



5. RESPONSES AND STRATEGIES

1. Introduction

It is by no means the case that the fuel retail sector has sat back and done nothing about the spiralling crime problem affecting the industry. Considerable resources running to hundreds of millions of rands have been dedicated to tackling security issues both by the oil companies themselves as well as by the owners, managers and even staff of individual petrol stations. It is indicative, however, that when asked why their petrol stations had not been targeted by violent criminals in the preceding months, a quarter of owners and managers ascribed this to 'God, prayers or luck'. About 25% of managers said they had no idea at all about how to improve their security systems (eMIRG, 1999).

Staff collusion was believed to be a strong factor in all crimes in the opinion of most managers and owners. Evidence of collusion was not meaningful from the RISE data. But, regardless of whether the 'insider job' element is important or not, the effect of suppositions from both sides regarding either the lack of caring by owners and managers or the complicity of attendants, the result presents a dilemma. On the one hand, attendants are encouraged (or instructed) to be vigilant about security and to co-operate with management in efforts to reduce crime. On the other hand, many owners expressed an inherent mistrust of their employees. The RISE study found attendants were relied upon to act as 'watchdogs', often without an understanding of the pressure attendants came under from criminals or gang elements. A few owners and managers who participated in the study admitted they did not trust their employees to enlist their help at all in the fight against crime. One manager said his staff refused to take any safety precautions.

Following the murder of the Petrol Station 5 in June 2002 and subsequent violent attacks, SAPIA issued guidelines to stations for improving safety and security. Their guidelines advocated use of bullet-proof kiosk glass; open and clear views of trading areas; limited access to back offices; well-lit forecourts; panic buttons; safety locks; sliding doors to limit access; video surveillance; armed response; links with local police; keyless safes and more inter-industry liaison (RISE, 2002).

Managers and owners clearly feel that the oil companies should be playing a larger role in providing security systems and resources. The oil companies believe that the retailers are skimping on preventive measures to bolster profits. And the petrol attendants believe the managers are largely responsible for creating a safer working environment.

2. What has been done

It would be true to say that a great deal has been done, and a large amount of money spent, in attempting to protect the fuel retail sector and its employees from crime. Tools in the safety prevention kit used by the sector include risk assessments, security auditing, training of retailers and staff, communication with retailers, incident reporting, trauma counseling and the creation of industry forums. Investment in security infrastructure, signage and the shift to 'key-less banking' are also important components of a crime prevention strategy.

Collectively, the oil companies created a retail security forum that meets regularly to strategise on crime issues. The forum is part of the South African Petroleum Industries



Association (SAPIA) and has been meeting for several years. The oil companies have also recently commissioned the MTN Crime Prevention Centre at Rhodes University to keep track of the data on crime occurring at South African petrol stations. It is worth noting that most dealers and owners are aware that crime statistics, once reported, are immediately conveyed to the parent companies of their affiliated oil companies. Some owners and dealers expressed the view that full reporting of crime incidents could have a prejudicial impact on their businesses, leading to blackmarking by the oil company and eventual closure. This suspicion needs to be addressed if incident reporting is to be efficient and useful.

During 1998, the Fuel Retailers Association (FRA) and SAPIA agreed to form a special committee with the objective of establishing the extent to which filling station operators, their businesses, staff and customers have been exposed to violent crime. As a consequence, a survey was commissioned by eMIRG, a market intelligence resource group. The results of this survey are contained within this Petrol Station 5 Safety Project report (FRA/SAPIA, 1999).

In addition, the Motor Industry Bargaining Council (MIBCO) has recently established a National Industry Forum for Safety of the Forecourts following a MIBCO resolution on June 10, 2002.

The following key elements were agreed as terms of reference for the forum, according to MIBCO correspondence with this project, which were intended 'to drive policy and strategy formulation for the creation of deliverables in the promotion of safety on forecourts in South Africa:

- The active engagement of the South African Petroleum Industry Association (SAPIA) with the view of establishing measures taken thus far by its members in the promotion of safety on forecourts and the exchange of inputs pursuant thereto;
- The participant organisations exchange information so as to ensure meaningful and fruitful debate of the issue;
- The engagement of the Manufacturing Engineering and Related Services Sector Education and Training Authority (Merseta), as the statutory training and development administrator with the view of the promotion of safety through training;
- Defining and, if necessary, re-defining the terms of engagement with the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC);
- Ensuring accountability for the implementation of recommendations of the HSRC's investigation into safety of forecourts (Petrol Station 5 Safety Project); and
- Agreement on timeframes for implementation of decisions taken within the national industry forum for safety on forecourts'.

