selection committee for the annual Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing. Clarke holds a docorate in psychology from the University of London.

Recommended Readings

• **_A Police Guide to Surveying Citizens and Their Environments_**, Bureau of Justice Assistance, 1993. This guide offers a practical introduction for police practitioners to two types of surveys that police find useful: surveying public opinion and surveying the physical environment. It provides guidance on whether and how to conduct cost-effective surveys.

• **_Assessing Responses to Problems: An Introductory Guide for Police Problem-Solvers_**, by John E. Eck (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2001). This guide is a companion to the _Problem-Oriented Guides for Police_ series. It provides basic guidance to measuring and assessing problem-oriented policing efforts.

• **_Conducting Community Surveys_**, by Deborah Weisel (Bureau of Justice Statistics and Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 1999). This guide, along with accompanying computer software, provides practical, basic pointers for police in conducting community surveys. The document is also available at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs.

• **_Crime Prevention Studies_**, edited by Ronald V. Clarke (Criminal Justice Press, 1993, et seq.). This is a series of volumes of applied and theoretical research on reducing opportunities for crime. Many chapters are evaluations of initiatives to reduce specific crime and disorder problems.

- ***Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing: The 1999 Herman Goldstein Award Winners.*** This document produced by the National Institute of Justice in collaboration with the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services and the Police Executive Research Forum provides detailed reports of the best submissions to the annual award program that recognizes exemplary problem-oriented responses to various community problems. A similar publication is available for the award winners from subsequent years. The documents are also available at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij.

- ***Not Rocket Science? Problem-Solving and Crime Reduction***, by Tim Read and Nick Tilley (Home Office Crime Reduction Research Series, 2000). Identifies and describes the factors that make problem-solving effective or ineffective as it is being practiced in police forces in England and Wales.

- ***Opportunity Makes the Thief: Practical Theory for Crime Prevention***, by Marcus Felson and Ronald V. Clarke (Home Office Police Research Series, Paper No. 98, 1998). Explains how crime theories such as routine activity theory, rational choice theory and crime pattern theory have practical implications for the police in their efforts to prevent crime.

- ***Problem Analysis in Policing***, by Rachel Boba (Police Foundation, 2003). Introduces and defines problem analysis and provides guidance on how problem analysis can be integrated and institutionalized into modern policing practices.

- **Problem-Oriented Policing**, by Herman Goldstein
  (McGraw-Hill, 1990, and Temple University Press, 1990).
  Explains the principles and methods of problem-oriented
  policing, provides examples of it in practice, and discusses
  how a police agency can implement the concept.

- **Problem-Oriented Policing and Crime Prevention**,
  by Anthony A. Braga (Criminal Justice Press, 2003).
  Provides a through review of significant policing research
  about problem places, high-activity offenders, and repeat
  victims, with a focus on the applicability of those findings
  to problem-oriented policing. Explains how police
  departments can facilitate problem-oriented policing by
  improving crime analysis, measuring performance, and
  securing productive partnerships.

- **Problem-Oriented Policing: Reflections on the
  First 20 Years**, by Michael S. Scott (U.S. Department of
  Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services,
  2000). Describes how the most critical elements of
  Herman Goldstein's problem-oriented policing model have
  developed in practice over its 20-year history, and proposes
  future directions for problem-oriented policing. The report
  is also available at www.cops.usdoj.gov.

- **Problem-Solving: Problem-Oriented Policing in
  Newport News**, by John E. Eck and William Spelman
  (Police Executive Research Forum, 1987). Explains the
  rationale behind problem-oriented policing and the
  problem-solving process, and provides examples of
  effective problem-solving in one agency.

- **Problem-Solving Tips: A Guide to Reducing Crime and Disorder Through Problem-Solving Partnerships** by Karin Schmerler, Matt Perkins, Scott Phillips, Tammy Rinehart and Meg Townsend. (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 1998) (also available at www.cops.usdoj.gov). Provides a brief introduction to problem-solving, basic information on the SARA model and detailed suggestions about the problem-solving process.

- **Situational Crime Prevention: Successful Case Studies**, Second Edition, edited by Ronald V. Clarke (Harrow and Heston, 1997). Explains the principles and methods of situational crime prevention, and presents over 20 case studies of effective crime prevention initiatives.

- **Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems: Case Studies in Problem-Solving**, by Rana Sampson and Michael S. Scott (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2000) (also available at www.cops.usdoj.gov). Presents case studies of effective police problem-solving on 18 types of crime and disorder problems.

- **Using Analysis for Problem-Solving: A Guidebook for Law Enforcement**, by Timothy S. Bynum (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2001). Provides an introduction for police to analyzing problems within the context of problem-oriented policing.

- **Using Research: A Primer for Law Enforcement Managers**, Second Edition, by John E. Eck and Nancy G. LaVigne (Police Executive Research Forum, 1994). Explains many of the basics of research as it applies to police management and problem-solving.

Other Problem-Oriented Guides for Police

Problem-Specific Guides for Police series:

1. **Assaults in and Around Bars.** Michael S. Scott. 2001.
   ISBN: 1-932582-00-2
2. **Street Prostitution.** Michael S. Scott. 2001. ISBN: 1-932582-01-0
3. **Speeding in Residential Areas.** Michael S. Scott. 2001.
   ISBN: 1-932582-02-9
4. **Drug Dealing in Privately Owned Apartment Complexes**.
   Rana Sampson. 2001. ISBN: 1-932582-03-7
5. **False Burglar Alarms.** Rana Sampson. 2001. ISBN: 1-932582-04-5
6. **Disorderly Youth in Public Places.** Michael S. Scott. 2001.
   ISBN: 1-932582-05-3
7. **Loud Car Stereos.** Michael S. Scott. 2001. ISBN: 1-932582-06-1
8. **Robbery at Automated Teller Machines.** Michael S. Scott. 2001.
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