

# BULLETPROOF YOUR BUSINESS

**10 STEP BLUEPRINT**

**TO PREVENT YOUR BUSINESS FROM  
FALLING VICTIM TO ARMED ROBBERY!**



By Sam Ekinci  
[www.AlliedRisk.com.au](http://www.AlliedRisk.com.au)

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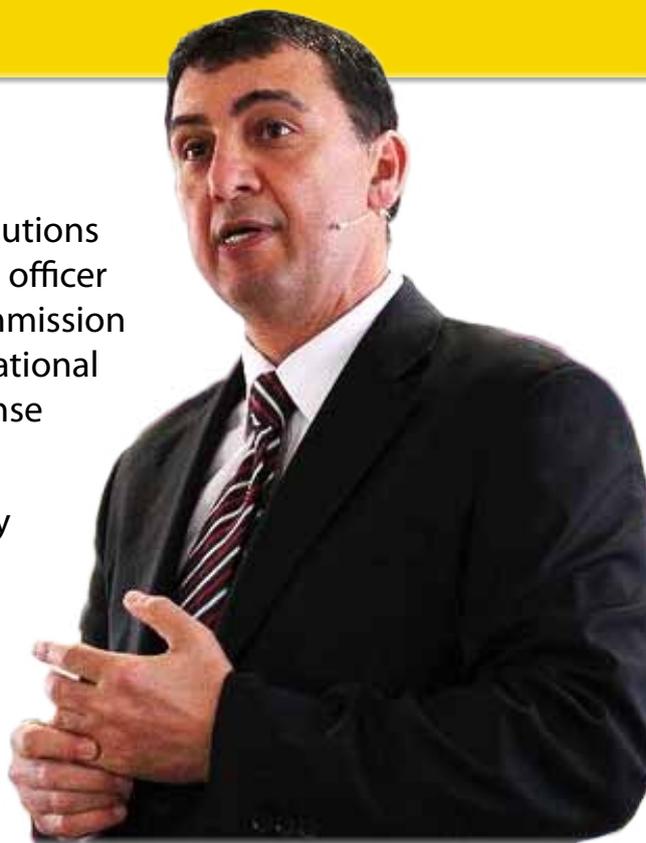


# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sam Ekinici is the CEO of Allied Risk Solutions and started his career as a NSW Police officer working with the Corporate Affairs Commission and Fraud Squad before taking on operational and training roles with the Tactical Response Group.

Sam has been involved in security management, risk assessment and the investigations field for over twenty years and has managed security operations for many national and international firms coordinating key and major events.

Having trained NSW Police in crowd control techniques, he has implemented similar strategies for crowd control and management in licenced premises and the Sydney 2000 Olympics, Australia Day Celebrations, Queens Baton Relay and for sporting and motoring events with crowds well in excess of 200,000. Sam is a much sought after speaker. He has a wealth of experience in the security industry and is actively involved in a number of professional organisations to provide constant advice and improvement for the industry.



Sam has consulted for many organisations in the areas of:

- Security management (administrative, operational, electronic, physical)
- Training and development of security and front line staff
- Duty management modular training
- Customer service training
- RSA refresher Training

Sam's unique training programs focus on establishing a system of accountability, ownership and responsibility thereby ensuring your organisation maintains a high level of service and a performance driven culture focused on individual accountability.

Sam's commitment to service excellence as a security consultant, trainer and public speaker is consistent with his active support and philanthropy through Opportunity International Australia and other local charities.

# INTRODUCTION

**A**s a business operator you've spent thousands, hundreds of thousands, possibly even millions of dollars ensuring your venture is successful. But in the midst of that success, a new threat has arisen: the threat of an armed hold-up.

With large sums of cash on your premises and criminals lurking, managing this perpetual threat to your assets, staff, customers and reputation is paramount. Throughout these pages, we'll outline 10 essential steps to provide you with not only the best possible chance of preventing armed robberies, but also to survive in the event an armed hold-up does occur.

*Ask yourself...*



# IS MY BUSINESS PROTECTED?

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And then there is the human cost. After all, when an armed robbery occurs on your business premises, the most important outcome is that all staff, clients, customers and other patrons emerge safely. However, an armed robbery is always an extremely volatile situation, and achieving this safety requires your employees to have training and knowledge in a variety of areas. These include:

- An overall understanding of the impact an armed robbery can have on both themselves, those around them, and the business itself.
- A recognition of the dynamics of an AR, including the objectives of the robber, the danger of weapons, and their own priorities in the situation.
- The ability to observe and respond to the actions of the robber, both before and during the attack.
- Understanding the natural reaction of human beings to stressful situations, and the importance of controlling these responses.
- Knowledge of the information required by police for an investigation and how to note these details, even in the heat of the moment.
- The potential for post-AR psychological trauma and how best to deal with such an occurrence.

For all these reasons, it's crucial that businesses take steps to secure their premises, educate their staff and implement procedures that can help neutralise the threat of an AR. In this (e-book), we'll cover all of these key concepts in greater detail, while suggesting a range of preventative measures and training procedures to educate both you and your employees.

### ***Did You Know?***

Since 2006, service stations, licensed premises, takeaway outlets and other "smaller" venues have become more likely armed robbery targets than higher-value locations such as banks (Willis 2006).

# TYPES OF ARMED ROBBERIES

The annual National Armed Robbery Monitoring Report splits armed robberies into two categories. These are as follows:

## Low yield:

Unplanned and essentially opportunistic, these are the types of armed robberies where targets are accessible to offenders who are generally inexperienced and likely to use easy-to-obtain weapons such as knives.

## High yield:

These generally involve some level of planning and organisation. High yield offenders will often employ weapons that are much more difficult to obtain (such as firearms) and are less likely to operate alone (for example, banking and financial location ARs are overwhelmingly carried out by multiple offenders).



High yield ARs are generally considered to involve more than \$10,000 worth of value to the offenders. With the average armed robbery yielding around \$1700, it's easy to see that low yield, opportunistic robberies are by far the most common. However, these are also the types of ARs that could be prevented with the appropriate security planning measures.

# THE DYNAMICS OF AN ARMED ROBBERY

In any armed robbery attack, there are two objectives at play: the objectives of the offenders, and the objectives of the victims.

The objectives of the victims are simple: to stay alive and, ideally, emerge from the situation physically unharmed.

In order to achieve this objective, however, the victims must have a thorough understanding of the robbers' objectives. Remember, while the victims have only one objective, the robbers have several:

- To obtain the target of the AR, that being cash or other valuable items.
- To create an environment where they are in complete control at all times.
- To minimise the possibility of having to deploy their weapons or use physical force.
- To be on-site for the least amount of time possible.
- To escape from the situation without physical harm coming to them.
- To escape from the situation with as little profile as possible in order to evade capture from the police.



# THE NATURE OF AN ARMED ROBBERY

Virtually all ARs have these objectives in common. However, the nature of the offenders themselves can vary greatly:

Some ARs will involve dangerous weapons, while others may involve a false threat of weapons, or perhaps simply physical intimidation. Where they do involve weapons, those weapons may be firearms, knives, syringes or any number of other implements.

Some ARs will be performed by professionals who have spent days or even weeks planning and researching the attack, while others will be opportunistic in nature – performed by amateurs, often on the spur of the moment.

Professionals are more likely to use firearms and are more likely to hit higher-value targets such as banks and licensed premises, while amateurs tend to prefer knives and are more likely to hit service stations, corner stores, takeaway outlets and other smaller business locations.

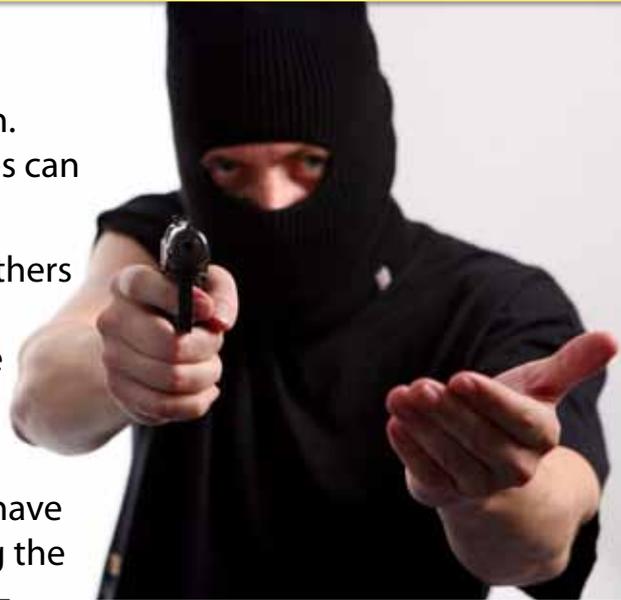
Some offenders will be under the influence of drugs, or committing the armed robbery in order to obtain money for more drugs. And for some offenders, drugs will not be a factor at all. One study (Nugent, Burns, Wilson and Chappell 1989) found that 30 per cent of ARs were motivated by drugs, while another (Makkai & Payne 2003) found that 37 per cent of regular armed robbers used heroin at least once per day.

Some ARs will be carried out by two or more individuals, while others will involve an offender acting alone. In 2008, for example, 64 per cent of ARs were committed by sole offenders. (Smith, Dossetor & Borzycki 2008)

These are just some of the variables that may be involved in an AR; there are many more. However, the key objectives of the offender remain constant, and keeping these objectives in mind is paramount to ensuring the safety and survival of all victims.

## ***Did You Know?***

In 2008, 52 per cent (2971) of ARs involved knives and 13 per cent (731) involved firearms. However, the average firearm armed robbery yielded \$5806 in value for offenders, while knife ARs averaged a yield of just \$1211. This could be because higher-value targets, like banks and licensed premises, have better security and, thus, require more dangerous weapons. It could also be because professionals, who are more likely to use firearms, are also more likely to hit higher-value targets. (Smith, Dossetor & Borzycki 2008)





# 10 STEPS

**TO HOLD-UP PREVENTION  
AND SURVIVAL**

# 1. RECOGNISING WARNING SIGNS

**H**ave you ever tried the activity known as ‘people watching’? In one way or another, we all “people watch” at some point during our day. It could be eavesdropping on a conversation in a café, watching the actions of a group of people walking by you in the street, or observing the behaviour of customers in a store.

For some people, however, people watching is more of a hobby than an everyday behaviour. It’s a popular pastime that involves observing other people and their actions, learning to read their tone, body language, interactions with others and so forth. Try it yourself some time – simply sit quietly on the side of the street with a cup of coffee, watching the world around you and learning from what you see.

In the service industry, people-watching habits take on particular importance. By learning to observe and recognise

people’s actions before they occur, you and your employees can go a long way to preventing ARs (and, indeed, other potentially dangerous incidents) from occurring in the first place.

With training, employees can develop observational skills in order to determine the future actions and possible intents of persons in the vicinity. By observing, employees will be able to detect signals and build an EWS – Early Warning System – which may help them prevent an incident such as an armed robbery from occurring.

When observing potential offenders, employees should ask themselves:

- Does the person seem agitated? (By the very nature of what they’re planning to do, would-be offenders will be under tremendous stress.)
- Is the person sweating too much for the current weather or environmental conditions? (Sweating is a key physiological response to stress.)
- Is the person looking around himself (or herself) often?
- Does the clothing the person is wearing suit the current weather or environmental conditions, or is it possible it is being worn to conceal a weapon?
- Does the person you’re observing seem to be associated with another person in the vicinity, even though they aren’t within close proximity to each other? Is there eye contact or are there other small but perceptible signals being passed between them?
- Does the person seem to overreact when security or police pass by?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, the best course of action for employees is to inform security personnel or a supervisor immediately. Much of the time, their suspicions may prove unfounded, but in some cases their EWS could prevent a potential armed robbery from occurring.



## 2. INSTALLING SECURITY EQUIPMENT



In addition to appropriate training of staff, there are various pieces of preventive equipment that can be put in place in order to deter potential armed robbers. These security measures aim to limit the opportunity for offenders to go about the robbery anonymously and will help position your business premises as an undesirable target for crime. Some of these measures include:

**Closed circuit television cameras.** The presence of CCTV video monitoring on your premises acts as a major deterrent for offenders, whose main objective is to obtain valuables without their identity being revealed.