It was noted that the forecourt safety forum consists of representatives of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa), the Fuel Retailers Association and the Retail Motor Industry (RMI) organisation.

Individually, the oil companies have launched a variety of initiatives in a bid to counter crime at affiliated retail sites. Shell, for instance, abides by a Group Security Policy that is applicable to all Shell operating companies throughout the world.¹ The policy is aimed at creating a secure business environment, minimising economic losses and business disruption and safeguarding the group's integrity and reputation. The company issues periodical 'Retail Awareness Notices' as part of its programme for combating crime. These

¹ It should be noted that Shell, as the supplier of Jaffer's Motors in Grassy Park, took special interest in this investigation and provided its own submission and documentation in addition to that provided by the oil companies as a whole.

IN TERROR AND IN SILENCE

typically include an update on a recent event or fatality followed by ‘tips to remember’. Notice No 7 from February 1999 included the following:

- Should you be attacked, remain calm and do not respond aggressively. Observe the attackers carefully, noting any distinguishing features so that you can give a good description to the police;
- Be especially vigilant on Monday mornings and when opening the office after a long weekend as the amount of cash available to robbers will be much higher;
- Be aware of suspicious looking characters who hang around – they might be planning a robbery;
- Change your routine, especially when handling cash. Avoid taking cash to the bank. It is always better to make use of cash-in-transit services;
- Build a working relationship with your working colleagues as in times of danger you will rely on them for assistance; and
- Cultivate good relations with the owners of neighbouring businesses to ensure assistance from them in emergencies.

Shell also makes provision for a Vulnerability to Robbery (VTR) assessment of its sites that dealers can have conducted on request. The company declares that according to its policy all incidents are reported, programmes will be conducted to develop security awareness and responsibility and the adequacy of security measures will be reviewed periodically.

Shell’s representatives pointed out to the working group that the company’s security procedures – described in the *Safety at Service Stations Operational Standards Manual* as well as the *Pump Attendants’s Safety Manual* – were published more than ten years ago. In addition, the concept of security is intrinsic to the *Shell Statement of General Business Principles*.

Other oil companies have similar crime prevention and safety programmes. BP has an HSSE (Health, Safety, Security, Environment) Audit for Retail Sites which includes checks on possession of the relevant legislation, emergency guides, a HSSE policy and procedure manual, emergency stop button and escape route checks, among others. BP also does a criminal risk assessment and site evaluations. In its hefty *Health, Safety, Environment and Security Procedure Manual*, BP states that ‘all staff must be trained in armed robbery survival and all site security procedures. The training must be revisited regularly to ensure that staff knowledge is maintained’ (BPSA, 1999). All the companies urge associated dealers and franchisees to report incidents of crime fully.

Security has been incorporated into the architecture of South African petrol stations for more than 15 years. Bullet-proof glass has been installed at many petrol stations to protect the cashier, though only 50% of the sites surveyed by RISE were equipped with this kind of glass. Of the other petrol stations surveyed, two had panic buttons, two had one-way viewing mirrors and one simply had an ADT caravan parked in the forecourt to create the illusion of safety.

The drop-safe has become a frequent crime prevention mechanism present at many petrol stations. Of the 25 surveyed by RISE, 24 stations had drop-safes in place.² According to the survey, most owners and managers were positive about the impact of the safes and highlighted they were comforted by the knowledge that cash was no longer available on site. The survey also indicated, however, that a minority of the owners and managers had stopped using the drop-safes. The basis for this reluctance was stated as

² The logic underpinning the use of a drop safe is as follows: small amounts of cash – usually around R1 000 – are dropped into a keyless safe. Nobody on site can access the money in the safe. The money is collected by armed security guards who transport the money to the bank (RISE 2002: 48).

RESPONSES AND STRATEGIES

concern that the cash-in-transit vans had become the targets and also that cashiers were exposed to higher risk just before dropping the money in the safe. The cost of cash-in-transit collections, borne by the petrol station owner in the form of increasingly costly bank charges, together with the lack of a secure place for the regular counting of the cash by the cashier also contributed to security concerns and a reluctance to use drop-safes.

The use of closed-circuit television cameras has also become ubiquitous in the industry. One company reports that it made the decision to start installing CCTV infrastructure eight years ago. The survey indicated that 20 of the 25 stations had a CCTV system in place. Many of the stations using CCTV cameras reported problems with the system that militated against their effective use as a crime prevention tool. Owners and managers complained that the quality of picture was poor preventing effective identification of the assailants. Some owners also reported that criminals often vandalised the cameras and either stole or destroyed the tapes. Others alleged the tapes simply disappeared when handed over to the authorities. A police investigation into security measures at Western Cape petrol stations found there was frequently no tape in the CCTV cameras or that tapes were not systematically stored in a safe place. A security firm also told the working group that CCTV cameras were often placed incorrectly at petrol stations preventing an adequate view of the faces of criminals.

Many of the CCTV systems that have been placed at sites are growing obsolete and are operated on an analogue basis. The move to digital – which allows for better images, transaction data overlay and remote monitoring – is naturally expensive. Several oil companies are putting resources into this shift. Suggestions were made to the working group that a centralised facility for regional monitoring of digital CCTV cameras was a possibility, along the lines of the Cape Town city centre. It is acknowledged that CCTV will never accomplish adequate safety levels on its own but, in conjunction with other strategies, provides a useful component in safety management.

Bulletproof glass, while expensive, has become an increasingly common feature of many petrol stations. BP has in fact issued all of its stations with this kind of glass. Usually placed around the cashier, the glass has proven to be a physical deterrent to criminals. It has also served as a source of psychological comfort for owners and cashiers. Several non-BP owners and managers told the RISE team they would feel much safer if supplied with protective glass. Owners and managers agreed protective glass could be circumvented by criminals taking hostages, but agreed nonetheless that they preferred to have protection than go without. The working group also heard from one company that offered a laminated cover for normal glass that had the same effect as bullet-proof glass at a fraction of the cost.³

Attendants interviewed by RISE responded differently to crime prevention technology. The highest confidence in technology was placed in drop-safes with more than two thirds (68%) of attendants feeling they constituted an effective anti-crime measure. There was a great deal more ambivalence concerning armed guards (39% believed they were neither effective nor ineffective), closed circuit television systems (36% felt unsafe in spite of CCTV systems), while almost half said business watch and neighbourhood watch schemes made little difference.

It is worth pointing out that feelings of risk were not continuous or stable across different

³ Defence Concepts: Bullet and Bomb Resistance Window Security Laminate DC 375.

IN TERROR AND IN SILENCE

locations. Risk also varied from petrol station to petrol station. Attendants identified the riskiest areas to be the pumps and the forecourts.

There is plenty of evidence that petrol station owners and managers have taken steps to improve safety by joining local crime watch or community crime prevention structures. Five of the managers surveyed belonged to a petrol station managers' association, five belonged to a business watch scheme and almost all were members of an industry association (primarily the FRA). Owners and managers also indicated they had invested time and money in building relationships with local police. Incentives such as free coffee, meals at cost and Christmas parties were used to encourage greater police visibility.

Some independent security-related training and know-how does exist within the sector such as that provided, for instance, by the Petrol Attendants' Academy. In its certification process, the academy gives basic instruction in robbery prevention, security aspects, being cashier and first aid.

A variety of other crime prevention policies have been instituted by companies including the creation of secure goods receiving yards, external access for servicing of ATMs, elimination of secluded areas, internal security gates and strong lighting.

It is worth noting too that considerable successes have been achieved in sectors from whom fuel retail could learn a great deal. The banking industry has achieved an extraordinary reduction in bank-related crimes, cutting bank robberies by almost half in the last year alone. In the first six months of 2001, 213 incidents of attempted armed robberies were recorded in South Africa leading to the loss of about R30 million. In the first half of 2002, 124 incidents were reported with the loss of about R20 million (Banking Council of SA Report, 2002).

