

“Making Convenience Stores Safe in Houston”



Changing the societal problem of violent crime in convenience stores with a Problem Oriented Policing approach by the Houston Police Department

Summary

Scanning: Convenience store robberies, aggravated assaults, and murders taking place in the stores and parking lots reached an all-time peak in 2007 in the City of Houston. With over 1100 robberies, over 400 aggravated assaults, and almost a dozen murders, convenience stores in the City of Houston had become a magnet for violent crime. The news reported on the epidemic nightly. Owners were afraid to do business, and customers were afraid to shop there. Beat officers were constantly responding to calls for service at convenience stores.

Analysis: The City of Houston is the fourth largest city in the United States and covers over 600 square miles. At the beginning of the analysis, it was not even clear how many convenience stores were located in the City of Houston. The Task Force estimated that number was around 800 to 1000, but no one knew for sure. The Mayor formed the Convenience Store Task Force in 2007 to look into the ongoing violence at these Houston businesses. It included the police department, the Greater Houston Retailer's Association, and several large international petroleum companies along with individual store owners. They studied the motivation of the offenders and found that, because few security strategies had been implemented in convenience stores, the offenders viewed them as high reward with low risk of being caught. The victims were looked at and contrasts began to emerge between stores that were targeted on a regular basis and those which were rarely victims of violent crimes. Some economic limitations of small "mom and pop" stores also presented themselves and posed a challenge. The City of Houston is an international city, where roughly 30% of the population was not born in the United States, the vast array of languages and cultures increased the difficulty of implementing any solutions. All of these concerns had to be addressed in any solution so that it could be implemented and palatable to all.

Response: The task-force determined that there were key common elements of the best practices and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) strategies that could be implemented as part of an ordinance. Starting with the mandatory free registration of all stores with the police department, the ordinance was gradually phased in with education as a key component. The Houston Police Department (HPD) worked hard to develop partnerships between the police department, the trade associations, and individual store owners. The HPD's Problem Oriented Policing Unit, called the Differential Response Team (DRT), was given the task of going out into the neighborhoods, finding and educating the store owners and managers about the ordinance and gradually bringing them into compliance. Officers used a internet-based system to register stores, and provide multilingual education that could accommodate the vast diversity of Houston. For those without internet service, the U.S. Postal Service was used.

Assessment: The partnership of the Greater Houston Retailers Association (GHRA) with the Houston Police Department (HPD) and other stakeholders resulted in an unprecedented reduction in violent crimes in convenience stores. For 2012, Crime Analysis reported a total of 266 Robberies in stores for a reduction of -65% versus 2007. Comparing the three-year average before and after the implementation of the ordinance confirms the value of the ordinance and the implementation and enforcement by the Differential Response Team officers with Murder down by -25%, Aggravated Assaults down -32%, Robbery down by -40%.

“Making Convenience Stores Safe in Houston”

Changing the societal problem of violent crime in convenience stores with a Problem

Oriented Policing approach by the Houston Police Department

SCANNING

When America invented the convenience store, criminals invented the convenience store robbery. Nearly every large metropolitan area and municipality in the United States has experienced violent crime at convenience stores in their jurisdiction and Houston is no exception.

Convenience stores were not only a target for armed robberies, but were also magnets for rapes, assaults, and homicides. In fact, a large number of the convicts on Texas Death Row were sentenced there for armed robberies, which had ended in murder, thus making it a capital crime offense.

Crime numbers had reached epidemic proportions and the nightly news broadcast it into people’s homes daily. People were afraid to go into convenience stores in their own neighborhoods. Store owners lived in constant fear of being murdered for only a few hundred dollars or less. Friendly neighborhood convenience stores had become the epicenter for crime and violence in the city. Something had to be done.

Houston Mayor Bill White formed the Convenience Store Task Force in 2007 to directly address the crime wave at Houston area stores. He told the Houston Chronicle that, "We're doing this because we want to protect our stores, their employees and customers. We wanted some of the best minds in the business to help us with strategies to prevent crime and not just to react to it."

The Task Force included members from large petroleum companies like Exxon and Valero, which owned hundreds of corporate convenience stores in and around the city. The Greater Houston Retailer’s Association (GHRA) was included because it represented a large number of convenience store owners, most of who were small business owners and had built their

companies from the ground up. Security and loss prevention experts were brought in to study best practices and find out why some stores were targeted more often than others. The Houston Police Department was at the core of this task force because it wanted to find a way to be proactive to prevent the violence and crime rather than only reactively respond once an incident had occurred, saving not only lives but resources as well.

ANALYSIS

The Convenience Store Task Force immediately set to work on why violence had risen to epidemic levels. They wanted to know who was committing the robberies, why some stores were targeted repeatedly, and how the police were responding to and investigating these incidents.

When the Task Force began, the exact number of convenience stores in Houston was not known. The number was estimated at somewhere between 800 and 1000, but that was just a guess. The Task Force first had to define what would be considered a convenience store so that the scope of their study would be neither too broad nor too narrow. Historically, the uniformed crime reporting (UCR) statistics had differentiated between a gas station and a convenience store. And where did a convenience store stop and a grocery store begin?

Working with the Greater Houston Retailer's Association the Task Force settled on the following definition: "*Convenience store* means any business that is primarily engaged in the retail sale of convenience goods, or both convenience goods and gasoline, and has less than 10,000 square feet of retail floor space. *Convenience store* does not include any business where there is no retail floor space accessible to the public."

Once the Task Force classified what a convenience store would be, HPD's crime analysis unit compiled some alarming statistics regarding the locations in Houston. There were 3744 Thefts, 1138 Robberies, 414 Aggravated Assaults, 8 Rapes and 10 Murders during calendar year 2007. Based on these statistics, with the estimated 1,000 or so convenience stores in the city, it

meant that on average, a robbery would occur at every single convenience store at least once a year. However, after talking with the representatives of the large petroleum companies, it was soon discovered that the crime was not evenly distributed. The large chain stores reported significantly less robberies and crime at their locations than the statistics suggest should exist. That meant that the bulk of the robberies and crime was occurring at smaller, individually owned stores. The large corporate chains reported that they had developed and implemented a list of best practices at their stores to prevent robberies and crime with good results. However, the Greater Houston Retailer's Association (GHRA) which mostly represents single locations, small business owners, commonly called "mom and pop stores" or family run stores, said that their members largely do not have such measures in place. They told the Task Force that their member stores had several limitations to implement of any the best practices strategies. First, and probably closest to any business owner's heart, are the financial limitations. For individual stores to hire private loss prevention consultants are a huge undertaking and expense, which most stores of that size could not support. Additionally most small store owners believed, incorrectly, that the infrastructure required for security would be more costly than the few hundred dollars that they might lose in the occasional robbery.

