

ATTENTION ALL RETAILERS

This important message has been put together for your information by the Melfort & District community Justice Committee. Prevention is paramount! Please take the time to read through this information!

SHOPLIFTING CAN COST YOUR BUSINESS THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS EACH YEAR. Shoplifters may be any age, gender, or economic or ethnic background. There is no "typical" shoplifter. They often work in pairs or groups to divert the clerk's attention while they steal. They often operate when employees are apt to be less alert, e.g., at store opening and closing times, during the lunch and dinner times, and during shift changes. Shoplifters also learn to take advantage of crowded stores during peak hours. Effective prevention begins with an aware and alert staff.

Apprehend and Prosecute Shoplifting Offenders as often as practical.

Expense, time, liability . . . we know that actively apprehending and prosecuting shoplifters can be a time consuming, difficult and costly task. However, a decision **not** to apprehend and prosecute shoplifters comes at a significant cost to your bottom line and the communities you serve. Retailers have not only the right but the responsibility to apprehend and prosecute shoplifters as often as practical. The reasons are clear:

- FACT:** The most important factor in determining if a person will shoplift again is their experience the time before.
- FACT:** Complacency to shoplifting sends a message to our youth and communities that crime pays.
- FACT:** Complacency will bring repeat offenders back to steal.
- FACT:** Complacency tempts paying customers to try their hand at it.
- FACT:** Complacency tells loyal paying customers that the company doesn't mind if some people take merchandise without paying because the losses will be made up for by higher prices charged to them.
- FACT:** If the retailer, who is the victim, doesn't take a strong stand against shoplifting, then those criminal justice and community-based agencies who could and would support retailers in preventing shoplifting will adopt the attitude of "if they don't care, why should I". . .and the problem continues to grow.

Support Anti-Shoplifting Campaigns and Community Programs

In addition to hurting your bottom line, shoplifting hurts the communities you serve. It is imperative that retailers support community anti-shoplifting campaigns, school-based prevention programs and secondary prevention programs in the courts. Current security measures can be effective; however, having people **stop themselves** from shoplifting is less time consuming, less costly and more effective on a permanent basis.

Protective Measures

- Make the shoplifters feel watched. Elevate the cashier's platform. Install mirrors that enable cashiers and sales people to see over and around displays. Install one-way glass in offices to enable employees to see into the store without being seen from the floor. Install and monitor surveillance cameras.

- Post signs warning against shoplifting. Emphasize that you will prosecute. The best way to discourage shoplifters and keep your business from being tagged as an easy mark is to take a get-tough attitude and prosecute on the first offense.
- Encourage checking parcels on entry.
- Require receipts for merchandise returns for cash. Require a photo ID and signature for returns without a receipt. And then just give merchandise-only vouchers.
- Take an inventory of returned merchandise against receipts on a regular basis to catch false returns, i.e., ones without returned merchandise.

Display Strategies

- Minimize the shoplifter's access to merchandise without inconveniencing customers.
- Keep display and clothing racks away from entrances and exits to discourage "hit-and-run" thieves.
- Alternate hangers front-to-back to prevent thieves from quickly grabbing bundles of display clothing.
- Keep small and expensive items out of reach or in locked display cases. Have sales people show only one item at a time from a case.
- Use good locks and laminated or "strong" glass in cases that contain expensive items. This will help prevent smash-and-grab attacks.
- Arrange merchandise neatly to make it easier to detect missing items.
- Take daily or weekly inventories of expensive items.

Train your sales people to:

- Watch for people with loose or baggy clothing inappropriate for weather, and people with large bags or other props, such as newspapers, strollers, briefcases, or umbrellas that can easily conceal merchandise.
- Pick up stray receipts around the store.
- Be aware of shoplifter's tactics to confuse and distract you. For example, when working in teams one shoplifter will create a disturbance, e.g., complaining loudly, staging a faint, or knocking over merchandise, to draw attention away from the other who is doing the lifting.
- Be attentive to people in your area. This helps legitimate customers and deters shoplifters. A simple "Can I help you?" or "I'll be with you in a moment" warns shoplifters they are being watched. Keep a close watch on people who seem nervous or refuse assistance.
- Cover their entire area of responsibility, even blind spots.
- Have another sales person cover your area when you leave the floor, e.g., to check for items in the stockroom.
- Be especially alert at when the store is crowded. Shoplifters often operate when sales people are busy helping legitimate customers.
- Watch for shoppers walking with short or unnatural steps, which may indicate that they are

concealing lifted items.

- Watch customer's eyes. If they are looking at you they may need assistance or are thinking about shoplifting.
- Keep employees alert by holding periodic review sessions on store shoplifting policies.
- Discourage socializing on the sales floor. A group of employees in one spot usually means inadequate coverage somewhere else.
- Schedule hours so that an adequate number of sales people are working at all times.
- Watch for customers lingering in one area, loitering near stock rooms or other restricted areas, or wandering aimlessly through the store.
- Watch for customers who consistently shop during the hours when few people are working in the store.
- Watch for customers who visit the store frequently, but make only token purchases.
- Be alert for disturbances that distract sales people and cashiers.

Stopping a Shoplifter

If you suspect that someone may be considering lifting something, approach the person and ask "Can I help you?" or "Can I ring that up for you?" If you suspect someone has lifted and concealed something, keep him or her in sight and notify a manager or security personnel immediately. If you are working alone, request the assistance of another worker. Plan a "buddy system" for your own safety and as a witness.

***If you would like more information,
please call the Melfort RCMP office at 752-6420.***

Happy Holidays!

From the Melfort & District Community Justice Committee