The Banking Council of South Africa, in its presentation to the working group, outlined a number of crucial safety methods and procedures which could have an important impact on crime levels in the fuel retail sector. Examples of these include:

- development of effective crime scene management
- improved communication during cash collection visits
- implementation of minimum security standards
- bank note destruction and staining
- more secure cash transfer points
- assisting in establishment of special courts, court centres and fund prosecutions to speed up case completion
- prioritisation of cases
- liaison with SAPS on strategic level
- negotiation with SAPS for air and ground reaction units
- building national and international anti-crime partnerships

The Banking Council also had a number of suggestions specifically for the retail oil industry that the working group considered valuable. Among these were:

- an incentive scheme for employers who prevented crime
- better communication with cash-in-transit companies around the delivery time
- a toll free number for anonymous crime prevention tip-offs
- the linking of all CCTV cameras to a national control room
- the establishment of an independent security response team

RESPONSES AND STRATEGIES

- keeping a database of all dismissed employees
- keeping a CD of suspicious vehicles and people
- revisit placement of cameras, especially those on the roof
- regular lie-detection tests for staff⁴

The working group feels that there has been insufficient communication and collaboration between sectors such as banking, retail and the oil sector when it comes to matters of mutual interest such as crime.

Some of the oil companies have made provision for trauma counseling for those of their employees who experience violent crime. This does extend to fellow attendants or colleagues at specific petrol stations but not, however, to the families of victims.

3. Problem areas

It is clear that while efforts have been made in several quarters to respond to the violent crime crisis, the sector is still struggling to cope. There are many reasons for this, but some of the significant ones are identified below.

Seventy-nine percent of attendants interviewed by RISE said they had not received any crime awareness training. Most (64%) said they would tell their colleagues if they spotted suspicious-looking individuals at the petrol station while 59% said they would alert their employer and 19% said they would call the police. More than half of attendants said that management was either doing too little or nothing in relation to assuring their safety and security.

It is clear that cash-handling techniques leave much to be desired over the sector as a whole. Sloppy or public handling or counting of cash greatly increases a station's vulnerability to crime. A large number of the stations surveyed by RISE admitted cash takings were counted in an exposed area.

There was a strong feeling among many owners and managers that the government had not acted sufficiently to deter crime, generally, and to prevent crime at petrol stations specifically. A few expressed sympathy as the government had many other priorities and acknowledged the state's lack of adequate resources (RISE, 2002). Data collected indicated general satisfaction with police response to crimes. More than half of the owners and managers surveyed thought the police response had been either effective (28%) or very effective (27%). A much higher level of scepticism was indicated regarding the subsequent efficiency of the criminal justice system with most believing that cases seldom got to court.

It is also the case, however, that while an oil industry retail security forum does exist and that contact between various representatives of the industry and the police has happened in the past (eg March, 1999), insufficient efforts have been at a senior, national level to co-ordinate the industry's efforts to combat crime. Representatives of the national crime prevention division of the South African Police Services report that no approach has been made by the oil industry as a whole to create a crime management structure. Other sectors in the South African economy, including retail and banking, have made strenuous efforts to establish forums with senior representation by the police. The results of these structures' work are already becoming apparent.

⁴ The working group does not necessarily support all the measures recommended by the Banking Council and believes regular lie-detection tests are particularly problematic.

IN TERROR AND IN SILENCE

It is clear that an industry-wide structure, including representation from the retailers and from employee organisations in partnership with the SA Police Services could make a very significant impact to levels of crime suffered at the country's petrol stations and in the formulation of strategies on how to deal with crime. Early warning systems, operational agreements with local police stations, crime scene management training, prioritisation and identification of call-ins and response guidelines could all be important products of such a structure's work.

While the oil companies have business partnerships with all the fuel outlets they supply, the closeness of this relationship varies depending mainly on whether the petrol station is company controlled or dealer controlled. Where the sites are dealer controlled, the petrol stations are not owned by the oil company and the company therefore is in a much weaker position to demand adherence to safety and security procedures. While these guidelines are part of most new franchise agreements, the oil company's hands are tied. If the site is a high turnover outlet, withdrawal by the company would mean a significant loss of business. It would also mean the replacement by the former oil company of a new one that would necessarily inherit the dealer's reluctance to comply with procedures and standards. A key refrain of the oil companies is simply that they are not able to control their associated dealers nor to dictate minimum standards or procedures when it comes to safety and security.

