



## *Shoplifting Prevention*



**Together, we can keep  
Coeur d' Alene a safe place  
to live.**

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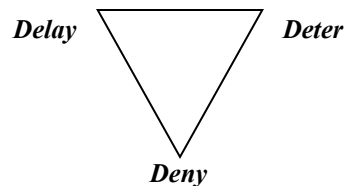
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**“An Ounce of Prevention is Worth A Pound of Cure”**  
Benjamin Franklin

The cost of shoplifting can threaten a store's ability to make a reasonable profit. Retailers operating on profit margins as low as 1% must sell \$500.00 in merchandise to cover the loss of a \$5.00 item.

While a shoplifter may have a number of reasons why they steal from a store, the store is not without resources to help prevent thefts. Basic crime prevention is based on three concepts: *Delay*, *Deter* and *Deny*. In other words — The harder the store makes it for the thief to steal their merchandise the better chance the store has of reducing the number of shoplifting events. The retailer can control, to a certain extent, the amount of losses they incur.

**Basic crime prevention objectives**



Shoplifting prevention must begin with very basic preventive measures and be implemented through the sale of the item. Focusing on only one component of prevention leaves the store vulnerable in other areas, making prevention ineffective. To be effective, the store must include all areas in the over-all prevention strategy.

**Prevention Components:**

- Store Design
- Product Displays
- Security Measures
- Employees

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## Employees

Shoplifters should be trespassed from the store. Their pictures should be placed in a file and reviewed by employees on a daily basis.

The first line of defense against shoplifting is the store's employees. Well-trained staff should know what to look for and what actions to take to reduce opportunities for shoplifting.

- Greeting customers as they enter the store reduces the ability of shoplifters to work anonymously.
- Staff should immediately offer assistance to customers who enter the employees' departments, especially groups. Let them know they are being watched!
- If the store has a high-security area, more than one person should be assigned to that area.
- A cashier should be stationed at the cash register nearest the exit/entrance at all times. This cashier should also have a clear view of the rest of the store.
- Train the staff on the methods used by shoplifters.
- Staff should request assistance if they are asked to provide one-on-one customer service. Distraction tactics are commonly used by shoplifters, especially the professionals.
- Staff should be posted full-time in the fitting room area.

Vigilant employees, store layout designed to reduce opportunities and products displayed to allow customer access without compromising security are the key elements in shoplift prevention.



## WHO?

Professional vs Amateur

While majority of shoplifters are amateurs, there are organized professional shoplifting "gangs" who steal for a living. Amateur or pro, many of the methods used are similar. Education and experience will alert the clerk as to which groups frequent their store and what actions need to be taken.

**Hiding the merchandise in the clothing.** Clerks should notice improper fitting clothes (loose-fitting or tight fitting), and out-of-season jackets. Clothing with designs can make it more difficult to see hidden merchandise.

- **Hiding it in another package.** "Booster" boxes, merchandise boxes, gift boxes, store bags, large purses, dog food bags, newspapers or books can all be used to conceal items. Clerks need to check the inside of these items at the checkout counter or at the door as they exit if they used the self checkout.
- **Price tag switch.**
- **Hide and seek.** Thieves working in groups or pairs will hide items under counters, dressing rooms or in additional inventory boxes for pick up later by an accomplice.
- **Create a diversion.** Any disturbance should be a tip to an employee that a crime may be committed. This disturbance can happen anywhere in the store, but is more likely at the checkout counter.
- **Customer who leaves and returns immediately.** Thieves will use the legitimate receipt to steal another of the same item.

The shoplifter's goal is to be able to steal as much as possible, quickly and anonymously. The goal for the store and its employees is to make it impossible for the shoplifters to reach their goal.

## Store Design

*P*roper store design is essential in preventing shoplifting.

Store design has been proven to help in the reduction of thefts by shoplifters. A design incorporating placement of fixtures, service areas, store lighting and colors can be “customer friendly,” stimulating to sales, and assist in crime prevention. Crime prevention measures need not be expansive or expensive, especially if they are incorporated into the original design of the store.

**CPTED** (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) applies an environmental approach to the general layout of the store to create safer environments, while achieving the crime prevention strategies of delay, deter and deny.

*F*our basic CPTED principals:

- ✓ Natural access control
- ✓ Natural surveillance
- ✓ Natural territorial reinforcement
- ✓ Maintenance

*Natural Access Control*—uses natural barriers in limiting access to products or areas. The use of lighting, fixture placement and directing traffic patterns guide the public through the store, from one department to the other and to the exits. Effective prevention measures include:

- Use fixtures or displays to eliminate the “direct” path to the entrance/exit. