



# ATM Attacks on the Rise

*Ways to Protect your Machines and Business With Better Security*



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**T**he News section of the March issue of *RePlay* highlighted a worrying trend for independent amusement and vending locations: attacks on stand-alone ATM machines.

Consulting group 3SI Security Systems reports a 60 percent increase in attacks from 2018 to 2019. Gangs, sometimes disguised in maintenance outfits, attempt to cart out machines or less noticeably, bypass the ATM locks and gain access to cash and data. In locations with little cash on hand, ATMs are a prime target for thieves.

This trend surfaces as ATMs appear to be increasingly found, not only in hotels and ball-parks, but in bars and taverns. As Hank Schlesinger pointed out in the April 2020 issue of *RePlay*: “ATM innovation that significantly expands features and functionality seems inevitable.”

With an increase of ATMs in use, and an increase in criminal opportunities, amusement and video game operators with installed ATM machines might want to review their security sys-



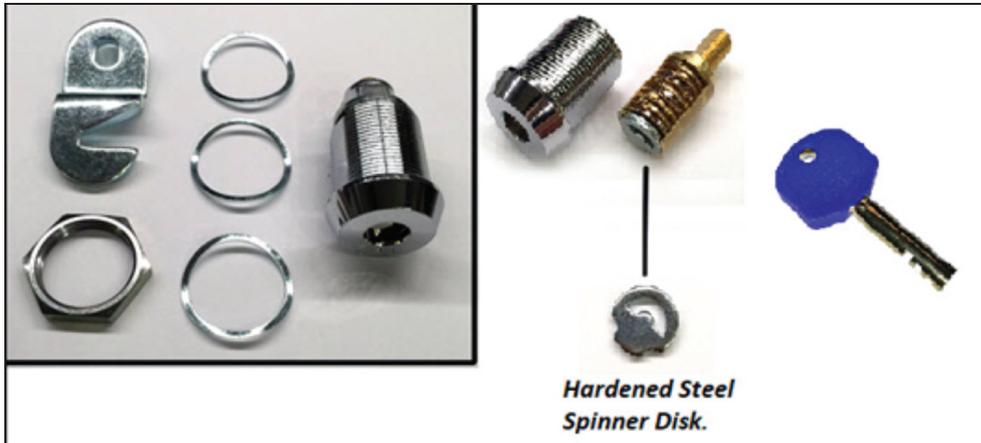
**Don't settle** for the OEM lock on your ATMs, says Morahan.

tems. Thieves have added ATMs to their list of targets, moving on from amusements, games and vending machines. Why? Because ATMs promise crooks a big payoff in money and in data. (Did you know that there's a black market for the sale of the credit card data skimmed from ATMs and petroleum dispensers? And the data is not just from customers. There is plenty of sensitive data from the operators' businesses as well.)

Given the economic climate, it's no surprise that amateur, brute-force attacks on cash handling devices are again on the rise. ATMs are a favorite target. You can pull them right out of the



**Thieves**, once inside an ATM, can use an endoscope (a medical device) to find where to access the machine's computer to steal data and create fake cash withdrawals in a process called “jackpotting.”



**A lock security kit** available from Lock America is one way to protect your investment.

floor with a forklift or a winch. Operators can protect the machines by hardening the installation, but there is a more insidious threat: lock manipulation.

Are you confident in the security of your ATM locks? Many ATMs come with “shipper locks,” a low-end, easily bypassed lock with few safeguards or combinations. These machines are vulnerable in many ways. Frequently they are attacked by what I call “The blue overall scam.” Thieves dress up as maintenance workers and use a generic key or lock picking tool to open the machine, and then insert a skimmer device or software tool to steal data or access cash.

It’s a tactic called “jack-potting.” Having gained access to the innards, thieves use a medical instrument called an endoscope to know where to place a Bluetooth device to link to their computers. From their keypad, they can steal data, or worse, create fake cash withdrawals. Until discovered, it’s the crime that keeps giving.

How do you enhance your security and protect your investment?

You can start by bolting the ATM to the floor. There isn’t much more you can do to stop forklifts or chains on trucks. You can install a GPS on the machine and



**Enhance** your security by installing the same security lock system in your machines and your ATMs.

affix a “GPS attached” warning, or you can take a lower-cost step that will probably stop more ATM crooks: you can upgrade your locks.

You may have medium-security, tubular locks in your vending machines, video games or jukeboxes. These machines don’t offer

quite the payoff of an ATM, so you may be satisfied with this style of lock for those pieces of equipment. Since the ATM offers a significantly bigger payoff for thieves, you need a more robust barrier.

To protect your ATMs, consider a security kit like the one pictured from Lock America (you can find the company online at [www.laigroup.com](http://www.laigroup.com)). Lock America is one of the companies I work with so I am very familiar with what they offer, but what’s key is to make your ATMs as secure as possible regardless of the lock supplier you prefer.

Why I like the Lock America kit is because it’s built around their *600 Series* high-security mechanism with spacers and cams that fit virtually every ATM. Every lock and cam combination is assembled in their company’s Corona, Calif., plant. The key is non-duplicatable brass and each locking system is unique with more than 6 million key combinations. Each customer receives their own authorized unique key code, which is registered with Lock America for easy re-

order or replacement by authorized users. Lock America has marketed this system to the vending and amusement industry for more than 30 years, and to such security-focused industries as information management, petroleum and propane distribution, and self-storage.

There is also a master key option that allows each location to have its own key code along with a management master key option to manage multiple sites. In addition, Lock America can match the *600 Series* key code of any of a customer’s existing Lock America locks, giving them the benefit of one key for all their devices.

ATMs are a revenue source and a marketing tool. They are also a target for amateur and professional thieves. You can improve your odds against loss by taking outside defense measures with floor bolts and enclosures, but remember that the interior defense is just as important. Bolting your machine to the floor is a strong start, but make sure you install a high-security lock system to keep your cash and data in place as well.





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