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Electronic crime displacement

Developments in computing and communications technologies have created many new opportunities for people to act illegally. A paper released by the Australian Institute of Criminology, “e-Crime Solutions and Crime Displacement”, seeks to apply theories of crime displacement in the context of electronic crime by considering the possible counterproductive effects that electronic crime reduction techniques might have. Criminal activity may be displaced following situational crime prevention measures in six ways: to other locations; other times or occasions; softer targets; different modus operandi; other types of crime; and other perpetrators. Examples of how displacement can occur in the context of electronic crime are detailed below.

Types of electronic crime displacement

OTHER LOCATIONS – Offenders may target victims in jurisdictions that have lower levels of network security or less severe penalties for computer crimes.

DIFFERENT MODUS OPERANDI – The hardening of electronic targets may encourage offenders to change their modus operandi by bribing or threatening staff for computer access.

OTHER TIMES OR OCCASIONS – Offenders may choose to operate during times of high traffic in order to conceal their illicit transactions in large amounts of data.

OTHER TYPES OF CRIME – Offenders may become involved in other types of crime such as threats of violence to compel people to withdraw cash at ATMs or transfer money electronically.

SOFTER TARGETS – Offenders may target smaller businesses or individuals who have inadequate security systems in place, or target computer systems with less sophisticated security features.

OTHER PERPETRATORS – Offenders may attack a target as existing offenders are removed following the implementation of crime prevention initiatives.

SOURCE: Smith, R.G., Wolanin, N. & Worthington, G. 2002, “e-Crime Solutions and Crime Displacement”, *Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, no. 243, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra.

Full report available on AIC web site: <http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/tandi/tandi243.html>