



Croydon Case Study 2

An extension of the Croydon Raid-control pilot – the convenience store experience

Raid-control in summary

At the start of 2002 there was a rise in violent robberies against pharmacies in South London. The robberies were violent in nature, with knives used to threaten pharmacy staff. The target was cash. The response to this unexpected and frightening spate of robberies was the formation of a partnership between the police and the security industry, recommending the introduction of a series of measures to target-harden premises. These included staff training in raid awareness, time delay systems, cash minimised, cameras in operation and stolen cash traceable. A year after installation, none of the pharmacies protected by this package of crime prevention measures had been victims of robbery. This approach was part of a fledgling crime reduction initiative called **Raid-control**.

Background

Following the success of installing **Raid-control** in pharmacies, the Croydon pilot was extended to convenience stores at the beginning of 2003. Thirteen convenience stores were identified that had been repeat robbery victims and **Raid-control** equipment was installed during the period January-March 2003.

Funding was obtained from the Government of London's allocation of the Capital Modernisation Fund, aimed specifically at assisting smaller retailers in deprived areas. Announcing the funding in 2002, the Government said 'local shops are at the heart of our communities' and stressed the importance of providing help 'to tackle the crime and anti-social behaviour that blights shops in some of our most impoverished communities.'

Results

A year later, there has only been one robbery in the thirteen convenience stores – a remarkable outcome given that all had been repeat robbery victims before **Raid-control** was installed.

Two attempted robberies also took place during this period, but a combination of the equipment and the staff training did its job in deterring the perpetrators. On one of these occasions the **Raid-control** signage was yet to be erected as the equipment had only just been installed: the signage being an important deterrent factor in entering a premises in the first instance. On the other occasion, CCTV footage of the attempted robbery was used to identify the culprits.

Retailers' reaction

Bhamini Patel has owned her convenience store for nine years. She has two part time staff and has spent some time going through the staff awareness package with both of them. Mrs Patel comments: 'I would definitely recommend this system. I find the CCTV camera and the safe easy to use, which is very important when you are busy. I've read about lots of robberies all over the country that have affected retailers. There are some horrible stories. I would recommend **Raid-control** for other places like Birmingham where I expect they have similar problems. I'm so glad I have it.'

John Hussey's convenience store was a target of robbery last year. He says: 'I was a victim of crime last year following a robbery to our store. We were contacted by a Crime Prevention Officer and **Raid-control** was recommended to us. It has certainly made us feel more safe and secure and acts as a real deterrent to robbers.'

Police reaction

The Crime Prevention Officer

Jon Smith has been working on the **Raid-control** project for about six months. He wasn't involved in the initial installation of the equipment, but has since overseen installation in two additional premises in November 2003. He is now in the process of identifying additional convenience stores where the package of security measures and training could help to reduce robberies.

Jon comments: '**Raid-control** is working. It's bringing peace of mind to retailers that have previously been subjected to some pretty terrifying ordeals. The funding is central to getting the initiative off the ground because small retailers can't afford to invest in these types of solutions, however much they need them.

'This is the sort of work that crime prevention officers should be doing. It's a good way to engage with the community: to offer practical solutions. It's also a good way of keeping abreast of changes in technology and best practice.

'I think **Raid-control** has definitely got the potential to be successful elsewhere.'

The Crime Manager

Janet Kearns is the Crime Manager for the London Borough of Croydon. Her first-hand experience of **Raid-control** has been very positive:

'I'm acutely aware of the impact that robberies on small convenience stores can have, not only on the shops themselves but also on the local community that they serve. The extended hours that these premises stay open make them particularly vulnerable.

'However, the installation of **Raid-control** in shops that suffered previous robberies has proved hugely successful, with no repetition of offences. The deterrent effect has been significant, but also, where two attempts were made, the culprits were either disrupted or identified quickly.

'This is a Crime Prevention Initiative that really does work. The incidence of violent robberies has dramatically reduced and the shopkeepers and staff feel safer in the knowledge that with **Raid-control** installed they are less likely to be victimised. Following the previous success where pharmacies were equipped with **Raid-control**, this latest phase of the initiative confirms its value in crime reduction and prevention.'

Constructive feedback

One issue that emerged during the convenience store pilot has led to a rethink on the way the training material is presented in multi-cultural areas. Whilst the majority of retailers understand spoken English, written English can be problematic – especially for older generations. Consequently, the **Raid-control** Advisory Group has recommended that all material be made available in a number of different languages.

Conclusions

Having proved itself to be a workable and successful crime prevention tool in the pharmacies pilot, **Raid-control** has proved to be equally effective in the convenience store environment. Installed in thirteen stores for a year, the combination of the training awareness package and the security equipment has resulted in only one robbery taking place. Two attempted robberies were thwarted.

Raid-control has continued to receive positive feedback from all those involved. The Crime Prevention Officers find it easy to implement and a good way to engage with the community, but most importantly the retailers welcome the initiative and feel 'safer'.

For more information contact Alan Townsend on
+44 (0) 20 7230 3729 (w) +44 (0) 7973 818927 (m) info@raid-control.org (e)

www.raid-control.org

Case study researched and written for **Raid-control** by Kay Wright, Media & PR Manager, British Security Industry Association (content correct at time of print – July 04).