

Thinking about buying a safe?

Why do I need to consider this topic?

All businesses can be affected by crime. Buying a safe may reduce one of the risks to your business.

What aspects do I need to consider?

Most safe manufacturers have a range of products. It is important to select a safe that best suits your needs and is practical for the place you intend to site it.

- Decide what will be the main purpose of the safe. The safe that is the best one to provide fire protection for computer discs may not be the best for the protection of a large amount of cash. Similarly, a safe designed to deter against a daytime robbery such as a hold-up will have different features to one where an overnight burglary is the fear.
- Decide on what quality and strength to buy. Normally the higher the value that a safe is intended to protect, the stronger it needs to be.
 - For security safes, look for one that has been tested and graded to the European Standard EN1143-1 by a recognised independent testing organisation. In the UK, the Loss Prevention Council Certification Board (LPCB) is such a body. On its website you will find, in the "Red Book", details of safes they have tested. Where these have an EN1143-1 grading (between 0 - VI), this will be shown. The higher the grade number the more resistant to forced opening the safe should be. Not all safes are tested to this standard. Most manufacturers will indicate a maximum value that they recommended be kept in one of their security safes. However, this is only given for rough guidance and will not reflect the particular hazards that relate to your business. It will not usually be a recommendation of how much money should be kept in the safe during business hours, i.e. for the hold-up risk.
 - For fire resistant safes, again look for testing by an independent testing organisation. The rating of the safe will usually be shown as fire resistance in minutes; normally 60 or 120 minutes. Fire resistant safes normally fall into two categories, i.e. those suitable for the protection of paper documents and those designed to protect computer data media such as back-up discs. Don't buy a document safe if you want to protect computer media. It is still important to keep copies of your computer data away from the premises, as fires in commercial buildings can last for many hours.
- Decide on what size to buy. There is no point in buying a safe that is too large to fit inside or too small for the money and goods you intend to keep in it. Safe manufacturers will usually provide internal and external dimensions for each size of safe they offer.
- Decide where you are going to site the safe. You will need to ensure that the floor where you intend to have the safe installed is suitable for the loaded weight of the safe. Unless you already have that information, you may need to get advice from a building surveyor or structural engineer. Remember that the safe has to be delivered to its final resting place. Other parts of the building across which the safe might be moved may not be as strong. Discuss delivery and installation with the safe company.
- Try to avoid locating safes close to workshops which have power cutting tools or welding equipment. If this cannot be avoided, make sure, with the help of the safe company, that you choose a safe designed to resist the type of tools available. Choose a concealed area away from both public gaze and easy view through a window. Avoid fitting the safe in a position where the door cannot be fully opened. Locating the safe within an area protected by a remotely monitored intruder alarm is also recommended. The alarm should reduce the amount of undisturbed time that thieves have to try to open the safe.
- When considering quotations, check what is included e.g. is delivery included to the fixing point (or just to the kerbside)? Does the price include fixing? Wherever possible, safes should always be fixed to a suitable concrete floor, in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Installation should be by the manufacturer or their approved agent.

- Decide on how many locks and what type. Most safe manufacturers offer a choice, e.g. key-operated, mechanical combination locks, and sophisticated electronic locks offering multiple user codes, time-lock and time-delay functions plus usage memory for audit trail purposes (or combinations of these). Where you do not want any one person to be able to open a safe, having two locks (of whatever type) is an option. Often, where the safe is a deposit type that allows money to be "posted" in, one of these may be a security cash collection company. For retailers where managers may change, having at least one combination lock will be useful. Where you have a number of staff who have access to the safe, electronic locks that provide each with his/her own number and give you an audit trail can be useful should money "disappear".
- Decide if you want a safe with a deposit facility. In retail premises, choosing a safe that has a "deposit" facility is also useful. It allows any employee to "post" money into the safe without having to have access to the main cash compartment. With the use of deterrent signs, this can be a useful way of reducing the hold-up risk, but be aware that not all deposit safes will have the opening protected to the same standard as the rest of the safe.

What key actions do I need to take?

- Decide what type of safe you need, i.e. theft-resistant, fire-resistant for paper goods, or fire resistant for computer data. Some models may combine fire and theft resistance (but may not be suitable for protection of data media).
- Allow for peak periods and future growth when calculating what values may have to be protected by the safe.
- Establish the minimum dimensions you needed inside the safe and at its door opening.
- Decide where the safe can safely be located (ideally within an area protected by a remotely monitored intruder alarm).
- Ensure that the safe can be safely delivered to that point and fixed.
- Choose the number and type of locks.
- Decide if a deposit facility is required, and what type; also any time lock or time delay facility.
- Consider first approved safes from the LPCB "Red Book" at [LPCB](#)
- Provide your insurance broker or agent with full details of the safe and get approval before ordering.

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