

How to Protect your Property and Investment

- **What are some of the top things a criminal looks for when choosing a business to rob?**

Burglars are not professionals as a rule, so they are mainly opportunistic and look for easy targets. They may have been in your business and something got their attention, such as seeing a low security safe, or a small safe that looked like it might be easy to remove. They may have seen a door that looked easy to break into, or maybe even a window that looked like it would be an easy ingress point. Burglars look primarily for weak security and entry points that are out of view from traffic.

For robberies, they look for a manager or employee that has a routine that they can count on, such as cash collection at closing time, or they may have seen a bank bag in the managers' hand when exiting the building at a certain time of day. They may have even seen a manager collect cash and put it in a locked drawer or other easily accessible place.

While they are at your business, they will also look for evidence of an alarm system. However, if they know that surrounding businesses will be closed when they hit, and there will not be anyone in earshot of an alarm siren, they won't be too disturbed about an alarm, as they usually know how long the response time is in your area.

They will also try to see where your recording device is for the security cameras. This is something that worries them even more than the alarm system. They know all too well that the recording system can provide all the information the police will need to find, arrest and convict them. So they treat it like leaving a witness behind.

Most new Digital Video Recorders (DVR's), are a "stand-alone" box that provides all of the functions of the system. Therefore, PC's are no longer used as a recording device in most instances. However, since you can totally control the DVR from any computer you already have, it is standard practice at many businesses to hide the DVR in a hidden or protected place, and use a PC to call up the camera views through your network, and leave that view up overnight. That way the burglars think that the PC is the recording device and will attack it. If you can't do that, or don't want to risk harm to the PC, then I strongly recommend placing an old VCR or time-lapse recorder next to the security monitor as bait, and hiding and securing the DVR in another place. If they think that they have the evidence, they will get careless.

- **What are the best ways to waylay criminals and why?**

Try to take a three-fold approach: deter, detect and delay.

Deterring criminals always starts with good locks and solid entry points. But it also includes things like making sure that you have plenty of alarm signs and stickers placed at access points and cash points. Having an alarm system may not stop criminals from breaking in, but it does make them change their plans to a hurried "smash-and-grab" type of operation because a blaring alarm means that they have a very limited time at the site.

Make sure that there are 2 or more cameras watching vulnerable areas or cash points from different angles. If criminals know that they will be recorded on one camera while attempting to disable or vandalize another camera, they will move on to an easier target. Hiding some cameras is okay, but make sure that criminals notice the cameras you want them to see.

Detect them with motion lighting, alarms and motion-based camera systems that can notify you if a certain door is opened or even if the alarm system is triggered.

Delay them with hardened entry points and high security locks. The longer they think it will take to breach your security, the more they will be inclined to move on to another business that looks like it might be an easier target.

- **What's happening that's new with today's security cameras?**

At CarWashCameras.com, 5% of our budget goes into Research & Development toward new products designed for use in the highly corrosive environments commonly found at car washes. We are also developing new and better ways to render video, both at the camera and at the recorder. One of the new technologies we have developed this year includes the Sun-Pix camera that we debuted in June. This camera employs a whole new way of looking at light, and is making it possible to use a camera in extreme high-glare situations. Essentially, this technology turns every pixel of the picture into its' own camera, and enables users to get a perfect picture under almost any conditions. We hope to introduce more types of cameras using this technology in the coming months.

We are also working to compress pictures more efficiently for recording without stripping out too much data or resolution. Four years ago our parent company, Rugged CCTV, joined a consortium developing out the feature sets of the newest picture compression method, called H.264. This new way of compressing and recording pictures applies to analog cameras, as well as the newest Internet Protocol (IP) type of mega-pixel digital cameras that we are starting to see used more frequently. H.264 basically tries to achieve the best quality picture in the smallest file space. This ability will become even more important as the industry moves to the all-digital format that creates large amounts of data. Currently IP-based cameras and recorders have yet to reach their full potential, and the costs are still quite expensive, but we think that IP-based equipment will be the primary technology used within the next 5 years.

- **Cameras and their supportive equipment are getting pretty intricate, are they something that the average joe can operate and understand?**

Our main objective when developing or changing the software or user interface of our DVR's, is to make it intuitive and easy for our customers to understand and navigate. My feeling is, that if you have to go to the manual to figure out how to do something – it is too tough already. We strive to make our menus and screens look just like the Windows software that our customers are already comfortable with. We also give each customer a “Quick Guide” that outlines functions they will use most commonly. Free Technical Support for the Life of the system is also included, just to make sure that someone is there to guide them through any hurdles they might encounter.

- **What happens when a camera gets wet? How can this be kept from happening and/or ruining the footage?**

We expect the cameras to get wet. In bays or tunnels, there is really no way to avoid this. We also expect them to be able to put up with some abuse from customers as well. We manufacture our bay and tunnel cameras to watertight standards, and are tested in our “dunk tank” immersed to a depth of 3 feet for 24 hours. We also shoot the camera bodies with nitrogen prior to sealing, to displace any existing moisture that may be present. Some models of cameras also have desiccant packs inserted to help maintain low moisture levels.

All of our sealed cameras carry our exclusive Two-Year Warranty against moisture failures, corrosion, and correct operation.

- **What is the number one mistake owners and operators make with their carwash security cameras?**

Hands down, the number one mistake car wash operators make is buying a security camera system from a discount warehouse, Internet retailer or overseas manufacturer. You will find that these systems are not intuitive to use and are hard to navigate. The manuals are not readable or understandable, and the available resolutions that you can record at, are very limited.

My experience has been that the system usually produces a good picture and will probably operate fine, but when it comes time to put it on the Internet for remote access, or to get footage off of it to give to the police, there will not be any assistance or technical support available. Now you have a system that is only usable as an observation system to watch the live camera views, but anything else is problematic. We have operators that call us with this complaint every day.

Getting your system set up for viewing and controlling it over the Internet is probably the single toughest task you will undertake with your camera system. We decided many years ago that we needed a dedicated tech person just to help owners with this single issue. This person has manuals for every type of Internet Modem and Network Router that you may have. This process usually requires the cooperation of your Internet provider as well. It is not an easy task, and it requires professional knowledge and training to get it done.

Allen Spears has been in the Car wash business for more than 17 years, and currently owns 3 washes in Texas. Allen is also the Chief Engineer at **CarWashCameras.com** (a division of Rugged CCTV), for the past 14 years, and has designed systems for over 1600 car washes during his career. He can be e-mailed at allensp@carwashcameras.com, and can be reached at **1-866-301-CCTV**.