



A message to businesses in Westminster from Head of Neighbourhood Policing for Central West Basic Command Unit, Superintendent Mark Lawrence

Dear Westminster Businesses,

These are unprecedented and supremely challenging times and not least for businesses. I know all of you will be anxious about both the personal and financial implications of the Covid-19 pandemic. I wanted to write to all of you to outline police activity in relation to businesses and to share some helpful advice provided by our central Metropolitan Police Business Crime Hub.

The current situation is ever changing as the police work with the government and partners to curb infection rates and prevent unnecessary deaths. Increasingly, and as new powers are introduced, the police are likely to be more engaged in enforcing the lockdown but for now we are doing our best to be as visible as we can on the streets of London to encourage people to act sensibly and to comply with government instructions.

The police in Westminster are experiencing resourcing challenges with sickness and self-isolation just like everyone else. However, at the time of writing, we have not had to drop any of our policing services and we continue to have relatively healthy numbers of officers working to keep Westminster safe. Our activity currently includes:

- 24/7 Response Policing - currently reaching emergency calls within our target of 15 minutes over 90% of the time
- West End Patrols - at least 1 sergeant and 6 constables on duty every shift to engage with businesses, provide advice and deter crime
- Operation Prima – high visibility reassurance patrols focusing on businesses and vulnerable premises over night to prevent, deter and detect burglary and other crime against businesses
- Street Engagement Team – working with the homeless community to manage the challenges they face during the crisis and to work with partners to ensure a collaborative approach is taken to protect the vulnerable and to prevent crime
- Neighbourhood Tasking Team - Active patrols to prevent and detect crime which will include night time burglary patrols to protect businesses

One of the strengths of policing for our business community in Westminster is our partnership working, both through the Business Improvement Districts and provision of private security and other services that help us fight crime and keep people safe. As many of these services are withdrawn for understandable reasons, the challenges for the police become ever more acute. As much as we would like to be and while we continue to deliver the policing services described above, we cannot be everywhere at once. This is why I would encourage all of you to read the following advice from the Business Crime Hub. If you want further information from the Hub, they can be contacted using the following email address, [Businesscrime.mailbox@met.police.uk](mailto:Businesscrime.mailbox@met.police.uk)

Below are some general crime prevention tips that may assist your organisations in this time. The impact on stores will vary and will naturally be defined by its location, size, criminality, customers, produce and its security.

#### **If your staff fall victim to an assault or witness violence in your premises**

- Try to remain calm and think of safety: yours, your customers and colleagues is paramount. If the perpetrator has left the premises, consider recording a description and reporting this to police as soon as possible.
- Trust your instincts and maximise distance between yourself, customers, colleagues and any aggressive parties.
- Ensure corporate conflict and exit contingency plans are adhered to.
- Use hold up/ panic alarms if it is appropriate to do so. If there is a hold-up alarm installed use it, but only when safe to do so.
- Consider the use of body worn video technology to capture evidence and positive impact the behaviour of those involved in violence on your premises.

#### **Closed Premises/Venues that have been temporarily shut**

- Test your alarm, ensure it is monitored and fully operational
- Identify any vulnerable areas. Rectify these. Ensure security gates, bollards and fire exit doors have been secured prior to closure of the premises.
- Ensure service doors are closed and locked when not in use.
- Make sure you have list of key holders who can be contacted in times of emergency.
- Ensure your contact details for staff are up to date.
- Consider moving high value items into secured stockrooms and out of view.
- Ensure keys to the premises or other venues are not left inside and are instead with dedicated key holders.
- Consider timer switches or ensure sufficient lighting is left on at the premises/surrounding area.

- Ensure there are no combustible materials left in the proximity of the building such as packaging - consider the risk of arson.
- Review your CCTV to confirm it is operational, provides good quality images and is positioned to cover as much of the stores public and private areas. You may wish to consider a mobile phone app that allows connectivity and a vocal capacity to engage with any intruder.
- Ensure that no cash is retained on the premises overnight (leave a note on the door stating that no cash or valuables are kept overnight) or store them in a security accredited safe bolted to the floor.

### **Physical Protective Measures**

- Secure by Design products – use security rated products where possible ([www.securedbydesign.com](http://www.securedbydesign.com))
- External shutters are recommended but some buildings may be subject to planning approval before installation.
- Ensure all doors leading from public to staff arteries-loading areas etc. are kept secure and monitored.
- Laminated glass or security film that can be applied to existing glass to make it more resistant to a physical assault. Shutters and grilles (subject to planning regulations may also be a consideration).
- An insurance rated safe should be bolted to the floor. Anti-tamper sensors can be fitted to set off an alarm if attacked.
- Anti-ram security tested raider retractable bollards can be mounted externally to protect frontages but may require planning approval.
- Consider use of anti-theft alarms on most desirable household items.
- Fogging devices that activate as a result of an intruder activation may also be beneficial-you can't steal what you can't see.

### **Large gatherings/Queuing**

- Premises should be adequately staffed with prominent management present who can make decisions or be identifiable to emergency services.
- Consider an allocation system or queuing to provide items that are provided on a limited basis – or possible keeping these off shop floor for collection.
- Meet and Greets on main entrances to provide reassurance, customer care and a subliminal message to any prospective thieves.
- Where possible SIA licensed security officers should have a visible presence on the premises in strategic areas

- All prominent household item areas should have a member of staff regulating them and depending on risk assessment consider deploying security into these areas.
- Establish queueing contingency plans, including any car parking areas, and ensure there is commensurate security, and staff in this area and the main entrances.
- Reassurance to customers, some of whom may be anxious, is key to reduce anti-social behaviour.
- Ensure that all staff are fully briefed each day, on emergency procedures and working practices
- All staff should remain vigilant and report any violence or suspicious activity to the police.
- Consider minimising the number of entry points to your building in concert with fire egress.
- Ensure building perimeters are clear of any debris, dustbins, ladders or loose tools and equipment that could assist entry.
- Check that your emergency equipment/grab bags, first aid supplies and radio communication systems are operational.
- Check and test your building security and emergency systems.
- Should there be an incursion onto your premises that is not disorderly and no offences have occurred, if police are requested to attend it should be stressed that the officers attending will expect a representative of the premises to request those trespassing to leave, whilst in the presence and hearing of the officer.
- If the police are asked to assist in the ejection of trespassers, then they are acting as an agent of the company or premises and have no more powers and privileges than that of an ordinary member of the public. They would look to stand by to prevent a breach of the peace whilst the persons are encouraged to leave and escorted onto public land by shop/security staff.
- If there are criminal offences apparent then officers will deal with these as they would in any normal situation.

Thank you all for reading and like all of you I hope we can all get through this crisis together as quickly and as healthily as possible to once again get those doors open for business.

Yours Sincerely,

Mark Lawrence, Superintendent

23/03/2020