



LOSS PREVENTION TIPS

CONVENIENCE STORE

Fact:

The convenience store business is thriving. Did you know there are 150,274 convenience stores operating in the United States? 121,538 sell motor fuels and more than 60 percent are single-store operators.¹

How does your business compare? Do you have food sales? Do you struggle with asset protection? Is customer and employee safety high on your priority list? These are questions that all convenience store owners must consider. A small investment in loss prevention is an investment in your business's success.

Key areas to focus your efforts:

1. Protect your equipment and machinery.
2. Train your employees to look out for theft and manage the loss of inventory.
3. Protect your physical location inside and outside of the store.

Fire Prevention:

Many convenience stores support their core business operation with food sales, utilizing commercial cooking, which can present a significant fire hazard. Fryers and grills must be protected by a UL300 fire suppression system.

- The hood system needs to be cleaned/maintained properly. The frequency of cleaning is partially determined by the jurisdiction and the volume of cooking.
- At a minimum, the hood system should be cleaned annually or semiannually. If there is a high volume of cooking, quarterly cleaning may be required.
- The metal filters should be cleaned more frequently by staff in-between contracted cleanings.
- The fire suppression system needs to be tested/inspected annually.
- If there are fryers, a Class K fire extinguisher must be located just outside the hood system.

- Fryers should be equipped with automatic high temperature shut offs.

If the store has propane exchange, the tanks must be properly stored in a locked and protective cabinet outside the building. The cabinet should be protected from vehicle impact if located near parking or vehicle travel.

Theft/Vandalism:

- Convenience stores are vulnerable to theft and vandalism due to several factors: high traffic of customers, being a cash driven business with large amounts on hand, and unlawful customers who can enter and exit quickly. Stores should have a security system that includes alarms, motion detection, and high-quality cameras. Establish emergency procedures for all employees to follow in the event of a robbery or even violence.
- To deter theft and vandalism, stores should have security cameras located inside and outside. The cameras should cover as much of the store inside and out, including the fuel pumps.
- Exit doors should have height markers to aid in determining thief height identification.
- External lights should provide adequate lighting for all external areas.

Money Handling:

Effective cash management starts with the business owner properly training all cash-handling employees. Create a checklist of the entire cash handling process from beginning to end – from cash accepted by an employee at the point of sale, to the bank deposit that happens daily and every step in between. Make sure all employees follow it to the letter. Benefits of a checklist include eliminating or reducing employee theft, a decrease in discrepancies, and reduced stress when money is involved.

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- The office area must be able to be secured when staff are counting money.
- Determine the maximum amount of money kept in register drawers.
- A drop safe should be present.
- Deposits should be made during the day, if possible.
- The time and route taken to make deposits should vary.

Refrigeration and Other Equipment Failure:

- The cost of unscheduled and unwanted breakdowns of your refrigeration units is expensive for a business owner. The primary cause of small refrigeration unit failures is poor or nonexistent preventive maintenance for the unit. To maintain reliable service from your refrigeration equipment, always have a professional inspect thoroughly each unit annually. This also applies to electrical, heating and cooking equipment. Regular maintenance annually goes a long way in prevention, keeping your business operating daily.
- To prevent food loss, stores should have service contracts in place to maintain coolers and freezers.
- Depending on location, some stores may need back-up power/generator to ensure vital equipment does not lose power.
- Temperature sensors in coolers/freezers are recommended to ensure food is stored at proper temperatures to prevent spoilage.

Slips, Trips, and Falls:

- Any business with a physical store location must contend with slips and trips. Spills, stock left on the floor, uneven surfaces inside/outside and doorways wet from rain could

all cause someone to slip or trip. Best practices are to always watch out for slip and trip hazards, keep your store's floors in good condition, never let a spill remain on the floor. When cleaning up a spill, require employees to use "wet floor" warning signs. In wet /snowy weather, always utilize a door mat at the entrance to encourage good housekeeping. Remind employees that they should not place boxes in the aisles that could inadvertently trip someone.

- Floors and aisles should be free and clear of hazards that may cause slip and falls.
- Spills must be cleaned immediately.
- Product displays should be stable and secure to prevent tipping over onto customers.
- Parking lots and other areas outside should be properly illuminated, and the surface should be free from holes, large cracks, or other hazards.
- Changes in elevations such as curbs, sidewalks and stairs should be painted to draw attention to the change in elevation.

Alcohol/Tobacco Sales:

Most convenience stores sell alcohol and tobacco products. Staff must be properly trained to check IDs on all persons purchasing these items. The minimum age for tobacco and alcohol sales is 21-years-old. Have a policy and plan in place that employees can follow to enforce your state's regulations and the law.

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