




Time-delay Safes in Community Pharmacies

Introduction

Pharmacy safety and security are of utmost importance to protect staff and patients, as well as to minimize diversion of controlled substances. With pharmacy-related crime in Ontario being an ongoing issue, pharmacy professionals continue to explore and/or implement various strategies to increase pharmacy safety and security. One such potential strategy is the implementation of time-delay safes. Several Canadian jurisdictions have mandated the use of time-delay safes in community pharmacies to deter crime (Table 1).

Table 1: Mandated use of time-delay safes in community pharmacies in Canada

BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	NB	NS	PEI	NL	NWT	YT	NU
✓ [†]	✓ [‡]	✓ [§]	✗	⌚ [^]	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
<p>  Mandated in jurisdiction  Not mandated  Pending </p> <p> [†] Implemented in 2015ⁱ [‡] Implemented in 2022ⁱ [§] To be implemented in all new pharmacies as of November 30, 2022, and by November 30, 2023 for all other pharmacies.ⁱⁱ [^] Contingent on OCP approval of a province-wide standard (decision anticipated in March 2023)ⁱⁱⁱ </p>												

Pharmacists are expected to take all reasonable necessary steps to protect the security of controlled substances in their possession.^{iv} In Ontario, the Ontario College of Pharmacists (OCP) is in the process of [developing a province-wide standard](#) that would mandate the use of time-delay safes, and prominent signage highlighting their use, in all community pharmacies which, if approved, will come into effect immediately.ⁱⁱⁱ

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide pharmacy professionals with information regarding time-delay safe technology as a possible initiative that can be considered for use to supplement other pharmacy safety and security measures. Currently, the decision to implement this technology is at the discretion of the pharmacy owner/designated manager (DM) based on the risks and needs of the specific practice setting. However, if OCP approves a province-wide standard, the use of time-delay safes, and prominent signage highlighting their use, will be mandated in all community pharmacies in Ontario.ⁱⁱⁱ (Note: At the time of publication, details regarding OCP's standard and implementation plan were not yet available. This resource will be updated as needed to reflect any additional information.) For other safety and security strategies, such as those related to physical design, security systems, and/or operational and staff initiatives, refer to OPA's [Pharmacy Safety and Security Checklist](#).

Overview of Time-delay Safes

Time-delay safes involve a feature that electronically delays the time it takes to open the safe after the security code is entered. Prior to use, the user can set the length of the time delay to meet the needs of their pharmacy, which cannot be overridden by someone opening the safe. In other Canadian provinces that have mandated its use, the required minimum time delay is 5 minutes.^{iii,v} According to police in Alberta, usage of time-delay safes may make the pharmacy a less desirable target because perpetrators want to make their robbery as fast and as efficient as possible (an average pharmacy robbery takes less than 2 minutes but can be as short as under 35 seconds) and therefore will typically target pharmacies with minimal security measures.^{iv} As the time-delay feature increases the chances of perpetrators getting caught, when used together with other security measures, it may act as a deterrent and prevent a potential robbery.^{ivii} The implementation of time-delay safes in Ontario pharmacies is supported by the Community Safety & Crime Prevention Committee of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP) to prevent crime and elevate public safety.^{viii}

Learnings from Past Experiences

- Implementation of by-laws and security changes in British Columbia which included the use of time-delay safes, security camera systems, motion sensors, signage, alarms, and physical barriers as appropriate, reduced pharmacy robberies by 94%.^{vii}
- In Calgary, pharmacy robberies decreased with the implementation of time-delay safes on July 1, 2022 (89 incidents in 2021 compared to only 14 after the July 1 implementation date).^{ix} Similarly, in Edmonton, there were 39 pharmacy robberies in 2021 compared to 0 after the implementation date of time-delay safes).^{ix}
- Walgreens saw a 76% decrease in the rate of pharmacy robberies in their 1,400 stores when the time-delay safe program was implemented in 2009.^{vi}
- CVS Health saw a 70% reduction in pharmacy robberies when time-delay safes were implemented in their Indianapolis stores in 2015.^x Further introduction in an additional 20 states saw a 50% reduction in robberies at their pharmacies in those local communities.^x

Other Considerations

Table 2: Other considerations related to the use of time-delay safes

Possible Concerns	Factors to Consider
Use of time delay safes could escalate a robbery	The Edmonton Police Service has indicated that use of time-delay safes is not associated with escalation of violence during robberies based on past experiences. ^{vii} In addition, the use of time-delay safes and prominent signage highlighting their use is meant to deter perpetrators so that they do not target the pharmacy in the first place. ^{viii}
Cost	Although an additional cost may be associated with implementation, it could be balanced against other factors such as the risk of robbery, security needs of the pharmacy, monetary and non-monetary costs associated with a robbery, etc. <i>(See section on Suggested Tips for Implementation for more information about sample costs and alternatives.)</i>

Table 2 (continued)

Possible Concerns	Factors to Consider
Interruption to pharmacy workflow	Consultations by the Alberta College of Pharmacy have indicated that the impact to workflow is minimal and manageable (based on feedback from pharmacy chains that have already implemented time-delay safes in their pharmacies). ^{xi}
Inadequate pharmacy space	Pharmacy professionals should assess the needs of their pharmacy when determining the size of safe required. In addition, as per the College of Pharmacists of British Columbia, the British Columbia Pharmacy Association and corporate pharmacies who have experience with using time-delay safes, appropriate inventory management can help mitigate space issues. ^{xi}

