



"You Want Fries with that Knuckle Sandwich"?

Fast Food Crime is on the Rise.

By J.R. Roberts

- **An elderly patron sitting quietly** at a table outside a popular fast food hamburger chain is suddenly and viciously attacked. His assailant (an employee who has just had an argument with his manager) uses the lid of a trash can to repeatedly beat the old gentleman on the head. He then uses a garbage bag in an effort to suffocate him.

- A young assistant manager of a chicken chain is closing up the restaurant for the evening when he is confronted by two armed robbers who shoot and kill him.

- A patron sitting in a fast food drive through window is taken by surprise when the occupants of the car in front of him, leap from their vehicle and beat and rob him.

- An employee of a pizza chain opens the back door to find masked men with shotguns waiting. They rob the store, order the employees to the ground and shoot them as they exit.

All across the United States scenes like these are repeated with frightening frequency. The fast food industry currently employs 12 million Americans in 878,000 establishments. Projected earnings for 2004 are expected to reach 440.1 billion dollars.

A parallel between fast food chains and convenience stores is obvious. Often referred to as "stop and robs" the convenience store industry continues to be an exceedingly "high risk" target for criminal opportunity. Recent changes and growth in the fast food industry, however, are placing that business at an increasingly higher risk.

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Location

Most fast food chains are located along major corridors and freeways, making access quick, easy and low risk to the perpetrator who can make a quick score.

Higher rates of speed and choice of multiple directions for escape further compound the problem.

Corporations very often target specific demographics that equal high traffic and potential profit, while failing to properly prepare for the increased crime that invariably accompanies such site selections. At the same time, most if not all fast food chains have begun a "late night" policy of extended hours of operation.

Environment

Like bank ATM's, many fast food facilities are often inadequately designed from a safety and security standpoint.

Poorly designed and overgrown landscaping, inadequate lighting, "blind spots" at the drive through lane and throughout the parking lot combined with pill box or bunker designs reduce or eliminate critical "natural territoriality" (the crucial ability to see and be seen.)

These same lots are often poorly maintained, allowing litter and even graffiti to take root.

These poor "order maintenance" issues send a cue to the would be perpetrator that the facility will be a quick and easy target with fewer chances of being observed, detected, or deterred.

Few of these locations properly utilize, place, or monitor CCTV components, or provide multiple location panic buttons or alarms.

Policies & Procedures

There is an almost universal failure on the part of owners and operators of fast food restaurants to properly screen employees. Criminal background/felony conviction reviews are inexpensive to conduct and should be considered mandatory when it comes to the consideration and concern of the safety and security of fellow employees and patrons.

Opening and closing procedures should be carefully considered, reviewed, and enforced by management.

Thorough training should include regular cash "drops" into a safe and signage should make clear that employees can not open safe.

Signs that announce limited cash available, height markers, and visible use of CCTV for the interior of a store, should all be considered standard.

Bullet resistant glazing should be used on all teller/drive through windows.

Robbery training and response should be instructed to all employees. Stores open late should be open for drive through only, and managers and employees closing late should have security presence/escort until they are safely off the property.

Local police departments invariably provide at no cost an analysis or "threat assessment" of a facility together with security suggestions. Such an analysis can also include a review of crime in the general area. A search of crime within the "zone" or "grid" where a commercial establishment is located can reveal much concerning the likelihood of criminal activity.

Conscientious and responsible owners determined to reduce crime and civil liability resulting from allegations of negligent and inadequate security should undertake a serious review of their premises unless they want a "side" of trouble.

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About the author

With 25 years of experience, J.R. Roberts offers specialized security consultation and services in three specific arenas:



Expert Testimony: plaintiff and defendant in a wide variety of civil suits have retained Mr. Roberts to provide consultation, analysis, and testimony across the United States (for a partial list of representative cases and attorney endorsements, [click here](#)).

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Seminars and Training: As the former Director of Risk Management for Valor Security Services, Inc. J. R. wrote, developed, and implemented the training program for that company. He has lectured Nationwide for trade associations, property management firms, and fortune 1,000 corporations.

To discover how J. R. Roberts Security Strategies, can assist you in providing the very latest training For your employees on such critical topics as employee theft/shoplifting prevention, Liability, or Comprehensive Security Guard Training visit our seminars and training page, or contact our Savannah, Ga. office.

Contact information

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