

SHOPLIFTING PREVENTION



Wall Township Police Department

How much does shoplifting cost us?

- ▶ Businesses lose an estimated \$40 billion each year to shoplifting (Source: National Retail Federation).
- ▶ Each family in the U.S. spends \$300 per year to subsidize what shoplifters steal.
- ▶ Nearly 90% of the population has, during their lifetime, shoplifted.
- ▶ About 1 in 48 shoplifters are caught. Risk of getting caught is low= repeat offenders.
- ▶ There is a shoplifting theft every five seconds of every day.
- ▶ **ONE THIRD** of all new businesses fail due to retail theft.

How much does shoplifting cost us?

- ▶ Adolescents account for nearly 50% of shoplifters but they only steal one-third as much as adults.
- ▶ Shoplifting accounts for 5 to 10 cents on each dollar spent in the retail economy.
- ▶ Employees are not exempt- some experts believe that businesses lose more to employee theft than to burglary, robbery and shoplifting combined. Examine your management practices. Make employees feel they have a stake in your business.

Shoplifter Classification

Non-Professional

1. Make up majority of shoplifters.
2. Individuals struggling with personal conflicts (depression, anxiety, thrill seeker) and needs.
3. Often they have \$\$ to pay for what they are stealing. Don't usually sell what they steal for a profit.
4. Normally don't commit other types of crimes.
5. Normally steal what they don't need or (sometimes) don't use.

Shoplifter Classification

Professional

1. Addicts who steal to buy drugs.
2. Criminals who steal for resale and profit as a life-style.
3. Frequently commit other types of crimes.
4. Drug treatment program or jail time.

Grading and Penalties

- ▶ 2nd Degree- \$75K or more, 5-10 year imprisonment, fines up to \$150K
- ▶ 3rd Degree- \$500-\$75K, 3-5 year imprisonment, fines up to \$15K
- ▶ 4th Degree- \$200-\$500, up to 18 months imprisonment, fines up to \$10K
- ▶ Disorderly Persons- Less than \$200.- up to 6 months imprisonment, fines up to \$1000

Additional Mandatory Penalties

- ▶ 1st offense- At least 10 days community service.
- ▶ 2nd offense- At least 15 days community service.
- ▶ 3rd and subsequent offense- 25 day community service plus minimum term of 90 days imprisonment.
- ▶ New laws have made it more difficult for shoplifting offenses(2nd and 3rd degree) to be downgraded to municipal court.
- ▶ 4th degree may be downgraded at county prosecutor's request.

Shoplifting Prevention

- ▶ Alert employees may be your best defense!
- ▶ Consider greeting customers when they enter the store
- ▶ Make sure counters/display cases are low: no more than waist high.
- ▶ Mount mirrors in corners so there are no blind spots

Shoplifting Prevention

Make it difficult to leave the store without paying-

1. Place expensive items in the center of the store- not by the exit.
2. Keep smaller expensive items locked in a display cabinet or behind the counter.
3. Arrange counters and display tables so there's no direct route to the exit.
 - ▶ Arrange your displays so that missing items are easily noticed. Keep them tidy.
 - ▶ Shoplifting signs provide a deterrent- "Shoplifters will be prosecuted"

Shoplifting Prevention

- ▶ Keep careful count of the # of items carried into and out of dressing rooms.
- ▶ Be alert to groups of shoppers who enter the store together then break up and go in different directions.
- ▶ Sales help should remember that ordinary customers want attention; shoplifters do not.
- ▶ Sales help should acknowledge waiting customers with a polite remark such as, “ I’ll be with you in a minute.” Legitimate customers are pleased- shoplifters feel uneasy.

Shoplifting Techniques

- ▶ Keep an eye out for large open bags especially those that are not from a local store.
- ▶ Baby carriages and strollers are great tools for shoplifters. Some thieves have even built false bottoms in baby carriages.
- ▶ Umbrellas with handles are handy for concealing small items. Thieves keep the umbrella closed but not snapped and drop items in. Newspapers too.