Houston is an international city where roughly 30% of the population was not born in the United States. Almost every major language and culture can be found in Houston, which sometimes hindered communication between the police and store owners before and after a crime had occurred. The diversity represented the store owners, their employees, and their customer base.

Culture also played a part in the smaller store's ability to implement any best practices. Not individual culture, but retail culture. Most business owners from other countries, who come here to start their business and build their futures in retail, come from retail cultures where the field of loss prevention is largely undeveloped. Loss prevention is a field that has developed dramatically in the United States over the previous few decades and these store owners were not

aware of the resources available to them from HPD nor did they know they had access to the loss prevention data that has been derived from other retail establishments. Houston area convenience stores needed education about modern techniques to prevent the robberies, not just how to call the police after a crime has taken place.

Where the employees of the large store chains have no personal vested monetary interest in whether a store is robbed, the owners of the small stores depend on the income for their livelihood. The stores profitability is completely personal to them. This personalization of the robbery in their stores often led to increased levels of violence because of resisting or refusing the demands of the criminals. The Task Force believed that training store owners and workers on what actions to take during and after robbery could reduce the violence of the actions.

The Task Force also wanted to know who the offenders were and why they, for decades, had chosen to prey upon convenience stores. What they found was that, within Houston, the offenders were largely young men in their early 20's who were motivated by quick scores of what they considered large amounts of money, which was usually only a few hundred dollars at most. What made them so attractive however was the low risk of being caught by the police. Most locations did not have cameras, and those few that did, the camera quality was so poor that it was almost useless for identification purposes. In addition, most of the cameras were positioned for loss prevention to catch employees stealing rather than capture the robbers. Police served a completely reactionary role, only able to prevent a robbery if they just happened to walk into a store targeted by a robber. Criminals could commit their crimes with impunity, and be free to do it again the following day, which they did.

As the crack epidemic exploded in the late 1980's and early 1990's, the frequency of the violent robberies increased and often with more deadly consequences. The Task Force also looked into what the convenience stores had come to represent in the community. Convenience stores had become havens for drug dealers and prostitutes to hang out at to ply their trades. Drunks and drug addicts would sit out front of stores begging for more money to fuel their vices.

Nefarious business was conducted in front of these establishments, frightening away any of the good clientele, further projecting the image to would-be hijackers that this location would be a suitable target. Following the Broken Windows Theory, the more that store owners tolerated the presence of the criminal class, the more they would be subject to victimization.

The Task Force needed to educate the store owners, provide them with a way to obtain the knowledge to prevent crime, to open a more direct dialogue with HPD, and to rid the convenience stores of the criminal element that had laid claim to them, by making the stores an unattractive target. They had a huge task ahead of them considering the geographic size of the city and the almost 1,000 stores.

Response

Because of the high stakes, it was decided that participation in any response effort be made mandatory through city ordinance. As this was decidedly a crime problem, HPD would implement and monitor the response. The GHRA volunteered to assist in education efforts and required their members to comply. The Task Force reported back to Mayor White that a municipal ordinance was needed to require all convenience stores within the City of Houston to implement a list of best practices at their locations and take active steps to prevent crime at their locations.

In 2008, Chapter 28, Section 13 of the Houston Code of Ordinances was written and adopted by city council to specifically regulate convenience stores as a group with the purpose of reducing crime at convenience stores in the city. The ordinance was experimentally implemented in the North Division's area of responsibility, and HPD sent out the Differential Response Team (DRT), which is the department's problem oriented policing unit, with the goal of education and registration. No citations for violations were written at that time. Officers sought out all the locations to record them and have a more clear understanding of exactly how many convenience

stores were in business. They explained the ordinance to the owners and showed them how to register and be compliance with the ordinance.

The ordinance itself was simple, having only eight main tenants. The first requirement in the ordinance is that all convenience stores in the city register with HPD. The ordinance sets out that no fee shall be charged for the registration, but that operation of the store without doing so shall be a criminal violation. HPD wanted to have information regarding the owners and managers of the convenience stores so that the department could have a direct line of communication. New owners and new construction would have 30 days to register under the ordinance. HPD facilitated this by making registration accessible through the departmental Internet Web site, www.houstonpolice.org. Upon registration, the department sent the owners a packet of information and training material, as well as a registration certificate and decal for their front door.

The second pillar of the ordinance was training and education. It required that all employees, managers and immediate supervisors of managers must complete a safety training program annually, and maintain a log. HPD worked with the large petroleum chains Exxon and Valero to craft this training program. Training programs similar to this one have become the nationwide industry standard throughout the retail community. The training focused on cash handling, employee safety, robbery prevention, and what to do in a robbery so that everyone goes home safe. In the beginning HPD provided a DVD for the employees to watch that was sent to the store in a packet of materials after registration. However, technology had progressed and in 2012 the department made this video available on YouTube, which can be viewed anytime, by anyone at "<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL6330D7669B17715C>". In order to accommodate the wide diversity of the City of Houston, the video is available in English, Chinese Mandarin, Spanish, Vietnamese, Korean and Urdu.

The third part of the ordinance provides that the owner of the store shall execute a signed, notarized, trespass affidavit with the police department so that HPD can enforce the applicable

trespass laws on the owner's behalf on the store property. Because they were afraid to tell trespassers to leave, many store owners and managers allowed drug dealers and other undesirables to loiter in and around their businesses. Many of them were unaware that they could have a standing agreement with the Houston Police Department to help keep their businesses free of the criminal elements that had set up business in and around their stores.

The fourth requirement of the ordinance was implemented to assist in the enforcement of the previous requirement. The ordinance makes it mandatory that "No Trespassing" signs be posted in English and Spanish on all sides of the building. It also requires that a height strip be posted at the main entrance/ exit of the store. GHRA, one of HPD's main partners on the Task Force, offers free to its members a packet providing the necessary signage and height strips to facilitate compliance with their member stores.

As part of the ordinance, all convenience stores are required to maintain an unobstructed line of sight allowing a clear view of and from the cash register and sales transaction area through all windows and public access doors. For years, across the nation, police field trainers in many departments taught their probationary officers to park to the side of a convenience store and look in the windows before walking in. But more and more, the windows of convenience stores had become cluttered with signage advertising everything from cigarettes to beer. Unwitting customers who couldn't see into the store could walk in on a robbery in progress, and more importantly police officers responding to a robbery in progress could not see to clear their threat area. One of the major chain stores did have a problem with the requirement and a compromise was reached to limit the requirement to the transactional area windows. Maintaining the windows free of obstructions opens the store to continuous scrutiny by passersby and the police. A citizen driving up to a store can see in more easily and report a crime in progress without becoming a victim of the crime.

The key to solvability in any crime is a quick response time. So the ordinance requires that the convenience stores shall have a silent panic or holdup alarm system, with a button in

reach of the cash register and out of sight of the customer. While not a difficult or costly measure to install, a surprising number of stores did not have one installed. To further educate the would be criminals that the location is now a hardened target, signs are required to be posted at the entrances and exits that an alarm security system is in use.

The ordinance requires additional store infrastructure with the installation of a drop safe. Corporate loss prevention learned the value of these safes long ago. A safe, which is bolted to the floor, that is not accessible to the employees, removes the possibility of a larger reward from the criminals. But it was not sufficient to merely have a safe; it must be used correctly. So the ordinance required that each store have a cash handling and accountability policy mandating the maximum amounts of cash that can be kept in cash registers. The ordinance does not mandate what the cash policy will be; the policy is up to the individual store owner to decide on based on the requirements of that particular store. To further educate the people with possible criminal intentions, signs are required stating that a drop safe is in use and that the employees do not have access to the safe, and that the employees have a minimum amount of cash on hand.

The impact of this one portion of the ordinance cannot be understated. Many of the robberies of convenience stores that HPD responded to listed that the suspect had taken several hundred dollars in cash from a cigar box beneath the register or some other hidden place in the transactional area. The robberies where someone was shot often stemmed from the crook's impatience while the clerk opened the conventional safe or took the money from the hiding place when employees had access to large sums of cash. The large corporate chains suggested that the drop safes be accessible to only armored car pick-ups, but that was left as a recommendation in lieu of a requirement.

The last section of the ordinance was meant to aid in solvability. It was believed that convenience stores were such frequent targets because there was little risk of being caught. So the ordinance required a surveillance camera system. A minimum of two, color, digital high-resolution cameras were required for all convenience stores. One camera must have an overall

view of the counter/ register area and the other camera a view of the main entrance/ exit area and both shall display the time and date of the recording. Stores that had cameras largely had them pointed at the cash register to catch internal theft. And the camera systems that stores did have were usually out of date and had very grainy resolution. Historically camera systems had cost thousands of dollars to install, but quick research by the Task Force showed that modern digital systems with night vision capabilities were available as “do it yourself” kits from some of the large electronics stores, and the prices had reduced significantly in the last couple of years. The cameras are required to run at all times, including when the store is not open for business. After hours burglaries and smash and grab burglaries were also a common problem, and this was an effort to combat those crimes as well.

Store owners are required to maintain a library of the recorded digital images for not less than 30 days, and to provide the police department with digital color images upon request. The police department needs 30 days of storage in order to give a greater window for solving some identity theft cases and where stolen identification and credit cards are used at a convenience store. Often, patrol officers and detectives investigating crimes at convenience stores with cameras were unable to get a copy of the stores video during the incident because the clerk was not knowledgeable in using the system, or because it was some type of proprietary system, or because the recording was maintained off site. The ordinance made it mandatory for an investigator to receive a copy of the video of the crime in a timely manner so that it could be used in the investigation and possible broadcast to the public on the nightly news in hopes that the offender could be captured before committing additional similar crimes. Continuing the education of possible robbers that the location is no longer “risk-free”, signs were required at the entrance stating that a surveillance system was in place and recording their actions.

Any ordinance which is to be effective needs enforcement to ensure compliance in reluctant people. The last section of the ordinance makes non-compliance in any of the sections a violation punishable by a fine not to exceed \$500.00. The goal of the City of Houston Police

Department is the safety of the community and citizens patronizing the stores and the reduction of both the actual crimes committed and the fear of future crime.

Enforcement of the ordinance began as a large-scale education campaign to store owners and employees carried out by the Differential Response Team Officers (DRT). The ordinance was passed in 2009, but did not go into full effect until January 1, 2010. During 2009, DRT officers were given initial training on the ordinance with registration being the primary objective. The divisional DRT units were then tasked to go out, find and register all the convenience stores across the city. During the registration process, the officers explained the ordinance and why the different parts were required. It was stressed to the store owners that this was a service that HPD was providing to the store owners in an attempt to keep them and their customers safer. During 2010, DRT officers were given additional training on the ordinance with an emphasis on educating the people in the stores. The officers began enforcing the law if a store failed to register. The City Wide DRT Coordinator developed a standardized inspection form for use when inspecting stores. Each year in March, HPD conducts a major crime prevention program called "March on Crime" where various aspects of crime prevention are brought to the public's attention. Starting with the 2010 March on Crime initiative, DRT officers began an initiative to inspect every store in the city during that month. The DRT officers complete the departmental inspection form at the store. A copy of the report is left with the store so that the manager or owner can review the results of the inspection. A second copy is kept at the division level and a third copy is sent to the command office that oversees the program. If violations are observed, the officer issues a warning using the form and gives the violator a specified date for a return inspection to check on progress. The purpose of the inspection is to gain compliance with the ordinance and education is still the primary goal. Starting with the March on Crime initiative of 2011, officers more commonly began citing locations that refused to come into compliance after two years of education and warnings.

Assessment

The ordinance is a resounding success in all aspects. The statistics speak the loudest with murder plummeting by 80%, sexual Assault reduced by 75%, robberies were down by 77%, aggravated assaults dipped by 77% and even Burglaries sank by 56% during the calendar year 2007 to 2012. In 2011, Houston was able to boast that not one single person had been murdered inside a convenience store inside the city limits. For any city, let alone the fourth largest city in the United States, those numbers were incredible.

As the DRT officers went into the community to visit the convenience stores for their annual compliance checks, they were truly amazed at the level of cooperation from all the stores. Once the ordinance was explained to the store owners as being a tool to help them, and not another burdensome regulation on small business, owners quickly came into compliance. The ordinance was seen as a partnership with owners, and not adversarial in nature. Store owners told DRT officers that they felt safer in their business, and felt that HPD was now more approachable about crime concerns in their neighborhood. In every neighborhood the store owners know that their DRT officer is someone who is willing to listen and help.