At present, there is no integrated public repository providing free and accurate data on crime and violence at petrol stations. This makes it difficult to refer to statistical data trends on petrol-based crime and violence. A start has been made at the MTN crime prevention center, but this information is not available to the public and greater integration is required to make the data more useful.

Additional security infrastructure and resources are potentially available at petrol stations. These resources are not technological or material ones, but are derived from and are part of the social capital in communities surrounding petrol stations. In the RISE study, several non-traditional and social capital-based security measures were explored. One such question explored whether street vendors were permitted to trade in or near the petrol station. Only one petrol station permitted this. Another question explored the presence of taxi ranks in or near the station: again, only one station permitted taxis to drop off and collect customers in or near the station (RISE, 2002). It is likely, according to RISE, that petrol stations are losing out on possibly advantageous collaboration with neighbours and related businesses. This proposition was not tested further by the working group who viewed it as an interesting but not compelling notion in need of further exploration.

Of the petrol stations surveyed in the eMIRG report, 30 per cent admitted they had no security measures in place at all while 45 per cent had panic buttons and armed response.

It is instructive that the career more favourably viewed than any other by petrol attendants surveyed by RISE was private security guard or police officer. While we do not advocate handing out firearms to attendants, there does seem to be a genuine interest in the performance of security functions. Some basic training in this regard would therefore not be seed into barren soil.

The oil companies would be the first to admit that the ongoing nature of the crime problem suggests a great deal more needs to be done in the realm of crime prevention.

RESPONSES AND STRATEGIES

One company recommended that oil companies should:

- Continue to enforce and extend keyless banking;
- Replace analogue CCTV systems with digital systems where appropriate;
- Continue with security training and awareness programmes;
- Uplift standards of the security industry; and
- Continue to engage other stakeholders.

It also said that retailers:

- Should comply with all legal requirements;
- Should comply with oil company standards and procedures;
- Should invest more in security measures in line with oil company guidelines;
- Should recruit staff from the Petrol Attendant's Academy, or similar institutions;
- Should develop improved relationships with staff members; and
- Should participate in local policing forums.

In addition, it was suggested that:

- Security companies should agree on improved service levels with oil companies;
- Banks should be prepared to reduce cash handling fees;
- Banks should be prepared to reduce card transaction fees;
- Banks should be prepared to extend bulk cash handling hours;
- Government should allow a portion of the fuel margin to be allocated on security expenditure at retail sites; and
- Government should assist in cash reduction through legalisation of fuel purchase by credit cards.

One response that has not been forthcoming has been the re-evaluation of the 24-hour service offered by most petrol stations. A great deal of evidence shows how vulnerable petrol stations are, particularly between the hours of 11pm and 4am. An independent report (eMIRG), commissioned both by the FRA and SAPIA recommended in 2001 that the industry should 'consider dropping 24-hour service in high risk areas'. To date this has not been acted upon.

There are various strategies emanating from overseas research on simple crime prevention that should be considered by the industry. These include:

- Placing simple height markers on exit doors to assist witnesses in estimating height of assailants leaving premises;
- Ensuring speedy direct access or departure is prevented by speed bumps or detours;
- Staff are trained and retrained in appropriate responses to armed hold-ups and robberies;
- A register is kept of risky customers; and
- The public and visible commitment of company management to improving safety and security.

The working group heard repeated statements and evidence relating the impossibility of accessing funding either from the Skills Development Fund, the Umsobomvu Fund or from any of the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs). Repeated attempts have been made by companies to access the SETAs, in particular, with regard to learnerships for petrol attendants or to provide training for the unemployed. These

attempts, stretching over several years, were repeatedly foiled in spite of the considerable amounts of money paid into, for instance, the Skills Development Fund.

The Minister of Labour, in a written reply to a Parliamentary Question dated March 1 2002, responded: 'Petrol Attendants currently fall within the jurisdiction of the Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services SETA, commonly referred to as the Merseta. The Merseta has already developed and registered a learnership to cater for petrol attendants. The Merseta is proceeding with plans to recruit learners into this programme in May 2002. It should however be noted that a final decision is still outstanding as to whether the fuel retailers should fall within the scope of the Merseta (motor chamber) or the Wholesale and Retail SETA. The outcome of the arbitration process should be announced within the next two weeks' (see: *Hansard*, 2002). To date, no petrol attendants have undergone learnerships with the Merseta or, indeed, with any SETA.