

**Guidelines:
Prevention and
Management of Pharmacy
Robberies and Break-Ins
in Nova Scotia**



September 2012

Disclaimer:

There are no security measures that will make a pharmacy immune to risks of robbery or break-in. Crimes of these types are inevitable, and the suggestions provided in this document are intended to decrease the likelihood of robberies or break-ins by putting in place strategies to make breaches in the pharmacies' security as difficult as possible for potential robbers. It is important to maintain realistic expectations as to the effectiveness of the implementation of any of these approaches. The recommendations in this document are based on research and common knowledge and are intended for use as suggestions, rather than as prescriptive rules.

Acknowledgements:

The document was adapted, with permission, from the *Guidelines for Addressing Pharmacy Robbery in B.C.*, the Pharmacy Robbery Committee of the College of Pharmacists of British Columbia and the British Columbia Pharmacists Association, 2010.

Chief Mark Mander of the Nova Scotia Chiefs of Police Association and Inspector Michael Payne of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police were consulted. The document was reviewed by the Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists.

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1 Introduction

Recent statistics in NS indicate that there is an increase in pharmacy robberies and break-ins. According to law enforcement, the primary motivators for security breaches in NS pharmacies have been substance abuse and drug seeking behavior, the street value/demand for the drugs and the need to repay outstanding drug-debts. Cash appears to be a less important motivator in pharmacy robberies and break-ins. This document is intended for use by community pharmacies to provide support and guidance in creating individualized plans to make them less vulnerable to robberies and break-ins and to assist them in fulfilling the requirement of federal law that pharmacists keep drugs secure in their pharmacies.

These guidelines set out the following objectives:

- (a) To further efforts to decrease diversion of prescription drugs into the hands of drug users and sellers on the street, thereby also contributing to increased public safety, and
- (b) to create strategies for pharmacy robbery and break-in prevention that will help to protect the personal safety of pharmacy staff, their clientele and the public and to protect damage to or loss of property,

For practical reasons, it is important to note that the individual differences in pharmacies, including: size, staffing levels, business focus, location, traffic, and services offered onsite and the level of autonomy of the businesses, may mean that certain suggestions are more applicable to some pharmacies than others (i.e., a 'one size fits all approach' may not meet all needs).

These recommendations should be used and implemented based on the context of each pharmacy. Pharmacy owners and/or managers are encouraged to make contact with local police services to discuss and develop individual robbery or break-in prevention plans. Informing local police of security precautions being implemented in pharmacies may provide valuable insights for the police and for the pharmacy.

Definitions

Narcotic: For the purposes of this document, 'narcotic' means any Controlled Drug or Substance as per the Controlled Drug and Substances Act.

Robbery: The criminal taking of the property of another from his or her person or in his or her immediate presence, against his or her will, by violence or intimidation.

Break-in: The illegal entrance into premises, such as a pharmacy, with criminal intent.

2 Premises

In order to protect the location itself, pharmacies should consider the following design suggestions:

- Utilize bright and high-quality lighting for the interior and exterior of the premises, with motion-sensitive lighting on the exterior if appropriate. This may help to minimize undetected entry to the

premises.

- Design the layout of the pharmacy to ensure that staff has a clear sightlines to the pharmacy, such that the pharmacy staff are not isolated from their view.
- Ensure that the pharmacy is well staffed, which will serve as a deterrent to potential robbers.
- Consider approaches such as *Crime Prevention through Environmental Design*, a planning concept used by police forces, in construction and by urban planners which attempts to influence the decisions of potential offenders through proper design and effective use of the built environment. For more information, contact the RCMP or your local law enforcement.

3 Equipment (Alarms, Safes, Cameras)

In light of the complexities of security technologies (alarm type, installation, monitoring, maintenance, the availability of a backup system should (land) phone lines be disabled (backup systems generally use cellular phone numbers), the appropriateness of camera placements, recording location, back-ups of data, date/time stamps, motion-activated vs. continuous, duration of image storage, etc.), seek professional advice when security equipment is being considered. Managers should ensure that maintenance schedules for all security equipment are carefully followed.

Strategies that may assist police in being able to apprehend perpetrators in the event of a robbery or break-in include:

Video Cameras and Closed Circuit TV

- Consider installing a closed circuit television (CCTV) system and monitors, so that potential perpetrators are aware that they are being observed.
- Ensure there is ease of access to data (digital images), so that information can be quickly obtained if and when there is an incident.
- It is advisable to advertise the presence of cameras and the fact that subjects will be filmed for identification purposes. Doing so can reinforce that the image has been captured on CCTV by the presence of monitors that display the image as individuals enter the store.
- Installation of good quality and easily read height markers on exit doors may assist with suspect identification at a later date. The CCTV camera can be embedded in exit door height markers that capture excellent close-up, eye-height images of everyone who leaves the store.

Alarms

- Ensure that alarm systems are installed such that if telephone lines are cut, notification of store's contacts will still occur (usually using the contact's cell phone). In local instances of pharmacies' phone lines having been cut, perpetrators entered the store undetected, having time to remove not only all narcotics, but also safes.

- Explore the possibility of installing a *silent* panic alarm. **Audible panic alarms are not recommended, as they can induce panic during a robbery which may lead to increased risk from the situation.** Although the presence of an audible alarm is not helpful in the event of a robbery, it may be helpful in the event of an after-hours break-in.

Safes

- Safes that are bolted to the floor are recommended for optimal security. The safe with both a day (key) lock and a combination lock for after hours will provide the best overall protection for most pharmacies.
- Locked safes may be counter-productive in event of a robbery (especially those with a combination lock), as they may increase the time to obtain the drugs thereby escalating the volatility of the situation. The aim is to have the perpetrator leave the scene as quickly as possible.

4 Inventory

Implement strategies to reduce the risks associated with having significant quantities of narcotics in stock:

- As much as possible, pharmacies should consider keeping the onsite stock of narcotics to a minimum. Although inventory needs are generally based on product demand, the associated risk and street value of the drugs warrants consideration. It is incumbent upon the pharmacist to reduce the likelihood of large quantities of drugs being diverted to the street as a result of a robbery or break-in.
- The daily supply of narcotics for dispensing must be readily available for the pharmacy to run efficiently. One approach to consider is to keep the dispensing supply to a minimum, and to have the bulk of the stock locked up in a location away from public access and view. Consider replenishing the dispensing stock prior to the start of the day, when no customers are present in the store.
- Creating store policies specific to the dispensing of narcotic prescriptions on the following subjects may serve as deterrents to potential robberies and break-ins:
 - ✓ How to handle new patients with prescriptions for narcotics (i.e., gathering very complete patient demographic information and medication history may serve as a deterrent to potential perpetrators and is best practice)
 - ✓ How to deal with 'fishing' phone calls;
 - ✓ Formal arrangements between the prescriber, the patient and the pharmacy to be sole providers of the narcotics for the individual;
 - ✓ Limiting quantities of narcotics that will be available per fill. Based on the Pharmacy Practice Regulations, pharmacists have the ability to adjust the quantity of drugs dispensed from that prescribed in certain situations. See Pharmacy Practice Regulations.

5 Staff

Pharmacy owners and managers should facilitate staff training to include both prevention and management of robberies and break-ins in order to mitigate harm to staff and others and to promote de-escalation of violence. This should ensure ongoing competence of the skills listed below for the staff group.

- Provide mandatory training for new staff with respect to:
 - a) Operation of security-relevant equipment, such as closed circuit TV, alarms, safes, etc.,
 - b) What to do in the event of a robbery or break-in and,
 - c) How to manage potential warning signs of robbery or break-in (the presence of suspicious customers and ‘fishing’ style phone calls). Encourage staff to be vigilant for signs of ‘casing’, while being sensitive to individuals’ awareness of being ‘watched’ – robberies are often preceded by site visits to assess the pharmacy’s setup. Contact authorities to report any suspicious behavior. Suspicious individuals should not be approached, they may be dangerous.
- Security is an ongoing issue and should be approached as such; situation-based training for robbery or break-in prevention and education should be repeated at regular intervals for all staff.

