

SHOPLIFTING / RETAIL THEFT

PRESENTED BY THE WINOOSKI POLICE
DEPARTMENT

Shoplifting or Retail Theft is one of the more common reasons for police to be called to your business. Awareness of different tactics offenders use can prevent this from happening.

AWARENESS IS KEY

Most retail theft is based on exploitation of the business owners need to multi task in the course of a work day. Owners and operators, as well as staff have many jobs to do, and many tasks in the course of a day. Offenders know this, and know that if they are careful, they can exploit these times to take advantage of your business for their own gain.

LEGALITY AND SAFETY

Prior to detaining anyone for shoplifting, you must be able to prove it. You must have seen the person take possession of your items, and you must have seen them pass your points of sale without making payment for those items. ONLY then can you legally detain them for shoplifting. If you encounter resistance of any kind, call police, and follow the individual. Get a good description of them as described in Witness Considerations. Always remain calm and remain safe.

STRAIGHT STEAL

Possibly the most common practice encountered, offenders place items into pockets, bags, backpacks or under jackets or garments and attempt to leave the premises without making payment.

CART LOADING

This involves leaving items under the cart, in the bottom of the cart, or under bulk items when passing through the point of sale to avoid having them scanned or rung out.

PREBAGGING

Some offenders will bring empty store bags into your business, especially grocery stores and then fill them in the aisle and walk out past the main registers with them as if they cashed out at a pharmacy location or other point of sale within the store

STICKER PEELING

Some offenders will peel “paid” stickers from old purchases and keep them, then re-using them on bulk items during new purchases – similar to the bagging scheme.

DISTRACTIONS

Sometimes working in pairs or groups, offenders will cause a distraction of your staff by being overly boisterous, suspicious, or

otherwise drawing your attention. Once you are distracted, a less obvious member of the group will remove the merchandise and flee while the others hold your attention – the others then settle down and leave without incident.

HANDOFFS / SWITCHES

In the same style, offenders may take items and switch them from person to person to inhibit finding the stolen items by loss prevention. Offenders may also replace merchandise with empty packaging, or take merchandise from packaging and leave the packaging behind.

FALSE RETURN / RECEIPTS

More complicated schemes involve locating discarded or dropped receipts, then using the receipt to walk into the store, find the same item, and walk out with it. Offenders can also gain a receipt, get item off shelf, and then do false return at Service Desk. They may even buy item, go home, return without it, get a second from the shelf and cash the second one in as a return. Many false return and switch cases can be inhibited by documenting serial numbers for larger items, such as televisions, on the receipt. Comparing the numbers will aid you greatly. For smaller items, checking to make sure the anti-theft device has been disabled prior to accepting it for return ensures that it has gone through a point of sale.