**Duress buttons.** Located behind counters, bars or other staff-only areas, duress buttons alert local police if an incident is occurring. Due to their covert placement they can be activated without the knowledge of the offender,

allowing police to respond immediately instead of finding out about the incident once it is over.

**Security signage.** Equipment such as CCTV cameras and alarm systems can only be effective in preventing incidents from occurring if offenders know they are present. Having prominently placed security signage around your business premises will help position your location as one that armed robbers should avoid. Signage explaining that valuable items are not kept on premises can also be helpful.

**Liaison with police intelligence officer.** Building a relationship with the police so that both parties are aware of the security issues existing in the local area is key to crime prevention. The police intelligence officer can inform you of current risks and discuss the appropriate steps that can be taken to rectify them.

### 3. MAINTAINING COMPOSURE

**W**hile the combination of staff training and security equipment can prevent most armed robberies from occurring, the unfortunate truth is that some offenders are brazen enough – or, indeed, desperate enough – to try their luck anyway.



It's important for your employees to understand that, if they were to become the victim of an AR, they must always deal with the offenders in a way that helps them achieve their objectives in the most effective manner possible. While they'll undoubtedly be under a great deal of stress, it's important to remember that the offenders will most likely be feeling high levels of agitation and stress as well, which can make them unpredictable and potentially dangerous.

Your employees' ability to maintain composure in the first moments of an armed robbery will give them (and those around them) the best chance of emerging safely. Ultimately, they are the ones who will determine the safety of everybody involved – both offenders and victims alike. And the key tool that they have in achieving this is reluctant compliance. By demonstrating their willingness to comply with the robber's demands, they're letting the robber know that they will help them achieve their objectives as efficiently as possible.

#### ***Did You Know?***

Most armed robbery offenders do not have a natural desire to be violent to their victims; they simply use violence as a tool to take control of the situation. It follows, then, that resistance greatly increases the chance of violence occurring – one study found that victims offered resistance in around 67 per cent of ARs that resulted in serious injury. (Willis 2006)

## 4. UNDERSTANDING FIGHT VS FLIGHT SYNDROME



When placed in a situation of imminent danger, almost all living creatures – including human beings – are subject to the “Fight-or-flight response”. Fight-or-flight refers to the body’s natural ability to prime itself to handle the danger, either by standing and fighting (fight) or fleeing (flight) from the scene. On an evolutionary level, the sole purpose of the fight-or-flight response is to allow the species to survive; without it, the entire gene pool of a species would be greatly diminished and possibly become extinct.

As human beings, it’s often strange to think of ourselves in these terms, but despite the incredible advances we’ve made as a species, our bodies are still very much subject to

these primal responses. We’ve all been in situations where we’ve felt physically threatened; it could involve anything from encountering a frightening animal or insect to getting into a heated dispute with another person. When faced with such threats, the adrenaline hormone is released into our bloodstream, enabling our bodies to undergo a number of physiological changes, including:

- Increased heart rate (often to over 140 beats per minute)
- Increased respiration (your breathing becomes significantly faster)
- Deterioration of fine and complex motor skills
- Pupil dilation
- Tunnel vision (you’ll only see where your attention is focused – ie. the offender’s weapon)
- Audio exclusion (you’ll only hear where your attention is directed – ie. the offender’s demands)

These responses prepare us to deal with the stressful situation in one of two ways – either fleeing or fighting. As we’ll soon explain, however, this response can have dangerous consequences during an AR.

## 5. CONTROLLING ADRENALINE



The release of adrenaline allows our bodies to become faster, stronger and more agile – often to a degree that seems almost superhuman. It's because of adrenaline that there have been documented cases of mother's lifting cars off the ground to release trapped children, of people leaping tall fences in a single bound to escape from vicious dogs, and of frail, elderly citizens overpowering larger assailants when being set upon.

In the situation of an AR, however, the increased adrenaline activity of the fight-or-flight response can actually be dangerous – particularly if there is a weapon involved. When being confronted by an armed robber, victims will begin to experience these physiological responses along with a range of highly charged emotions including fear, shock, intimidation

and anger. If they are unable to control these responses and become panicked or even irrational, this will also negatively affect those nearby, thus enhancing the potential for the offenders to overreact and deploy their weapons.

