
Store Manager Killed by Robber in Wyoming

SUMMARY

On November 25, 1992, the manager of a grocery store had unlocked and entered his store alone, when he was confronted by a person who had entered the building overnight through a roof opening and was in the process of robbing the grocery. During the confrontation, the robber allegedly stabbed the store manager and escaped.

Employers may be able to minimize the potential for occurrence of this type of incident through the following precautions:

- **Insist that employees with responsibility for morning store openings be accompanied by at least one other person.**
- **Institute or enhance training sessions for employees regarding attempted robbery or other violent acts.**

INTRODUCTION

According to newspaper accounts, the routine procedure for store opening was for two management personnel to meet at the location and to enter the building together. On this particular occasion, one of the assigned persons was late because of trouble starting his car, and the victim decided to enter alone. The robber had allegedly entered earlier through a roof opening and was in the store when the manager entered.

There are differing stories as to whether the robber had a knife which he had used to cut through the roofing materials to gain entry, or whether he picked up a knife from the meat department. In either case, the robber used a knife to stab the victim in the head, thorax, and abdomen; then exited the store stealing the victim's car to get away.

INVESTIGATION

Because of the sensitive nature of police investigation, FACE Project investigators did not conduct an on-scene investigation. Requests for reports from the Sheriff's Office were denied; as the incident involved criminal activity.

Usual procedure for store openings is for the manager and the assistant manager to go together to the store for morning opening and set-up for business. On this occasion, the assistant manager had car trouble, and was late in arriving.

CAUSE OF DEATH

The Medical Examiner listed the cause of death as multiple stab wounds with severe blood loss.

RECOMMENDATIONS/DISCUSSION

This incident could have been prevented by having two persons enter the building together to open the store for business. Since the only weapon available to the assailant was a close-range weapon a second person at the scene could have posed added threat to keep the assailant from attacking or, at the least, been available to call for emergency assistance if the attack was made. Newspaper accounts indicate that the victim was stabbed up to three hours prior to discovery of the incident.

Businesses with a potential for robbery or assault should provide at least introductory, and preferably periodic, training to employees on how to handle confrontation with robbers. While the probability of being robbed is not as frequent as other aspects of work, it carries extreme risk. For the protection of employees, such businesses would be well served by making sure workers are prepared for potential violent attacks and understand how to avoid them.

FATAL ACCIDENT CIRCUMSTANCES AND EPIDEMIOLOGY (FACE) PROJECT

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), Division of Safety Research (DSR), performs Fatal Accident Circumstances and Epidemiology (FACE) investigations when a participating state reports an occupational fatality and requests technical assistance. The goal of these evaluations is to prevent fatal work injuries in the future by studying the working environment, the worker, the task the worker was performing, the tools the worker was using, the energy exchange resulting in fatal injury, and the role of management in controlling how these factors interact.

States participating in this study include: Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia.

NIOSH Funded/State-based FACE Projects providing surveillance and intervention capabilities to show a measurable reduction in workplace fatalities include: Alaska, California, Colorado, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Minnesota, Missouri, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

Additional information regarding this report is available from:

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