Train your employees about what to do, or seek training or seek training from your local law enforcement. At least come up with a plan and practice what to do in case of an armed robbery. Even develop signals or codes to be use between pharmacy employees during an actual robbery. Use the following as guidelines for your training:

1) If someone comes into the pharmacy and announces they are there for money or drugs: *Fully cooperate with them - DO NOT BE A HERO!* No amount of money or drugs is worth risking injury to any employee, much less worth anyone’s life. Do not argue with or agitate the person – do as they demand. Don’t attempt to fight or pull a weapon on the suspect. Most armed pharmacists reacting to a robbery attempt end with injury to the pharmacist or another pharmacy employee.

2) Stay as calm as possible. Do not attempt to speak to the suspect if they seem overly nervous and agitated. Remember, this may be a prescription drug addict trying to get their next fix of medication. Or it could be street drug addict trying to get drugs to sell to buy the drugs they need. Regardless, the person could be going through withdrawals and DTs and not wanting to engage in conversation.

3) Comply with the suspect’s demands as quickly as you can, but do not volunteer. Let them know if you are expecting someone to walk into the pharmacy that might alarm the suspect, let them know who it might be. Get them out of the pharmacy as soon as possible. If the suspect only interacts with a clerk or technician and sends them to get the drugs or money, develop a code or sign to alert the pharmacist a robbery is taking place. If you are the pharmacist and you’ve been alerted a robbery is taking place, do not interfere with the clerk or technician – help them get what the suspect demands.

4) Watch everything the robbery suspect does while they’re in the pharmacy. Note if they touch anything. Is there someone else with the suspect? What are the suspect’s facial features, eye and hair color, what type and color clothes are they wearing? Compare their height to fixtures in the pharmacy – install a height marker in the pharmacy. Write these descriptions down as soon as possible afterwards to give to law enforcement.

5) If a weapon is displayed – what kind is it? A revolver vs. a semi-automatic. What color? Anything distinguishable you can remember about it? Write this down along with the suspect description.

6) When the suspect leaves the pharmacy, if possible note where they go and in what direction. Are they walking or in a vehicle? What kind – color, etc? Do not attempt to chase after them!

7) Lock the pharmacy down immediately after the suspect leaves the pharmacy and call law enforcement, if not already called, to alert them to the robbery. Arrange beforehand with local law enforcement for a code to alert them to a robbery in progress or one that has just been committed, as well as get guidance from them on how they want you to handle such situations.

8) Immediately after the suspect leaves, each employee should independently write down the facts of what just happened. Use a pre-printed form to help (see GDNA website). Avoid discussing the robbery with other witnesses to avoid contaminating each other’s memory of the event. Protect any evidence such a note, anything the suspect touched or left behind. If there is security video of the robbery – ensure it is preserved.

9) Wait for law enforcement to arrive and cooperate fully when they do. They are in charge of a crime scene until they release it back to you. Such as it is, your patients will have to wait for their medictions.

10) Do an inventory of the drugs (or money) taken. To the best of your ability, determine how much of what drugs were taken. Report the theft/loss to GDNA. Call 404.656.5100 or 800.656.6568 to request a DEA 106 Theft Report. Note: If stolen drugs are recovered – even if only after a short while, none of these drugs can be returned to stock. You have no idea what might have happened to them once they left the store. They must be considered adulterated and misbranded and destroyed.

11) An armed robbery is a very traumatic event. Lives have been threatened, and your safe pharmacy environment has been violated. Look after yourself and your employees. Arrange counseling all pharmacy employees affected by the robbery. If your pharmacy has an Employee Assistance Program, utilize it. If not, ask law enforcement for recommendations of a counselor.

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Beforehand:

a) Make a point of contacting your local law enforcement, if they have not already contacted you, and arrange a meeting to discuss what they would like for you to do in case of an armed robbery. Include codes for calling in robberies. Learn how they will respond during an ‘in-progress’ robbery – avoid a hostage situation. Get to know the people who patrol the area where your pharmacy is located, and the detectives who would investigate robberies and other drug/internal theft.

b) Install bullet-proof glass in your drive-through windows in case the suspect attempts a robbery pointing a weapon through the glass. Shut the door/gate on the window and immediately lock the pharmacy down – and call law enforcement.

c) Install video surveillance cameras and recording equipment in the prescription department. The more cameras the better. Have the installers place the cameras at locations which will record faces of potential robbery suspects – and overhead in the Rx drug shelves to help deter internal theft. Most of the larger chain pharmacies have excellent video surveillance systems.