The Greater Houston Retailer's Association lauded the City's actions and redoubled its efforts to help in assisting the GHRA member stores to come into compliance. The GHRA invited HPD DRT officers to its annual convention to be guest speakers to make a presentation on the ordinance and answer questions from the members. At that convention, there was an outpouring of interest from GHRA member stores who were not located inside the city limits of Houston, but were still interested in implementing these strategies at their own stores even though not required by law. A large petroleum distribution company, Susser Petroleum, followed suit by inviting HPD officers to present the ordinance at their convention to store owners and managers as well, even though a large portion of them were also outside the city limits.

Robbery detectives began asking why they were seeing a decrease in convenience store robberies. When the ordinance was explained, one robbery detective said, "Ohhhh, that's why

we're seeing an increase in discount retail store robberies.” One of the unintended side effects of the convenience store ordinance was displacement of convenience store robberies into discount retail stores. But even counting the displacement, the number of violent crimes in these stores does not come close to the previous numbers seen in convenience stores. The Vice President of Loss Prevention for one of the large, national discount retail store chains came to HPD North Patrol Division to ask why they were seeing a surge in robberies in the Houston area. DRT officers went to all of that chain's locations in the North Command police district and following the model convenience store ordinance, made recommendations to reduce the robberies. Since the ordinance does not cover this type of store it was up to the individual companies to adopt these crime prevention elements into their business model.

A few stores still refused to comply even after the education and warnings over several years' time. In 2012, three years after the enactment of the ordinance, these stores were subject to having citations issued and those will be adjudicated in the court system. When a store is issued a citation, the previous notifications and warning forms will be in the case file for use at trial.

This entire effort was not finished with the passage of the ordinance. Each year in March, DRT officers across the city go out with the lists of convenience stores that are registered and ensure that they are still in compliance. Additionally, the officers canvass the city for any new convenience stores that are unregistered, due largely to a lack of education. When they find an unregistered store, the officers begin with education in lieu of enforcement.

The implementation is always developing and updating. HPD's Web site has been updated several times to make registration ever easier. In 2012, the department stopped sending out training DVD's via the U.S. mail, instead opting for a YouTube webpage accessible to all registrants but DVD's are still available if requested. The languages offered on the videos has expanded to 6 languages so that as many owners and employees as possible can be reached.

When assessing if HPD could have been more successful in its solution, it was decided that, in order to get acceptance from those being regulated, the regulations would have to be as

few as necessary and reasonable to implement. Too much bureaucracy would tend to stifle economic development and small business growth. During the recession of 2008, the last thing any city wanted was to hinder business growth, or be seen as unfriendly to enterprise.

The solution to this crime problem was destined to succeed from its genesis with the Convenience Store Task Force and the inclusion of all the stakeholders from the outset ensured buy-in from all the parties. It also fostered a think-tank “brainstorming” process that brought in ideas from all experiences and backgrounds. The Houston Police Department’s education first approach forged a partnership of trust and respect between the convenience store owners and the officers responsible for ensuring compliance. Most of all, because focus of this effort was always the safety and well-being of the citizens of Houston and store employees, the ordinance had the desired outcome which was to make Houston convenience stores a safe place to do business.

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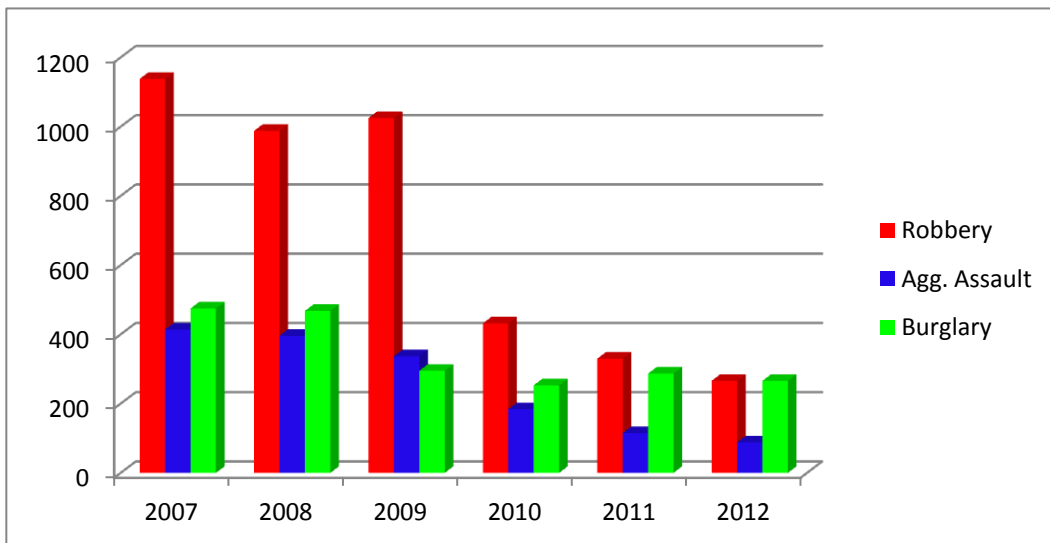
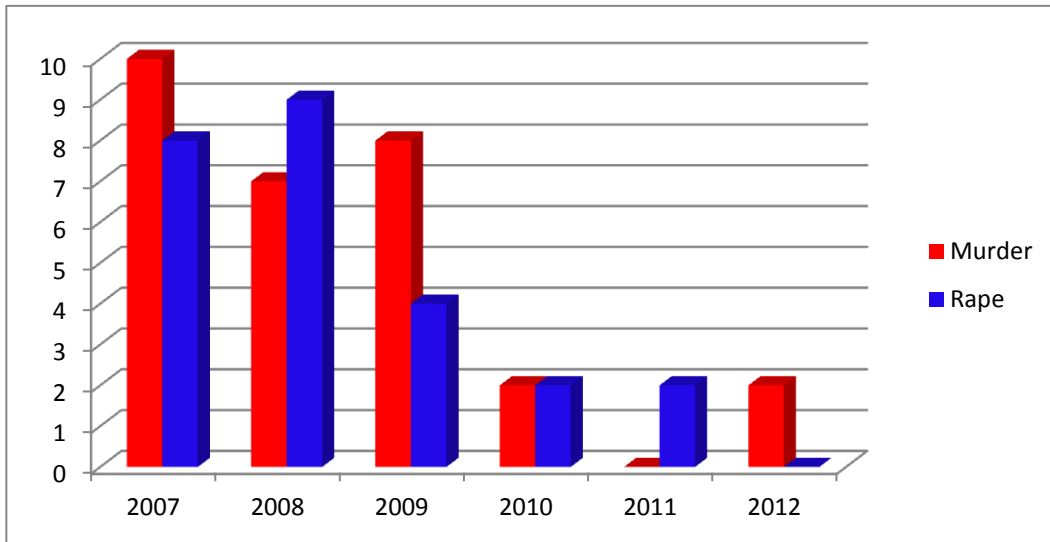