Suggested Tips for Implementation:

- Determine the size of safe required based on workflow, inventory levels, etc.ⁱ
- Consider whether the safe is large and heavy enough that it cannot be easily moved or whether it can be affixed to the pharmacy floor.^{xi}
- If the pharmacy is currently using a safe for controlled substances, consider whether it can be upgraded to include an internal time delay mechanism or whether the pharmacy needs to purchase a time-delay safe (examples of suppliers in Tables 3 and 4).
- Discuss with pharmacy team members the purpose of the safe, how it will support/protect them and how to use the safe appropriately (e.g., the safe should be closed and locked at all times unless filling a prescription or restocking).^{i,vii}
- Display signage to ensure the public is aware that a time-delay safe is used at the pharmacy to deter perpetrators and prevent robberies from occurring.^{xi}
- Additional guidance from other jurisdictions (for reference purposes only):
 - [Professional Practice Policy – 74: Community Pharmacy and Telepharmacy Security](#) (College of Pharmacists of British Columbia)
 - [What qualifies as a “safe”?](#) (Alberta College of Pharmacy)
 - [SCPP Council Approves Time-Delayed Safes for Community Pharmacies](#) (Saskatchewan College of Pharmacy Professionals)

Table 3: Examples of companies that can retrofit existing safes into time-delay safes**

Company	Service Area	Contact Information
Superior Lock & Safe	GTA and surrounding areas	905-825-1235 https://www.superiorlockandsafe.com/
Gamble Lock, Door & Safe	Newmarket and surrounding areas	905-895-3348 https://www.gamblelock.com/
Coté Lock & Security	Kitchener-Waterloo and surrounding areas	519-894-7055 https://www.cotelockservice.ca/

Table 3 (continued)

Company	Service Area	Contact Information
Walker Security Locksmith	London and surrounding areas	519-672-1900 https://walkerlocksmith.com/
Better Locksmiths	Windsor and surrounding areas	519-972-5625 http://betterlocksmiths.com/index-1.html
Locksmart	Hamilton and surrounding areas	905-387-0123 https://locksmart.ca/services/
Accu-lock and Security	Niagara and surrounding areas	905-374-7075 https://accu-lock.com/
Gunnebo Canada	Ottawa and surrounding areas	613-224-4335 https://www.gunnebo.com/en-ca/service/
Active Lock & Safe	Huntsville, Bracebridge, Gravenhurst, Parry Sound and surrounding areas	705-645-3500 https://activelockandsafe.ca/
Northern Security	Sudbury and surrounding areas	705-675-1003 https://www.northernsecurity.ca/
Wood Family Locksmithing	Timmins and surrounding areas	705-221-8728 http://woodfamilylocksmithing.com/services-overview.php
The Lock Shop	Thunder Bay and surrounding areas	807-625-9494 http://www.thelockshop.ca/retail-security-products.asp
<p>* The ability to upgrade an existing safe is dependent on the type of safe, features, etc. and may not be feasible in all situations; contact your service provider for more information. Please note, this is not a complete list and the information provided in this table is accurate as of August 3, 2022. Pharmacy professionals are encouraged to contact other companies who may be able to service their local area.</p> <p># OPA is not affiliated with and does not endorse any of the suppliers listed; this information is shared for member interest only and members are encouraged to use other services or companies that are appropriate and available to them.</p>		

Table 4: Examples of time-delay safes[∞]

Provider	Item	Details
Affordable Locksmiths	B-3521WD Narcotic Safe with Slide Out Trays	\$2,449.98
Staples	SentrySafe XX Large Depository Security Safe	\$1,699.99
Canadian Safe Manufacturing	Various narcotic safes with time-delay lock options	Contact for pricing and instructions for ordering (1-800-267-7635)
Amazon Canada	Time Delay Safe	Pricing varies based on size
<p>[∞] OPA is not affiliated with and does not endorse any of the suppliers listed; this information is shared for member interest only and members are encouraged to use other services or companies that are appropriate and available to them. Pricing provided is before applicable taxes and fees (e.g., shipping) and is accurate as of January 16, 2023.</p>		

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DISCLAIMER:

The Ontario Pharmacists Association (OPA) provides this material to pharmacy professionals for informational purposes only. It is intended to provide pharmacy professionals with general information for consideration regarding time-delay safes. The information provided may not be comprehensive and does not replace professional judgement and responsibilities. It is provided without warranty of any kind by OPA and OPA assumes no responsibility for any errors, omissions or inaccuracies therein. The decision for use and application of this document is the responsibility of the user. OPA assumes no liability for such use and application or any resulting outcomes. It is the responsibility of the pharmacy professional to use professional judgment in evaluating this material in light of any relevant situational data. It is intended to supplement materials provided by regulatory authorities, and should there be any discrepancies, municipal, provincial, and federal laws, policies and guidelines shall prevail. This information is up to date as at the date of publication. Pharmacy professionals are encouraged to use other resources that are appropriate and available to them.

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