



There has recently been a wave of armed robberies in shopping malls across South Africa.

According to Dr Johan Burger from the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), the most recent set of quarterly reports from 2020/21 show that business robbery increased in each quarter – a continuation of an eight-year trend where aggravated robbery in general increased nationally by 43% between 2011/12 and 2019/2020. Business robbery alone increased by 30%. Initially, lockdown saw a small decrease, but the easing of restrictions saw aggravated robbery trends heading in exactly the upward direction they were pre-lockdown.

Shopping mall robbers typically follow four key steps.

Identifying targets: High reward targets are top priority and, although malls with inadequate security will typically be chosen over those with good security, criminals will take the risk if the reward is great enough.



Planning: Gaining intel on security at the target centre, gauging possible risks and obstacles, judging the quality of security officials and equipment, looking at where CCTV cameras are, assessing escape routes, and making plans to side-step additional security measures like access control at jewellery stores.

Ganging up and kitting out: Getting a large enough group with suitable vehicles (typically multiple vehicles) and firepower together to overcome predicted resistance. They will typically hide firearms under clothing or in a bag that won't attract attention.

Execution: Getting in and out before security companies or the police can respond is key. Firearms are only drawn once they are in the target area or if they are confronted by security officials. They will not hesitate to use their firearms and will shoot to kill in order to escape.

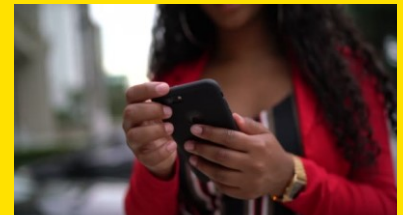
Shop owners must look out for suspicious activities.

People: Although criminals will do their best to be inconspicuous when scouting, suspicious behaviour like loitering in a particular area, pretending to wait for someone, just hanging around, taking pictures in the vicinity of places such as jewellery shops, cell phone shops and IT businesses are red flags.

Vehicles: Cars seen regularly in the same areas – especially those with persons staying in the car, with others leaving and returning – should be reported.

Cell phone theft in and around shopping malls is an ongoing problem.

- Keep cell phones out of sight.
- Be alert when making calls in public, and refrain from walking and texting.
- Customers must refrain from leaving cell phones on counters when making payments.
- Don't leave cell phones unattended behind or under counters.
- Don't charge cell phones where the public can see them.





Employees and Training

- Training is an investment you make in your employees that might save a life.
- Share robbery prevention and response guidelines with staff so that they are informed.
- Encourage active responses that can make a huge difference during emergency situations.
- Staff should be made aware of which information should not be revealed to inquiring minds.
- Encourage employees to report suspicious activity and to never try and handle a potentially dangerous situation.
- Do not assume your employees will know what to do in a high-stress situation.
- Regularly hold practice robbery drills so that the robbery response procedure is near automatic in the event of an actual robbery.
- Employees should be told to always cooperate with a robber.
- Greet customers as they enter the business. This gives potential robbers the impression you are alert and aware of their presence.
- Have at least two employees open and close the business.



Caution is required when recruiting staff.

- Focus on hiring responsible and trustworthy employees.
- Do not share too much sensitive information regarding your business with your staff.
- Install CCTVs around the store to keep an eye on employees and train them on store safety and expectations.
- Staff should be made aware that they will be monitored and that there will be serious consequences and disciplinary measures if they commit any form of fraud or theft.



Vehicle theft at shopping malls is a big concern.

- Stolen vehicles include, but are not limited to, Land Cruisers, Toyota Hilux and Ford Rangers.
- Shoppers and tenants must lock their vehicles and not leave valuables such as laptops etc., in the vehicles – not even in the boot.
- Car-jamming is an ongoing problem. When you press the remote-control button, make sure that you hear the beep of the alarm activating and see or hear the locks clicking into place. Always check your door handle before leaving the car.
- Strictly monitor tailgating.
- Alert security immediately of suspicious people, vehicles and activities.

#SafetyFirst

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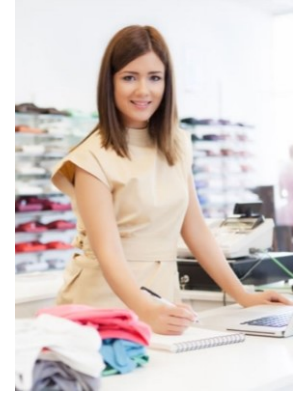
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Personal safety begins with an individual's AWARENESS of their environment – no one can defend against the danger they couldn't see coming.

Electronic Distractions: Whether it's staring down at your phone or listening to music, electronic devices can seriously impair your ability to be aware of what is going on around you. Only use your devices after you've determined you are in an area or situation where it is safe to do so.

Peripheral Vision: Attempt to focus on something while also observing what's happening at the edges of your vision. This widens your monitoring range for detecting anything out of the ordinary.

Scan: Most people automatically scan new situations or environments but don't always focus on helpful information. Practice looking for exits, barriers, suspicious objects and people, and any other unique elements that could affect your personal safety.

Stop and Pretend: If you feel like you are being followed, either on foot or in a vehicle, stop and turn around, pretending as if you went the wrong way. The person's reaction following you will help you determine if they are indeed a threat. If they stop or reroute to mirror your actions, you can confirm that they are following you intentionally.

Become a Hard Target: Those with malicious intent generally single out individuals that seem meek, vulnerable, or unaware of their surroundings. Body language plays a significant role in how others perceive you - walk tall and act with confidence.

Personal Space: If someone is crowding you, seems suspicious, or displays threatening body language, scan them for subtle signs of violent intent or a hidden weapon.

Senses: Practice engaging all your senses (sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste) to their fullest extent to increase your personal safety. Regularly exercising your senses can make them keener, which can help you avoid unsafe situations, determine threats faster, and pick up on critical information more quickly during emergencies.

