



How to protect your business during a dawn raid

Search and seizure operations, or dawn raids, are a powerful tool for investigators in criminal, regulatory, and civil cases. Disruptive, stressful, and intrusive – these unannounced visits can place considerable pressure on businesses and individuals. And whilst you have no power to stop or interfere with them, there are things you can do to protect yourself and your interests.

Why are they here?

Most visits will be as a result of a court order, and powers of entry can be granted to:

- Police forces
- Serious Fraud Office
- Competition and Markets Authority
- Financial Conduct Authority
- HMRC
- Health and Safety Executive
- Information Commissioner's Office
- Local authorities.

It is unlikely that you will know about the investigation until you get the knock on your door.

But it is critical to fully understand the extent of their powers, so that you can make rapid strategic judgements on-the-spot.

What can you do?

The first thing you should do is call us. We will provide immediate emergency advice and send our team to supervise the search and protect your rights.

But the investigators are not obligated to wait for our arrival, so in the meantime you must:

- Obtain copies of any search warrants or authorisation documents to check the scope of their powers
- Not be excluded from the search, unless the investigator can evidence a good reason as to why
- Maintain a detailed record of actions taken, areas searched, and items seized. Record times and utilise colleagues and employees if necessary
- Delay answering questions until your solicitor arrives
- Do not obstruct the operation, as this can be a criminal offence.
- Do not destroy, delete, or hide anything.

Dawn raids can expose your business to financial risk and reputational damage, including subsequent prosecutions and claims based on the investigation's findings. There may also be arrests.

These occurrences will test the resilience of anybody and any business.

Having the right legal support can make all the difference.

How we can help

The best thing you can do is be prepared.

We can design procedures and deliver employee training, so that if a dawn raid does occur everybody knows what they should, or shouldn't, say and do.

We can also provide comprehensive advice about what comes next, including challenging the legal basis for the search, dealing with subsequent investigations and prosecutions, and advising you on how to avoid reputational damage.



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