Appendix list

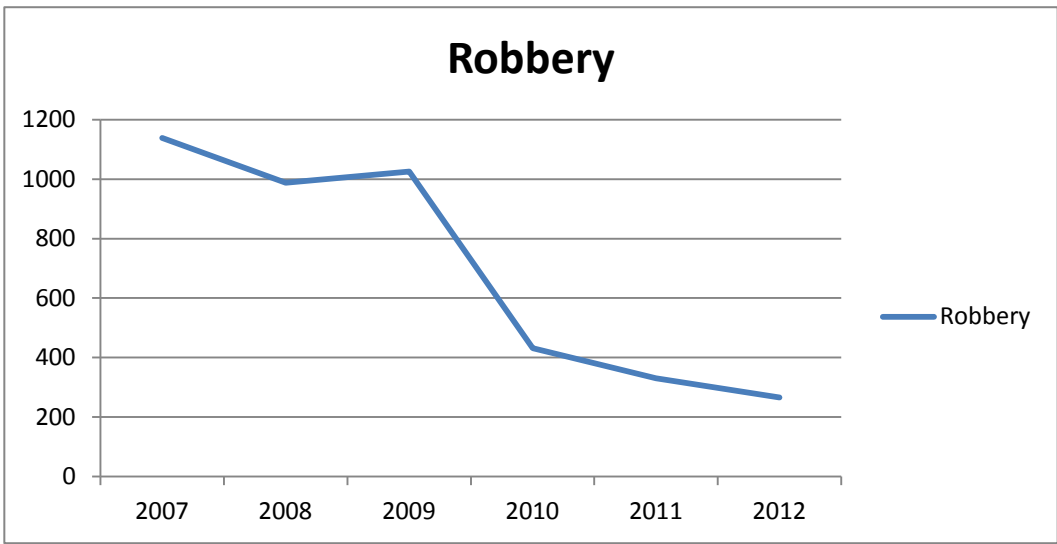
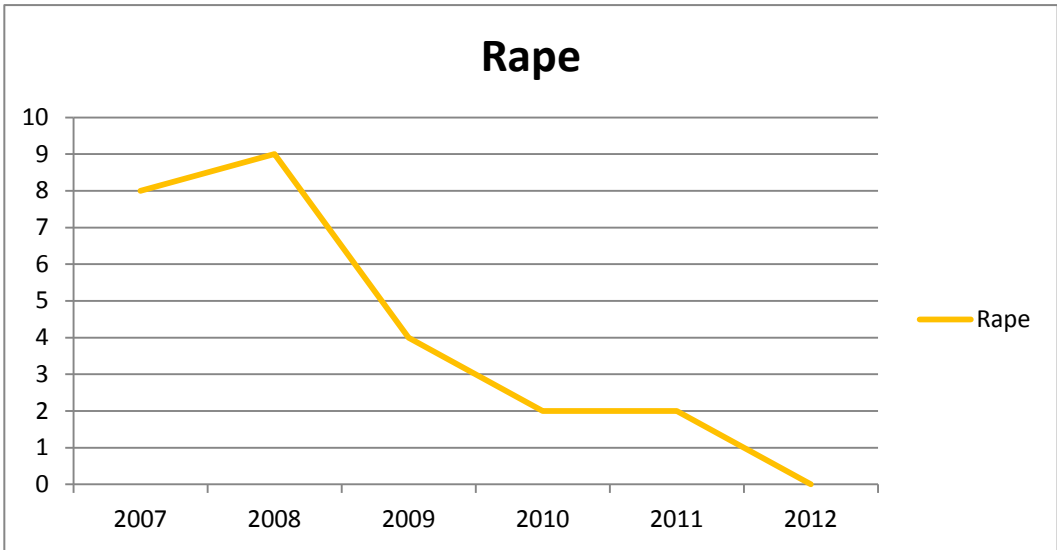
1. Houston Police Department Convenience Store Statistics 2007 to 2012
2. Houston Police Department Website Home Page Screen Shot
3. Houston Police Department Website Convenience Store Task Force Page
4. Online Convenience Store Registration Form
5. Online Training Video Webpage
6. Convenience Store Training Log
7. Trespass Affidavit Form
8. Houston Police Convenience Store Registration Decal
9. Houston Police Convenience Store Registration Certificate
10. Convenience Store Inspection Form
11. Chapter 28 Section 13 City of Houston Municipal Code

