

SHOPLIFTING: FACTS & PREVENTION



Shoplifting is the criminal offence of theft that involves the taking of merchandise that is offered for sale, without paying for it. It carries heavy penalties, such as being arrested and possibly charged, which can affect a person's future in terms of obtaining employment.

WHO ARE SHOPLIFTERS?

There are no typical shoplifters – people who steal can be any age, race, gender, or from any social or economic background. Typically, they fall into one of the following categories:

- **Professional Shoplifters** – skilled thieves who often target expensive items, possibly for resale.
- **Amateurs/General Public** – need to stretch budgets or act spontaneously on opportunity.
- **Juveniles** - make up nearly ½ of shoplifters and often commit the crime because of peer pressure, rebelling or for the thrill.
- **Narcotic or drug addicts** - people often desperate to support their habit.
- **Kleptomaniacs** – people who a compulsive urge to steal (rare).

WHO SUFFERS?

- **Retailers** – lower profits.
- **Consumers** – pay higher prices.
- **Sales associates** – pay and hours affected.



PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

**Actually seeing someone shoplift is difficult, often estimated to be 1 in 30 occurrences.
As a result, businesses that focus on prevention will most effectively eliminate losses.
A wise business decision is to put dollars and 'sense' into prevention strategies.**

- Have a well-lit store
- Advertise against shoplifting and discourage loitering
- Pay a potential shoplifter a lot of attention – the thief is likely to leave
- Locate mirrors so store areas can be seen at a glance
- Avoid tall display counters that obstruct views and avoid narrow, cluttered aisles
- Only display one of a pair (example: one shoe)
- Divide stores into sections and assign certain employees to each section
- Keep valuable merchandise away from store exits and in locked cabinets, and fasten down items used for display
- Develop adequate inventory controls
- Plan policies and procedures for shoplifting early in the business planning strategy
- Involve employees – ask what they would do to deter theft
- Closed Circuit TV cameras – aid in identifying thieves
- Attentive staff – be alert during peak hours, store openings, closings and shift changes
- Give customers receipts and spot check receipts at the exits
- Hire trained security personnel
- Form co-operative, mutually beneficial partnerships with other retailers, property management, police and community agencies



HOW CAN EMPLOYEES BE TRAINED TO PREVENT SHOPLIFTING?

The most effective way to prevent thefts is to remove the opportunity for a crime to take place.

- Greet customers as they enter the store and provide the best customer service possible – shoplifters shun attention.
- Take note of people who frequently enter the store without making any purchases.
- Watch for people who are nervous, wandering around, possibly picking up items with little interest.
- Watch for people carrying large purses, shopping bags, strollers, umbrellas, or wearing bulky clothing – if concealing items, they may walk with short or unnatural steps.
- Watch for people who appear nervous.
- Be mindful of distractions – pros work in pairs; 1 distracts employees while 1 shoplifts.
- Only show one valuable at a time to a customer – lock display cases.
- Limit and know the number of clothing articles in a dressing room at any given time.
- Remove empty hangers from clothing racks so that the presence of one could indicate a shoplifter is at work.
- Watch for label switching, short changing cashiers and phony returns

HOW PARENTS SHOULD DEAL WITH TEENS CAUGHT SHOPLIFTING

When called, write down the location and phone number of the facility where your child's been apprehended.

Avoid emotionally confronting your child at the scene or facility.

Treat the person in charge with respect and find out if charges are being filed – write down details.

Upon getting home, you may need to take a time out – there is nothing wrong with indicating that you are not yet ready to discuss the event.

Talk with your spouse or a friend about the consequences within a day or two. This may assist in helping you cope.

Lay out an Action Plan that provides consequences to your child.

**Find out the root of the behaviour and address the underlying problems.
(ie. Peer pressure, drug habit, rebelling or stress.)**

SECURITY AUDITS

Hamilton Police Service Crime Prevention Branch provides FREE Business/Commercial Security Audits.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) strategies are effective when applied to building or store interiors. Studies have shown that the application of CPTED techniques may reportedly decrease security problems by up to 50% and increase sales by as much as 33%. Hamilton Police Service Crime Prevention Officers can conduct a thorough assessment of your business environment.

**For further information on this service please contact the
Crime Prevention Office at 905-546-4900**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THIS SUBJECT OR OTHER CRIME PREVENTION TOPICS PLEASE VISIT OUR
WEBSITE AT WWW.HAMILTONPOLICE.ON.CA OR PLEASE CONTACT:**

HAMILTON POLICE SERVICE – CRIME PREVENTION

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