



ATM CRIME & ARMOR ISSUES ON THE RISE

By Joe Woods



Skimming, vandalism and physical attacks on ATMs, armored car and cash-in-transit (CIT) personnel, ATM technicians and other ATM crimes are all on the rise throughout the U.S.



For a criminal, the ATM has always presented an open environment with multiple escape routes. Criminals can be very adept at approaching the ATM and making it appear that they are conducting typical business. But in reality, they can be placing devices on the ATM to capture card and pin data.

The exact numbers are hard to come by, but some reports indicate these attacks on ATMs and personnel have increased by 50% over the past three years. In one high profile case, an armored car driver was killed during a 2023 cash delivery by two attackers.

All attacks on ATMs and personnel are serious threats, and while no one can prevent every incident, there are things banks can do to help reduce the threat.

Here are four tips that you can put into action immediately for your own ATM fleet:

- If you have branch staff loading external ATMs (or ATMs that are not loaded from inside the branch), vary the day of the week and time of day that they travel to the ATM. Being consistent and routine in your replenish cycle makes staff an easy target.

- If you are concerned with having staff loading your external ATMs, contact the armored car or CIT company currently providing your branch cash and ask for pricing and the documents for ATM replenishment. Even if you don't make the change immediately, having the necessary pricing and paperwork can enable a faster transition when needed.
- Have your branch staff check the ATM a minimum of twice a day for skimming devices. Not all skim devices are detectable, but many of them are. Your staff should inspect the card reader and pin pad for tampering or any noticeable changes. Be sure they grab the card reader and wiggle it. It should not move. If it does shift or moves, it could indicate that a skim device has been placed on top of the original reader. Also inspect for glue or tape around the edge of the reader. Many skim devices are put on in such a way that they can be removed very quickly after a period of time, so they are not going to be bolted or adhered tightly to the ATM fascia.
- Have staff look at the frame of the ATM. Are there devices that look out of place? Some criminals are placing small wireless cameras at the top of the ATM fascia aimed at the pin pad to capture cardholder pin data.

Along with these steps to help thwart skimming crime, you should be aware of armor-CIT issues that are causing increased ATM downtime. Running your ATM fleet at

peak performance is critical for customer access. Your customers rely on ATM's for cash and making deposits during and more importantly, after business hours. When an issue pulls an ATM out of commission your customers suffer. They may lose out on needed cash for weekend expenses or not have deposits made available in their checking account. One of the most common issues robbing your ATM of critical uptime is armor/CIT issues.

In 2022, armor/CIT service performance suffered a 5% decline globally per statistics provided by CMS Analytics at the Cash in The USA conference. Service results for armor carriers continued to decline in 2023. And there's nothing stopping this slide in performance in 2024. What is causing this decline? In a word, staffing.

Lack of available and willing employees and continuous turnover are key elements in the decline in service you may be experiencing with your armor provider. Many armor branches are understaffed by 50%. Thinking of switching to a new armor/CIT provider? The industry joke has always gone something like, "let's try to pick the best of the worst." And many armor branches are not accepting new clients due to staffing issues, unwilling to add more stops on routes that are already too long for existing field service staff to properly service.

Even if an armor branch is able to hire and retain new armor field staff, these employees need time to train, learn how to load and work with many different ATM platforms, safes, etc. New employees typically cause as many ATM issues as under-performing employees.



So, the pain will continue even as an armor branch is staffing up.

The closer you work with your partners, the more aware you will be and can help set expectations for your staff and customers. It takes time, and moving from one provider to another can be like jumping from the frying pan into the fire.

About the Author

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