6 Prevention and Management Procedures

In addition to the information provided in sections 3, 4 & 5, there are additional practices that may further protect pharmacies from being vulnerable to robberies or break-ins:

Before a robbery/break-in

The following strategies may help to minimize the risk of being subject to robberies or break-ins:

- Increase the perceived risk and effort of and reduce the reward for committing a burglary at the specific location.
- Consider implementing a policy to require that clothing that is worn to disguise a person (such as hats, sunglasses, helmets) be removed upon entering the store. This approach would require active involvement of store staff and would have to be implemented on a discretionary basis.
- Ensure adequate staffing levels at all times. Depending on the assessment of risk and other operational considerations, employing staff whose job it is to greet customers as they enter the store reduces the anonymity of and discourages potential perpetrators from proceeding any further with their plan.

During a robbery

When a robbery does occur, the aim is to minimize danger and maximize safety for staff and patrons and to increase the likelihood perpetrators being apprehended:

- *Do not* be a hero by challenging the perpetrator.
- Do exactly as you are asked; give the perpetrator what he is asking for.
- Utilize non-threatening body language: maintain open body posture and personal space and limit eye contact if you are able.
- Attempt to remember as much as possible about the perpetrator(s): voice, language, clothing, size, 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, based on the situation, make the judgment at the time as to whether or not to use it. Audible alarms are not recommended *during* robberies and the sound can make perpetrators panic, increasing the risk and volatility of the situation.
- Ensure that the perpetrator's escape route remains clear.

After a robbery/break-in

The following strategies should be applied immediately following a robbery/break-in:

- Make detailed notes as soon as possible. Note how and when the perpetrator leaves the area. Consider factors such as movement, direction and vehicle description (including license plate information, make, model, colour, etc.).
- After a robbery or break-in, the pharmacy has become a crime scene. Do everything you can to maintain the integrity of the crime scene to assist in maximizing the likelihood of apprehending the perpetrator.
- Immediately close the business: stop store operations, secure the premises and lock all entrances.
- If the police have not already been alerted by a silent alarm, call them **as soon as it is safe to do so**. Follow police instructions, including:
 - (a) Keep the phone lines open until law enforcement arrives at the scene,
 - (b) Avoid touching anything that the perpetrator has come into contact with, to keep the items available to provide forensic evidence,
 - (c) Ask witnesses to remain at the scene until the police can interview them – collect contact details where possible, and
 - (d) Ask all witnesses to independently complete the *Armed Robbery Questionnaire* – Refer to Appendix 3, and to provide to police as soon as possible after completion. This checklist has been developed to provide a consistent means of capturing detailed

information of the robbery or break-in from staff and other witnesses. It is important that people work independently when completing this checklist to ensure each person gives an independent and unbiased account of the event. Once police arrive, give full statements and comply with their instruction.

- Immediately after a robbery or break-in has occurred, contact the Nova Scotia Prescription Monitoring Program (NSPMP) by phone at (902) 496-7123 or 1-877-476-7767 (toll free) to report the incident. They will gather the details of the event and if appropriate, send an advisory to alert other pharmacies in the province.

Narcotic Control Regulations made under the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* require that any loss or theft of controlled drugs or substances be reported to the Office of Controlled Substances within 10 days using Health Canada's [Loss or Theft Report Form for Controlled Substances and Precursors](#). A copy of the form should be forwarded to the Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists as soon as possible by fax: 902-422-0885 or by email to: info@nspharmacists.ca. Based on the nature of the incident, the College's assessment of the situation and timeliness of reporting, the College may opt to communicate with other pharmacies in the province to inform them of illegal activity and encourage increased vigilance in awareness and prevention procedures. Pharmacy managers* should have processes in place to communicate such messages to all staff in a timely manner.

