

How banks are fighting crime

By CARL STODDARD

As armed robberies become increasingly common, more banks and other financial institutions are combating the situation with tougher security systems.

Standard Federal Savings and Loan, 29405 Greenfield, in Southfield, fortified the interior of its building with bullet-proof plastic walls and partitions in the wake of two robberies which occurred within a five-day span.

"We decided to give us some security," one teller at Standard Federal told a reporter shortly after the bullet-proof walls were installed. "A gun doesn't look as big through the glass."

According to Mike Furry, a vice-president with Standard Federal, the bullet-proof partitions have been added to about 10 of the loan company's 30 offices.

"We don't go in better skelter installing them," Furry said. He added that installation is based on priority, with offices judged to be in need of the protection receiving it.

"History has shown that where bul-

let-proof glass is installed, we don't have hold-ups," Furry said. In addition to the bullet-proof partitions (which enclose tellers and other personnel) wood enclosures around the tellers have been re-reinforced with armor plating, he said.

The safety measures should help protect not only the employees but also customers because of the greatly reduced likelihood of a robbery, Furry said.

MOST FINANCIAL institutions would prefer not to talk about the need for added security, but spokesmen for most agree security measures are sure to become tighter. Southfield police agree.

According to Col. John Hood, head of the Southfield Police Crime Prevention Bureau, at least two financial institutions in the Southfield and Lathrup village area have thus far gone to bullet-proof protection. Other banks, savings and loan companies and mortgages companies may follow suit.

One banking company, in fact, has an on-going program of beefing up security at all of its offices, Hood said.

Mrs. Carol Ewing, a representative for Cadillac Plastics, a company which sells "bullet-resistant" plastic panels, predicted more banks will be "releasing employees behind walls of see-through deterrents."

"I don't want to gloom and doom everybody, but as criminals become more sophisticated and tellers are killed...banks will want stronger deterrents," she said.

Underwriters Laboratories (UL) places bank protective measures in three categories. Mrs. Ewing said. Most banks now fall within the first category which calls for a guard, closed-circuit television cameras and either glass or plastic partitions in front of tellers' windows.

She termed the thin glass or plastic partitions "a physical deterrent."

"It's only there. You could shoot through it. But most banks go with it because it's the least expensive."

The second category includes glass or plastic walls around the employees, she said. These protective materials are about one inch thick and provide some protection.

Highest on the list are the materials commonly called "bullet-proof."

Made of either thick glass or laminated polycarbonate plastic, these materials are usually capable of stopping bullets fired from most conventional weapons. For legal reasons, the plastic and glass sheets are termed "bullet-resistant," she said.

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