

AN ANALYSIS OF FOOD STORE ROBBERIES IN FLORIDA: IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT DECISIONS AND PUBLIC POLICY

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Problem addressed. In 1981, a Florida food store was robbed every two hours. Retail food store robberies in Florida increased from 2,398 in 1977 to 4,271 in 1981, a 78 percent increase. In 1981, robberies of food stores accounted for over 40 percent of all robberies perpetrated on business establishments in Florida. Convenience store robberies account for a large proportion of food store robberies, but the increase in supermarket robberies is cause for concern. Convenience store robberies in Florida increased from 2,220 to 3,811 from 1977 to 1981, a 72 percent increase. During the same period, supermarket robberies increased from 178 to 460, an increase of 158 percent. The store robbery rate per 100,000 inhabitants has increased from 27.5 in 1977 to 42.3 in 1981, an increase of about 54 percent.

Direct losses due to robberies were slightly less than one-half million dollars in 1977, but in 1981 losses exceeded \$1.5 million. During the five year period, average losses per robbery increased from \$158 to \$232 for convenience stores and \$809 to \$1,360 for supermarkets.

The dollar losses inflicted by food store robberies represent only a small measure of the total economic and social costs. Expenditures for internal security measures, law enforcement and judicial costs amount to many times the direct costs. Also, of paramount con-

cern to the food distribution industry, are the incalculable social costs such as loss of life and other physical and psychological trauma associated with food store robberies.

The primary objective of this study is to provide food retailers with data and analyses of food store robberies and prevailing public opinion so that appropriate corrective measures can be taken to reduce the incidence of robberies.

Methodology. This objective will be met through a three-part research program. The first phase will consist of basic statistical analyses of data on retail food store robberies collected by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. Phase II will determine prevailing public opinions with respect to the robbery situation and will assess the potential impact on food retailers. The third and final phase will appraise the effectiveness of the judicial system in reducing food store robberies by examining the final dispositions of robbery cases that have been cleared.

Major findings. To date, only Phase I has been completed. It was discovered that the Florida Department of Law Enforcement routinely collects considerable data on food store robberies as part of the nationwide uniform crime reporting system. Because of resource constraints, these data are rarely analyzed to the fullest extent. Phase I provides detailed descriptions and

and analyses of the frequency of robberies for supermarkets and convenience stores by geographic area within the state, by time of day and time of month, by type of weapon and analyzes the type and value of property lost and recovered.

The number of homicides committed in conjunction with food store robberies is reported, and food store robbery clearance rates and methods are examined.