

## Robbers roast eatery patrons

By Alexander Leibner

JOHANNESBURG – A surge in restaurant hold-ups in the north of Johannesburg in the past few weeks has seen robbers target the patrons as well as the businesses.

Wendy Alberts, CEO of the Restaurant Association of South Africa (Rasa), said: “The robbers work in groups of 16 to 24 men, well-armed, who clean out the guests, staff and safe, if there is one.”

She said the restaurants’ location did not matter, but there seemed to be a trend to target high-profile and middle- to up-market establishments.

Alberts said the public hadn’t been told of all incidents, as some restaurants have tried to keep the robberies away from public attention.

She was commenting after five restaurants were robbed in the northern suburbs last week.

“Robberies have been on the increase and will carry on as Christmas draws closer.”

Police spokesman Superintendent Chris Wilken confirmed there had been a “slight increase” in restaurant-related robberies.

He suggested restaurants take bookings only, beef up their security and work closely with police to tackle the problem.

He also recommended reporting suspicious-looking people.

A restaurant consultant revealed measures implemented in a recently robbed restaurant.

“Security personnel, bouncers and armed guards are not the welcome you want when planning a relaxed dinner

“We’ve looked at undercover security agents blending in with guests, and keeping an eye on things through CCTV.” – CNS.