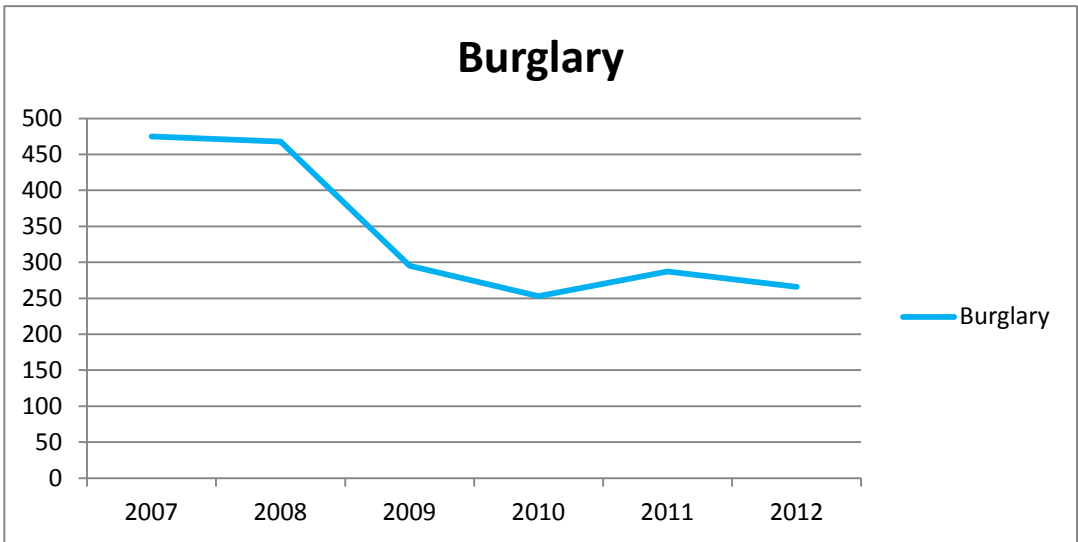
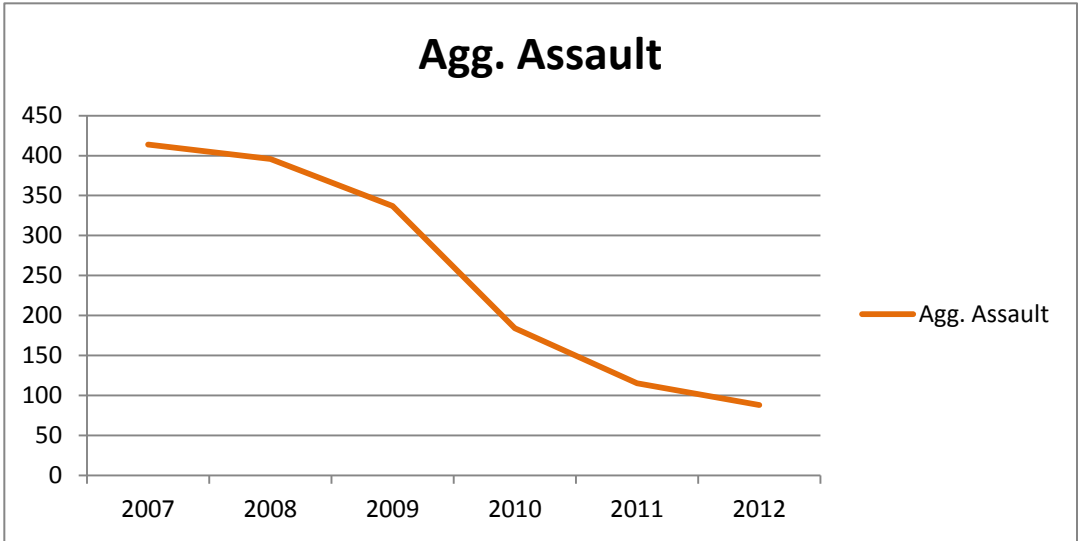
Houston Police Department Crime Analysis Convenience Store Statistics 2007 to 2012

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Murder	10	7	8	2	0	2
Rape	8	9	4	2	2	0
Robbery	1138	988	1025	432	330	266
Agg. Assault	414	396	337	184	115	88
Burglary	475	468	295	253	287	266



Appendix 1





The screenshot shows the Houston Police Department website. At the top, there is a search bar and a navigation menu. The main content area includes the Houston Police Department logo, a mission statement, and a list of services. A dropdown menu is open, highlighting 'Convenience Store Registration'. To the right, there is a 'Share' button with a red arrow pointing to it, and a photo of Chief Charles McClelland with a bio. Below this, there are sections for 'Need a copy of a report?', 'News Releases', 'Crime Statistics', and 'Contact the Department'.

Houston Police Department home page with Convenience Store Registration highlighted.

Appendix 2

Department Links

- HPD Home Page
- 4 Organization
 - Chiefs Message
 - Organization Chart
- 4 Divisions
 - Auto Theft
 - Crime Lab
 - Robbery
 - Special Operations
 - Vice
- Beat Map
- Patrol Stations and Storefronts
- Careers
- Mission Statement
- 4 Get Informed
 - Blog
 - Crime Prevention
 - Crime Statistics
 - Crime Stoppers
 - Department Reports
 - Fallen Officers
 - Family Violence
 - Find my towed car
 - HPD Jail Inquiry
 - ID Safety
 - Immigration
 - Keep Houston Safe
 - Mediation Process
 - News Releases
 - Officers in Action
 - Racial Profiling
 - Safe Clear
 - Traffic Control
 - Truck Enforcement Unit
 - Victim Services
- 4 Join Us
 - Careers
 - Citizens Police Academy
 - Volunteers
- 4 Multimedia
 - Podcasts
 - Videos
 - Fallen Officers
- 4 Registrations



Convenience Store Task Force

1200 Travis, 18th Floor
Houston, TX 77002
713.308.1860

Registration

All convenience stores located in the City of Houston are required to register online with the Houston Police Department. This will facilitate greater positive interaction between the Houston Police Department and the convenience store community and to improve data tracking concerning crimes around convenience stores. Once a convenience store has successfully registered, the store will be provided with a security packet that will include an internet link to security training so that storeowners can provide training to their employees. Storeowners will also be provided with a decal to be displayed at the entrance to the business and a registration certificate. Contact can be made directly by email at ConvenienceStoreTaskForce@HoustonPolice.org to request information or to have questions answered. New Registration or Update information on a store that is already registered can be made through the links below. Once the registration packet is received, the owner/manager needs to contact the Task Force by email or telephone to let the Police Department know that the information was received.

[Online Registration](#) [Update Information](#)

[Trespass Affidavits](#) [Training Video](#)



Key components of the Convenience Store Ordinance

The Municipal Ordinance includes, but is not limited to:

- 1.) **(sec. 28-402) Registration of Convenience Store**
All convenience stores located in the City of Houston are required by ordinance to register with the Houston police Department.
- 2.) **(sec. 28-403) Employee, Manager, and Supervisor training**
All employees, managers, and supervisors are required to view the Training Video provided by the Police Department. The packet that all stores will receive once they register, contains the internet link to the video. [\(Link to page with safety training videos\)](#) [\(Download Training Log\)](#)
- 3.) **(sec. 28-404) Trespass Affidavit**
All Convenience Stores must have a Trespass Affidavit on file with the Houston Police Department. You can submit the original Notarized Trespass Affidavit form and Complainant Data Sheet to your nearest storefront or substation for filing. A copy of the affidavit only must be posted at the Convenience Store in a place always accessible to public view. You may call the Convenience Store Registration Unit if you have any questions concerning Trespass Affidavit. [\(Click here for Substations and Store Front locations\)](#). [\(Click here to download Trespass Affidavit and Complainant Data Sheet\)](#).
- 4.) **(sec. 28-405) Security Signs and Height Strip**
All Convenience Stores must have "No Loitering" and "No Trespassing" signs in at least two inch lettering or larger, in English and Spanish, posted on the front, sides, and rear of the store. Convenience Stores must also have height strips posted at all public exits.

Convenience Store Task Force home page

http://www.houston.tx.gov/policy/convenience_store/registration_form2012a.htm

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Google (2) HPD Official Portal CoH Employee Self Service Free Hotmail HPD Portal Internet Explorer cannot d...

City of Houston
Official Site for Houston, Texas

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Convenience Store Registration Form.

The date and time of your submission is automatically generated when you click SUBMIT. Please complete all required fields.

STORE INFORMATION (New Application)

* Store Name:

* Sales Tax Number:

* Store Address:

* Store Phone:

Fax:

* City:

* State:

* Zip Code:

On-line registration and updated of information Store owner/management information

Appendix 4

The screenshot shows a YouTube playlist titled "Convenience Store Safety (Houston Police Department)" by the channel "houstonpolicedept". The playlist contains six videos, each representing a different language:

- 1. Convenience Store Safety - English (615 views, 9:52)
- 2. Convenience Store Safety - Chinese Mandarin (73 views, 12:30)
- 3. Convenience Store Safety - Spanish (36 views, 11:06)
- 4. Convenience Store Safety - Vietnamese (48 views, 9:52)
- 5. Convenience Store Safety - Korean (18 views, 9:52)
- 6. Convenience Store Safety - Urdu (131 views, 11:24)

Additional details from the page include:

- Channel name: Convenience Store Safety (Houston Police Department)
- Channel description: The Houston Police Department explains how to keep your convenience store and its staff safe.
- Available in: English, Chinese Mandarin, Spanish, Vietnamese, Korean, Urdu
- About houstonpolicedept: Staff list includes Evelyn Navarro, Cindy Cuellar, Mezgebe Desta, Chuck Gonzales, and Betty Harrell.
- 8 playlists by houstonpolicedept (505,982 views)
- Subscribe button with 531 subscribers

Training videos available in six languages

Appendix 5

Convenience Store Training Log

Convenience Store Name:				
Convenience Store Address:				
	Employee Name	Date of Training	Time	Employee Signature
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
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27				
28				
29				
30				

Downloadable training log for store employees

TRESPASS AFFIDAVIT
(BUSINESS OR COMMERCIAL PROPERTY)

My name is _____ . I am the _____
(Printed Name) (Owner/Agent of the Owner)

of the property located at _____ , Houston, Texas _____
(Street Address) (Zip Code)

I hereby request and authorize the HOUSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT to enter the premises at said location and, in my absence, to enforce all applicable trespass laws on my behalf in regard to the above referenced property. I further request that on my behalf, the HOUSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT request all persons who are not patrons in the normal course of business to immediately leave the property or be arrested pursuant to Section 30.05 of the Texas Penal Code. "NO TRESPASSING" signs have been posted throughout the property.

In addition, I, or my designee, will cooperate fully in the prosecution of anyone who is arrested for a violation of any local or state law.

My business address is _____ . My business phone number is _____ .

(Signature)

Subscribed and sworn to me on this the _____ day of _____ ,20____, to certify which witness my hand and seal of office.

NOTARY PUBLIC IN AND FOR
THE STATE OF TEXAS

Downloadable trespass affidavit

Appendix 7

Convenience Store



REGISTRATION VERIFICATION



CONVENIENCE STORE CERTIFICATE OF REGISTRATION



**NAME OF STORE
ADDRESS
CITY, STATE ZIP**

This certificate is issued by the Houston Police Department to certify compliance with the registration requirements of City of Houston Code of Ordinances Sec. 28-402.



CONVENIENCE STORE AWARD OF DISTINCTION Date



**NAME OF STORE
ADDRESS
CITY, STATE ZIP**

This store has met all of the requirements outlined on Section 28 of the COH Code of Ordinances without any violations.

Appendix 9

**Houston Police Department
Differential Response Team Convenience Store
Inspection Form**

Store Name _____ Date _____ Time _____
 Owner/Manager _____ TDL _____ D.O.B _____
 Address _____ Telephone _____

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) (Sec. 28-402) Registration of Convenience Store | Y N C W |
| Operate a registered convenience store | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Owner registered convenience store | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2) (Sec. 28-403) Employee, Manager, and Supervisor training | Y N C W |
| Provide record of employee safety training program completion | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3) (Sec. 28-404) Trespass Affidavit | Y N C W |
| Execute a Trespass Affidavit with the local police station | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Trespass Affidavit posted | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4) (Sec. 28-405) Security Signs and Height Strip | Y N C W |
| Post "No Loitering" signage on the front, sides, and rear of Convenience Store. | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Post "No Trespassing" signage on the front, sides, and rear of Convenience Store. | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Height strips posted at all public exits | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5) (Sec. 28-406) Unobstructed Visibility | Y N C W |
| Unobstructed line of sight from the cash registers through all windows and public access doors | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6) (Sec. 28-407) Alarm System | Y N C W |
| Silent panic or holdup alarm | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Panic button located within reach of cash register | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Post decal or sign at all public entrances/exits indicating that a security alarm system is in use | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7) (Sec. 28-408) Drop Safe | Y N C W |
| Drop safe on premises | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Cash accountability policy | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Post sign/decal indicating that employees cannot open safe and have minimum cash on hand | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8) (Sec. 28-409) Surveillance Camera System. | Y N C W |
| Two color digital high-resolution surveillance cameras | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Camera with views of counter/register area and main exit/entrance area displaying date and time of recording | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Exit/entrance camera that provides a clear and identifiable full frame of filmed individual's face | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Operate surveillance camera at all times | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Able to provide police department with digital color images as requested in connection with a crime investigation | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Maintain library of recorded digital images for 30 days | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Signs or decals at all public entrances/exits indicating that surveillance cameras are in use | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |

Inspecting Officer(s) _____ Telephone _____

Number of Warning(s) _____ Citation(s) _____

Signature of Business Owner / Agent / Manager _____

Comments _____

Y = Yes N = No C = Citation W = Warning
 Any answer other than Yes requires a Warning and date for re-inspection in comments section

City of Houston, Chapter 28, Article 13

Convenience Store Ordinance

Convenience goods means basic food, household and/or pharmaceutical items.

Convenience store means any business that is primarily engaged in the retail sale of convenience goods, or both convenience goods and gasoline, and has less than 10,000 square feet of retail floor space. *Convenience store* does not include any business where there is no retail floor space accessible to the public.

Drop safe means a cash management device where money can be deposited without the depositor having access to the contents.

Employee means any person who is employed in consideration of direct or indirect monetary wages, commissions, or profits, any contract employee, and any other person engaged in the operation of a convenience store.

Health officer means the director of the department of Health and Human Services or his designee.

Height strip means markings to aid in estimating the height of suspects.

Manager means the person designated by the owner to be responsible for the daily operation of a convenience store.

Owner means the person or persons who hold title to or leases property for the purpose of operating a convenience store.

Police official means the Chief of Police or person he may designate to act as the official primarily responsible for the administration of this article or the official's designees.

Registered agent means the person identified by the owner of a convenience store in the registration filed pursuant to this article that is authorized to receive on behalf of the owner any legal process and/or notice required or provided for in this article.

Safety training program means the training program promulgated by the police department for convenience stores or a nationally recognized training program that includes all the training elements of the police department's training program.

(Ord. No. 08-248, § 2, 3-26-08)

Sec. 28-402. Registration of convenience stores.

(a) It shall be unlawful for any person to operate a convenience store in the city that has not been registered as required by this section. No fee shall be charged for the registration required by this section.

(b) The owner of a convenience store shall register by providing to the police official the following information regarding the convenience store:

(1) The name, telephone number, facsimile number and business or residence address of the owner; and, if the owner is a corporation, whether foreign or domestic, the name of the registered agent of the owner and the telephone number and facsimile number and business or residence address of the registered agent, which address information shall include the street name and number, office or suite number if a business address, and the city, state, and zip code.

(2) The nature and extent of the owner's interest in the property. If there is only one owner, the extent of the owner's interest is 100%; and

(3) The name, telephone number, facsimile number, and business or residence address, including street name and number, city, state and zip code, of the current manager and, if the manager is other than an individual, the name, title, telephone number, facsimile number and business or residence address, including street name and number, city, state and zip code, of the individual to be contacted for any purpose under this article relating to the convenience store.

The use of a public or private post office box or other similar address shall not be sufficient for the purposes of complying with this subsection.

(c) Any change of ownership of a convenience store, including, but not limited to, the sale of the convenience store or any ownership interest therein, shall require the purchaser or transferee to update the information provided under subsection (b) of this section and to file the updated information with the police official within 30 days of the effective date of the ownership change. The same requirement shall apply to any change relating to the owner's registered agent and manager. A prior owner shall advise the police official that he no longer holds any ownership interest in the property.

Appendix 11

(d) The owner of a newly constructed or established convenience store shall comply with the provisions of this section not later than the thirtieth day following completion of construction or new opening of the convenience store, whichever occurs first.

(e) After a convenience store complies with the provisions of this section, the police official will provide to the convenience store:

(1) A registration compliance decal which shall be displayed above a public entrance door to the convenience store; and

(2) A registration statement, a true and correct copy of which shall be posted in the convenience store at all times in a conspicuous place accessible at all times to the public.

(f) Compliance with the requirements of this section shall be deemed to meet the requirements of 250.003 and 250.004 of the Texas Local Government Code.

(Ord. No. 08-248, § 2, 3-26-08)

Sec. 28-403. Employee, manager, supervisor safety training.

(a) All newly-hired employees, managers, and immediate supervisors of managers must complete a safety training program before reporting for duty and at least annually thereafter. Employees, managers and immediate supervisors of managers who are employed by a convenience store on the effective date of this ordinance must complete a safety training program not later than the ninetieth day following the effective date of this ordinance.

(b) All persons who complete the required safety training program shall sign a statement indicating the date, time and place the safety training program was completed. The owner shall keep the statements or copies of the statements on file in the convenience store for at least two years and make them available to the police official or the health officer immediately upon request.

(Ord. No. 08-248, § 2, 3-26-08)

Sec. 28-404. Trespass affidavit.

The owner of a convenience store shall execute a trespass affidavit as promulgated by the police department in order to enforce all applicable trespass laws on the owner's behalf at such property. A true and correct copy of the trespass affidavit shall be posted at the convenience store at all times in a conspicuous place accessible at all times to the public.

(Ord. No. 08-248, § 2, 3-26-08)

Sec. 28-405. Security signs; height strips.

(a) A convenience store shall have posted at all public exits and entrances "No Loitering" and "No Trespassing" signs in lettering two inches or larger, in English and in Spanish. Additionally, a convenience store shall post such signs on the front, sides, and rear of the convenience store.

(b) A convenience store shall have height strips posted at all public exits.

(Ord. No. 08-248, § 2, 3-26-08)

Sec. 28-406. Visibility.

A convenience store shall maintain an unobstructed line of sight allowing a clear view of and from the cash register and sales transaction area through all windows and public access doors. Such windows and doors must be clear of all items that would obstruct a clear view including, but not limited to, tinting, signage, advertisements, shelving, and merchandise. Such unobstructed line of sight must, at a minimum, extend from three feet above the ground to at least six feet above the ground.

(Ord. No. 08-248, § 2, 3-26-08)

Sec. 28-407. Alarm system.

(a) A convenience store shall have a silent panic or holdup alarm system for which a permit has been issued in accordance with [Chapter 11](#) of this Code. This system shall, at a minimum, include a panic button located within reach of the cash register and out of view of the customer. Such panic button will generate an alarm signal indicating a holdup or other life-threatening emergency requiring a police department response.

(b) A convenience store shall have posted at all public exits and entrances signs or decals indicating that a security alarm system is in use.

(Ord. No. 08-248, § 2, 3-26-08)

Sec. 28-408. Drop safe.

(a) A convenience store shall have a drop safe on the premises to keep the amount of cash available to employees to a minimum. A drop safe must be bolted to the floor. A drop safe may have a time-delay mechanism to allow small amounts of change to be removed.

(b) A convenience store shall have a cash accountability policy mandating the maximum amounts of cash that can be kept in cash registers.

(c) A convenience store shall have posted at all public exits and entrances signs or decals indicating that employees cannot open the safe and that employees have minimum cash on hand.

(Ord. No. 08-248, § 2, 3-26-08)

Sec. 28-409. Surveillance camera system.

(a) A convenience store shall have a minimum of two color digital high-resolution surveillance cameras. One camera must have an overall view of the counter/register area and the other camera a view of the main entrance/exit area and both shall display the date and time of the recording.

(b) The entrance/exit area camera shall be placed to provide a clear and identifiable full frame of the filmed individual's face.

(c) The cameras shall be operated at all times, including hours when the store is not open for business.

(d) The owner shall provide the police department with digital color images in connection with crime investigations upon request.

(e) The owner shall maintain a library of the recorded digital images for not less than 30 days.

(f) A convenience store shall have posted at all public exits and entrances signs or decals indicating that surveillance cameras are in use.

(Ord. No. 08-248, § 2, 3-26-08)

Sec. 28-410. Violation.

Any failure to comply with any applicable provision of this article shall be an offense punishable as provided in [section 1-6](#) of this Code.

(Ord. No. 08-248, § 2, 3-26-08)