In future:

Attempt to prevent repeat victimization. A pharmacy that has been robbed once should make best efforts to ensure that the pharmacy is a less desirable target and to decrease the risk to people and property through implementation of the recommendations in this document. Ensure that all victims take advantage of available victim support services (Refer to *Resources*, Appendix 1 – for victim's services information).

**See Responsibilities of the Pharmacy Manager, Pharmacy Regulations*

7 Conclusion

By creating a robbery and break-in plan that is customized to the individual pharmacy, pharmacies can lessen the risk of harm to staff, clientele and to the public in general and prevent damage to property. Through working with local law enforcement services, pharmacies may also contribute to larger efforts to decrease the diversion of prescription drugs to the street, thereby further promoting increased public safety.

Appendix 1 – Resources and References

Resources:

Improving Medication Safety in Community Pharmacy: Assessing Risk and Opportunities for Change, Institute for Safe Medication Practices :

<http://www.ismp.org/tools/communitySafetyProgram.asp>

Aware NS, NS Health and Community Services Association: www.awarens.ca

Canadian Safe Manufacturing (Cash Guard), 1(800) 267-7635

<http://www.canadiansafe.ca/productdetail.cfm?product=29>

Department of Justice Victims Services Programs, Province of Nova Scotia

Toll Free: 1(888) 470-0773 or http://www.gov.ns.ca/just/victim_services/programs.asp#PVSP

Office of Controlled Substances, Health Canada - Loss or Theft Report Form for Controlled

Substances and Precursors http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hc-ps/alt_formats/hecs-sesc/pdf/substancontrol/substan/compli-conform/loss-perte/form_4010_eng.pdf

References:

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 Western Australian Office of Crime Prevention, armed robbery prevention information: <http://www.crimeprevention.wa.gov.au/index.php>.

Appendix 2 - Important Phone Numbers

Emergency: Dial 911

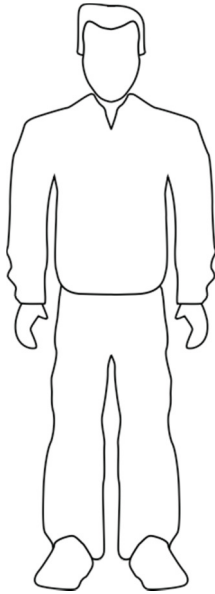
Local Police: _____

Nova Scotia Prescription Monitoring Program: 1(902) 496-7123

Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists: 1(902) 422-8528

Crime Stoppers: 1(800) 222-8477

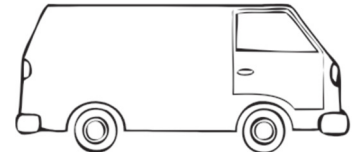
DESCRIPTION OF OFFENDER - Don't guess - if you are unsure about any aspect leave blank.



	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



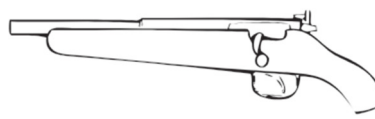
LARGE AUTOMATIC PISTOL



SMALL AUTOMATIC PISTOL



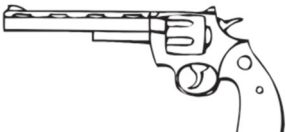
SAWN-OFF BOLT ACTION RIFLE



PUMP ACTION SAWN-OFF SHOTGUN



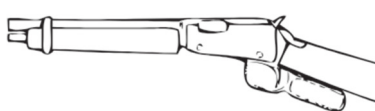
LONG BARREL REVOLVER



SNUB NOSE REVOLVER



SAWN-OFF LEVER ACTION RIFLE



AUTOMATIC SAWN-OFF SHOTGUN



SINGLE SHOT SAWN-OFF SHOTGUN

