

Desperate Melbourne shop owners turning to smoke screens to deter burglars

Melbourne businesses are increasingly using smoke and fog screens — which instantly blind intruders at the push of a button — to combat rising armed robberies and deter theft.



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Suburban businesses targeted by violent armed criminals are increasingly turning to fog security products screens in the latest move to fortify their stores.

The number of stores adding the Fog devices to their toolkit has exploded with the surge in armed robberies committed at service stations, bottle shops and tobacconists.

Gangs of armed robbers have been met with the blast of fog which is deployed from the roof, filling the room instantly to blind the would-be crooks.



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It can be activated by the touch of a button (or by your device) and is proven to thwart the crooks eyeing off cigarettes and high-end booze.

A Braeside BP service station was the latest example of a worker deploying the fog machine as machete-wielding thugs stormed the [Lower Dandenong Rd store on Tuesday night](#).

One Melbourne-based company said [Melbourne's crime wave](#) was forcing businesses to further defend themselves.

Smokeshield chief executive Natalie Vogel said the number of fog installations in Victorian stores have doubled.

She said her product had a 97 per cent success rate in disrupting crooks.

"Many business owners have reached a tipping point — they're no longer satisfied with security that only records what happened after the fact," she said.

"Once the fog is deployed the criminals are stopped in their tracks and the additional strobe and siren ensure they leave empty-handed within seconds, completely disorientated.

"We've had multiple activations in recent weeks, where nothing was stolen because the fog system kicked in so quickly and the employee simply walked into the safe room we built and hit a duress button activating the fog."

Police were on Tuesday night called to the BP service station on Lower Dandenong Rd in Braeside after a crew of four offenders, one allegedly armed with a machete, threatened the innocent worker.

The service station worker retreated to the back room and deployed the smoke deterrent while the crew were raiding the cigarette draws before they fled the scene about 7pm.

The product is also popular among tobacconists, bottle shops, jewellers, convenience stores, pharmacies and electronics stores.

Other stores have also turned to different forms of fortification amid the rise in ram raids and firebombings across the city.

Steel bars and sturdy security roller doors are now commonly seen placed across the shopfronts of tobacconists to prevent further firebombing attacks.

The number of traffic bollards placed in front of stores and in residential driveways also appears to have risen to prevent vehicles entering and exiting those premises.