

Cash-in-transit attacks 'remain high on criminal agenda'

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ATTACKS on cash-in-transit staff and vehicles rose 15 percent in the 2015/16 period, while the cash-in-transit sector continues to be a soft target for criminals as it moves an amount of R130 billion in circulation around the country.

Cash Connect Management Solution joint chief executive Richard Phillips warned yesterday that the Easter season could see a spike in bank robberies and ATM bombings.

Phillips said the sector was still trying to recover from

the spate of violent armed robberies that took place in December.

He said the retail sector had experienced a more than 150 percent increase in robberies last year. During the same period, plastic explosives used in attempts to steal from cash deposit devices had increased by more than 400 percent.

"We can reasonably expect to see a spike in business crime during April, as consumers go on holiday and the volume of cash increases at retail stores across the country.

"As consumers plan to take a

break, criminals certainly don't prepare to take time off.

"This, in fact, is their peak period for business."

Phillips said the trends showed that syndicates attack in groups of six to 12 armed men, with armed robberies the most prevalent mode of attack, followed by business burglaries.

Pattern

"During a burglary, the findings show that general retail stores that only trade during the day time are attacked when the stores are closed for business.

"The pattern with these occurrences is that an assortment of cutting machines, angle grinders and tools of that kind are generally used to access the safes.

"Security professionals caution that robberies are more often than not executed with careful planning by organised crime syndicates who collect as much information about the target as possible.

"Information about the amount of cash and the general what, when and how the cash is protected is gleaned from within the business, either by

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observation or through the help of employees or contractors, and in some cases both," said Phillips.

He said the cash-in-transit in-

dustry was expected to remain high on the criminal agenda.

"We welcome (newly appointed Police Minister Fikile Mbalula's) recent commitment to a specialised police task-force approach to cash crime.

"This is an essential part of the cash industry's response to this extremely violent and potentially crippling crime," Phillips added.

"Criminals, without a doubt, are becoming smarter and more determined in their methods.

"Their common use of explosives is indicative of how better skilled they are becoming."