

## Alert over burglaries at small businesses - North Somerset

Police in North Somerset are urging local businesses not to leave cash on the premises overnight after a number of burglaries.

Officers are investigating overnight burglaries at cafes, restaurants and takeaways. Thieves are stealing tills, tip jars and even charity collection boxes.

In the past fortnight two premises in Weston-super-Mare have been broken into and there was an attempt at a third.

One local restaurant owner, who asked not to be named, said the break-in had made him feel that he could "trust no one".

He said: "They broke the window, cut the phone line and forced entry to my office. They took all the money: change for the tills and some of the wages for my staff. It has had a great impact. I couldn't pay some of my staff on time. As well as the the stolen cash there is the cost of repairs.

"My alarms went off straight away. I asked my neighbours and they told me they heard it so I asked why didn't they call me? We've done everything within our power to to prevent any future incident. We've put a system in now where if the alarm goes off I'll get a call to my phone to notify me."

He said he'd advise other businesses to make this difficult for thieves by keeping cash in a good quality safe which is bolted to the floor and putting the CCTV hard drive somewhere secure.

But he added: "I don't feel unsafe. I've been here many years and this is the first time it's happened. We're in one of the safest areas."

PC Peter Rooke is one of two officers dedicated to looking into these and other burglaries.

He said: "These are local businesses and these break-ins have a significant impact. My advice is to review your security arrangements. Make sure first floor windows are secure and difficult to access. The key thing is to take the time to bank your cash at the end of the day – including any tips – or to put it into a high-specification safe which would take thieves a long time to access.

"If you live near to a small business and hear anything suspicious in the night please take a look, if you feel safe to do so. If you see anyone acting suspiciously call us straight away. Ring 999 if they're clearly breaking in, otherwise call 101 – call handlers are on duty 24/7."

PC Rooke urged other small businesses should act to make sure they're not affected.

While police can't recommend products or services, the Master Locksmith's Association website has useful advice <https://www.locksmiths.co.uk/>