In order to emerge from an armed robbery safely, everybody involved needs to control their emotions as much as possible. Victims should start by taking a deep breath – this is an important technique commonly used to promote relaxation in any situation. Paying attention to the rules of reluctant compliance discussed earlier in this book, too, they should keep their eyes focused on the offenders at all times, doing exactly what is asked of them. Most importantly, they should never overreact or try to “be a hero”.

## 6. ASSISTING THE POLICE

**A**t the conclusion of an AR, the police will be called so that an investigation into the incident can begin. The assistance you are able to provide will be crucial in giving police the best possible chance of apprehending the offenders. You and your employees must endeavour to be observant and retain specific details pertaining to the armed robbery and the offenders.



However, this can be quite difficult in the high-stress situation of an AR. Using some of the techniques discussed earlier, including reluctant compliance and adrenaline control, will go a long way to retaining more details and being of greater assistance in the investigative process. An understanding of contemporaneous notes and crime scene protection procedures is also crucial, both of which we'll discuss forthwith.

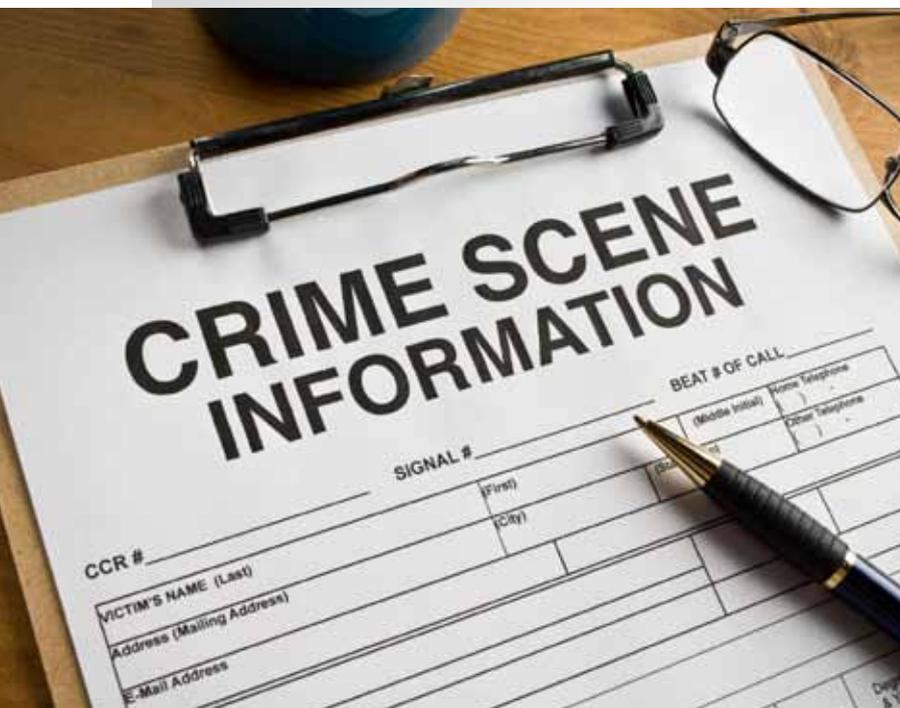
## 7. CONTEMPORANEOUS NOTES

**I**n law enforcement, the term 'contemporaneous notes' is commonly used to refer to notes taken at the time of an incident. While the armed robbery is taking place, employees must endeavour to commit to memory as many details as possible. At the earliest convenience after the armed robbery is finished, they should then transfer those memories to paper. The longer they take to write the details of the AR, the more details they are likely to forget, and the less chance police will have of conducting a successful investigation.

The following rules and guidelines will greatly enhance the record of events and offenders for the benefit of police:

- Always use a pen or pencil – not fountain or felt tip pens, as these can smudge
- Always record names and addresses in capital letters
- Always ensure accuracy of time and date
- If providing a 'guesstimate' as to the person's height, relate it back to a fixture in the building or room – eg "The first offender was as tall as the sign next to the front door."

