

The Coronavirus has had a significant impact on the commercial sector-fiscally and the risk of increased anti-social behaviour in our businesses. The impact on businesses will vary and will naturally be defined by its location, size, criminality, customers, produce and its security.

Lancashire Constabulary have produced the crime prevention tips that may assist your organisation.

If your premises/venue has been temporarily shut, ensure that:

- Test your alarm, ensure it is monitored and fully operational
- Identify any vulnerable areas. Rectify these. Ensure security gates, bollards and fire exit doors have been secured prior to closure of the premises.
- Ensure service doors are closed and locked when not in use.
- Make sure you have list of key holders who can be contacted in times of emergency.
- Ensure your contact details for staff are up to date.
- Consider moving high value items into secured stockrooms and out of view.
- Ensure keys to the premises or other venues are not left inside and are instead with dedicated key holders.
- Consider timer switches or ensure sufficient lighting is left on at the premises/surrounding area.
- Ensure there are no combustible materials left in the proximity of the building such as packaging - consider the risk of arson.
- Review your CCTV to confirm it is operational, provides good quality images and is positioned to cover as much of the businesses public and private areas. Ensure that all the CCTV images are backed up to the Cloud and/or your hard drive is locked away.
- You may wish to consider a mobile phone app that allows connectivity and a vocal capacity to engage with any intruder.
- Ensure that no cash is retained on the premises overnight (leave a note on the door stating that no cash or valuables are kept overnight) or store them in a security accredited safe bolted to the floor.

If your premises/venue has been temporarily shut, please review physical protective measures as below:

- Secured by Design products – use security rated products where possible such as PAS 24/2016 (www.securedbydesign.com)
- External shutters are recommended but some buildings may be subject to planning approval before installation
- Ensure all doors leading from public to staff arteries-loading areas etc. are kept secure and monitored by CCTV.
- Laminated glass or security film that can be applied to existing glass to make it more resistant to a physical assault. Shutters and grilles (subject to planning regulations may also be a consideration)
- An insurance rated safe should be bolted to the floor or wall. Anti-tamper sensors can be fitted to set off an alarm if attacked.
- Anti-ram security rated retractable bollards can be mounted externally to protect frontages but may require planning approval.
- Consider use of anti-theft alarms on most desirable household items.
- Fogging devices that activate as a result of an intruder activation may also be beneficial-you can't steal what you can't see.

Beware of COVID-19 scams

Unscrupulous criminals are exploiting fears about COVID-19 to prey on members of the public, particularly older and vulnerable people who are isolated from family and friends. Law enforcement, government and private sectors partners are working together to encourage members of the public to be more vigilant against fraud, particularly about sharing their financial and personal information, as criminals seek to capitalise on the Covid-19 pandemic.

Criminals are experts at impersonating people, organisations and the police. They spend hours researching you for their scams, hoping you'll let your guard down for just a moment.

Stop: Taking a moment to stop and think before parting with your money or information could keep you safe.

Challenge: Could it be fake? It's ok to reject, refuse or ignore any requests. Only criminals will try to rush or panic you.

Protect: Contact your bank immediately if you think you've fallen for a scam and report it to Action Fraud.

Your bank or the police will NEVER ask you to transfer money or move it to a safe account.

Examples COVID-19 scams identified

Below are some of the COVID-19 scams which have been reported. These scams can affect businesses but also your employees who are home working and/or self-isolating.

Online scams

- Email scams that trick people into opening malicious attachments, which put people at risk of identity theft with personal information, passwords, contacts and bank details at risk. Some of these emails have lured people to click on attachments by offering information about people in the local area who are affected by coronavirus.
- Fake online resources – such as false Coronavirus Maps – that deliver malware such as AZORult Trojan, an information stealing program which can infiltrate a variety of sensitive data. A prominent example that has deployed malware is '*corona-virus-map[dot]com*'.

Refund scams

- Companies offering fake holiday refunds for individuals who have been forced to cancel their trips. People seeking refunds should also be wary of fake websites set up to claim holiday refunds.

Loan sharks

- Illegal money lenders are expected to prey on people's and organisations financial hardship, lending money before charging extortionate interest rates and fees through threats and violence

Donation scams

- There have been reports of thieves extorting money from consumers by claiming they are collecting donations for a COVID-19 'vaccine'.

Doorstep crime

- Criminals targeting older people on their doorstep and offering to do their shopping. Thieves take the money and do not return.
- Doorstep cleansing services that offer to clean drives and doorways to kill bacteria and help prevent the spread of the virus.

Counterfeit goods

- Fake sanitisers, face masks and Covid19 swabbing kits sold online and door-to-door. These products can often be dangerous and unsafe. There are reports of some potentially harmful hand sanitiser containing glutaral (or glutaraldehyde), which was banned for human use in 2014.

Telephone scams

- As more people self-isolate at home there is an increasing risk that telephone scams will also rise, including criminals claiming to be your bank, mortgage lender or utility company.

Additional useful information

If your business is remaining open, please check the National Business Crime Centre for guidance and crime prevention tips - <https://nbcc.police.uk/>

For any further tips or guidance, please visit the Lancashire Constabulary business crime page - <https://www.lancashire.police.uk/help-advice/keeping-your-business-safe/>

Lancashire Constabulary Business Crime Twitter page - @LancPolBusCrime
Lancashire Constabulary Fraud & Cyber Crime Twitter page - @LancsFraudCyber

Alternatively you can contact the Business Crime Coordinator on 11276@lancashire.pnn.police.uk

Lancashire Partnership against Crime (LANPAC) is a unique collaboration between Lancashire Constabulary, Lancashire Businesses and Public Services working together to reduce levels of crime and disorder across the county. For further information about LANPAC and how businesses can join, please visit www.lanpac.co.uk or contact 10335@lancashire.pnn.police.uk