Shoplifting Techniques

- ▶ “Crotch walking”- Women who wear full skirts/dresses who put merchandise between their thighs and walk away.
- ▶ Baggy clothes- good places to hide stolen items. Some people have extra pockets sewn into coats and jackets.
- ▶ Beware of the customer with a large coat who keeps his/her hands in their pockets-

Shoplifting Techniques

1. Shoplifters cut slits in the pocket lining so they can reach for items without being seen.
 - ▶ Shoplifters simply grab items and run. These people rely on the gullibility and slow response of employees.
 - ▶ Shoplifters grab garments from racks close to the door and run off... Solution- Alternate the direction of the hangars as this makes it difficult to remove many at once.

Shoplifting Techniques

- ▶ Shoplifters sometimes enter fitting rooms put merchandise on under their own clothes and wear them out of the store. Others just put the clothing on and walk out.
- ▶ Be careful- This person hasn't technically stole the item until they walk out of the store.

Shoplifting Techniques

- ▶ Shoplifters often steal items and attempt to return for a refund. Does your store require a receipt for all returns?
- ▶ Remember: Most shoplifters cannot succeed unless they get some privacy. One of the best ways to combat shoplifting is by greeting them as soon as they walk in and be attentive to them the rest of the time.

Shoplifting Prevention

- ▶ Be on the lookout for customers who handle a lot of merchandise but who take an unusually long time to make a decision.
- ▶ Watch for customers lingering in one area or loitering near stockrooms.
- ▶ Be alert to customers who shop during hours when staff is low- early morning, lunch hour and closing time.

Confronting The Shoplifter

Have a store policy in place!

Don't ever put yourself in harm's way.

What's needed to make a charge stick?

1. See the person take or conceal merchandise.
2. Identify the merchandise as yours.
3. Prove that the merchandise was not paid for.

Confronting The Shoplifter

- ▶ Failure to meet this criteria leaves employees open to false arrest.
- ▶ Simply preventing a person from conducting normal activities can be deemed false arrest.
- ▶ Any physical touch may be used against you in court.
- ▶ Never accuse a customer of stealing and do not try to physically apprehend suspected shoplifters.

Confronting The Shoplifter

- ▶ If suspicious behavior is observed advise the store manager and/or the police.
- ▶ If a shoplifter is confronted by a store employee (security) it should be done outside the store- you can show that the shoplifter left the store with no intention of paying. It also eliminates unpleasant scenes which might disrupt normal store operations.

Confronting The Shoplifter

- ▶ or- Employees can verbally corner a shoplifter inside the store by saying, "I believe you have some merchandise you have forgotten to pay for. Would you mind coming with me over the register to straighten this out?"
- ▶ Response of most impulse thieves or pros when caught, is, "I've never done this before."

Confronting The Shoplifter

- ▶ This, along with sufficient evidence, is all the more reason to call the police.
- ▶ Question- What do you, the store employee do if they run? (security tape, description, etc...)
- ▶ **CALL THE POLICE IMMEDIATELY!**

Good Judgment Required

- ▶ Is the shoplifter old or senile?
- ▶ What do you do with young offenders?
Remember that parents of youngsters may be ineffective in handling the situation.
- ▶ Who are you helping if you let the young shoplifter go?
- ▶ What if the shoplifter is violent or under the influence?

Repeat Offenders

- ▶ 1 out of every 3 people caught for shoplifting will repeat their offense.
- ▶ Most shoplifters who were caught repeating the offense say that they want to stop but can't - too afraid to ask for help.
- ▶ Police intervention can be solution- courts will mandate programs to address the problem.

Useful Websites

- ▶ www.shopliftingprevention.org
- ▶ www.shopliftersanonymous.com
- ▶ www.securitysolutions.com
- ▶ Google