- Include details of height, weight and gender
- Include details of what the offenders were wearing – colour, style, types of footwear, headwear, masks, etc.
- Include details of hair length and colour, eye colour, tattoos, body piercings, scars and other identifying features
- Include details of weapons the offenders brandished
- Include details of vehicle used in escape – type, make, colour and other identifying features
- Include details of any accent you might have recognised
- Record what the offenders said in first person, and always enclose in “quotation marks”
- Record what and where the offenders touched while on premises
- Record any other details you think might be of assistance



Remember, armed robbers rely on the intimidation factor of the situation negating the victims' ability to recall details and provide them to police after the event. By reluctantly complying, remaining calm and breathing, victims will allow their brain to function in an effective and methodical manner that will increase the chances of being accurate in their observations and diligent in their awareness of any details of the event.

As an additional warning, employees should know never to write notes while an armed robbery is taking place, even if the offenders' attention is not focused on them at the time. The technique of reluctant compliance states that the victim's only focus should be on the offenders and complying with their demands to help them achieve their objectives as efficiently as possible. If employees are caught making written notes during the event, this could place both them and the other victims at great risk.

## 8. CRIME SCENE PROTECTION

The crime scene is the area surrounding the immediate vicinity where the armed robbery was committed. Once the offenders have escaped from the scene, employees will need to gather their thoughts and begin considering how they can help police. This will include committing contemporaneous notes to paper, as discussed above, and also ensuring the crime scene remains protected.

After the AR, these are the steps for crime scene protection:

- As soon as possible, establish a crime scene perimeter. Until the police arrive, try as best as possible to maintain that perimeter and do not allow any person access to it.
- Make notes as to where and what the offenders touched or came into contact with.
- Obtain descriptions and details of the offenders from all persons present at the time. However, be mindful of other persons' emotional states.
- Ascertain as closely as possible just what was removed from the premises and list it down for the police.
- As much as possible, try not to touch anything inside of the crime scene perimeter. Anything you or other victims come into contact with after the incident will contaminate the crime scene; this evidence must then be removed and ruled out so that the investigation can move forward. This takes time and can significantly delay and even impair the potential apprehension of the offenders.
- When the police arrive, make direct and personal contact and comply with all directions given by any police officer to preserve or keep intact the area where the act of violence occurred.



## 9. POST-ARMED ROBBERY TRAUMA AND STRESS

Anybody who has been a victim of an armed robbery will tell you that, after the event, victims will experience differing emotions, thought processes and possible physical effects as a result of the trauma and stresses suffered during the incident. These manifestations will have varying effects from person to person and may include:

- Inability to concentrate
- Uncoordinated movements
- Excessive talking
- Frustration
- Increased aggression
- Increased consumption of alcohol/drugs
- Isolation
- Feelings of inadequacy
- Bouts of depression
- Constant tiredness



Because of the varying nature of individual responses to stress and trauma, it's essential that armed robbery victims consult health care professionals after the incident. Ignoring stress and its impact can lead to serious health issues in both the short and long term. Some stress management techniques that can be employed include:

- Formal debriefing (in-house with appropriately trained staff)
- Informal discussion and exploration of incidents with fellow team members and support staff
- Professional counselling
- Reviewing practices, policies and procedures
- Conscious use of personal recreational activities
- Appointment with trained professionals such as counsellors and health professionals (see your doctor if a referral is required)



## 10. WHAT'S THE NEXT STEP?

The Financial and Psychological cost of an Armed Robbery to businesses is extensive when you take into consideration the direct and indirect losses.

Understanding the Dynamics of an Armed Robbery and the internal and external factors which generate the risks associated with Robberies, is often a reflection of your level of unpreparedness or the systemic breakdown within the organisation creating the opportunities for the Robber.

In order to be "proactive" rather than "reactive" the aspect of Armed Robbery awareness and training should be incorporated into every aspect of your operation.

A Risk Analysis will identify some of these key factors:

- A Sound Security Management Plan
- Workplace design and layout
- Staff training, awareness and preparedness
- Cash handling and management procedures
- Security and business practices, procedures and protocols
- Identifying, reporting and recording suspect activity

With so much at risk to address this workplace hazard, there is no better time to take advantage of this package to minimise risk from Armed Robberies, update your systems, procedures and protocols and train and educate your staff to best manage pre- and post- incidents.

For a confidential, obligation free consultation act now.

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