HOW CRIME PROOF IS YOUR STORE?





Nobody wants to lose their hard-earned cash or merchandise to the shoplifter or burglar. But it's an unfortunate fact of doing business today that the rates with which these crimes occur jump with each passing year.

Although the risk of either of these crimes cannot be totally eliminated, there are steps you can take to minimize your losses.

SHOPLIFTING

For many jobbers, the advent of increased walk-in trade has brought with it an unfortunate by-product — shoplifting.

Good inventory control is the best way to determine whether or not shoplifting losses are occurring, and if so, how much.

Shoplifting loss estimates vary by the type of operation and the efficiency of management. According to one estimate, losses of approximately .23 percent of sales for the well-managed store to as high as 1.5 percent of sales for the loosely controlled operation can be blamed on shoplifting. And such a loss of money or merchandise can cut into profits as fast, or faster, than anything else.

Shoplifting tends to be highest in stores located in metropolitan areas. But regardless of location, no store manager can afford to leave himself unprotected against shoplifters and their methods.

Professional shoplifters are sleight-of-hand experts. Under ordinary circumstances, they can — and do — snatch items from counters and pass them along to confederates without detection.

As for the hand-is-quicker-than-the-eye techniques, professional shoplifters come equipped with coats with hidden pockets, slits or zippered hiding places. Hands can emerge unseen from these hidden pockets to snatch up articles directly from open displays. Many times, such performances are blocked from view by the open coat itself. These shoplifters are also adept at palming small items with the cover-up aid of gloves.

Sometimes shoplifters have special hooks or belts on the inside of their coats or tricky aprons and undergarments designed to hold innumerable articles. Some sleight-of-hand experts slip merchandise into packages or boxes that have hinged tops, bottoms or sides. Salespeople should try to keep an eye on shoppers who carry bulky packages or shopping bags into the store. These are handy receptacles for items which a shoplifter purposely knocks off counters.

Some shoplifters do not confine their activity to store owners. They even steal from other customers, picking up packages which store patrons carelessly lay aside in their pre-occupation.

Price tag switching is another method used by shoplifters. This is an especially vexing problem for the owner or manager of a store, as it's almost impossible to prove the guilt of a ticket switcher. There's also the hazard of false arrest countercharges.

Fortunately for the owner or manager of a store, the majority of shoplifters are amateurs rather than professionals. Unfortunately, there is no one "stereotype" shoplifter to watch for: they come in all shapes, sizes and ages.

With this in mind, the best protection a store has is a sales force alerted to various shoplifting methods.

- Employees must watch merchandise and people if they are to be successful in discouraging shoplifting in your store.
- Generally, your salespeople should be alert to persons wearing oversized, loose coats. They should also watch people carrying large satchels, packages and shopping bags.
- You and your people should be especially alert for "teams" — shoplifters entering the store separately and pretending not to know one another. One of the team will attract the sales clerk's attention away from the partner by causing a fuss, asking unreasonable

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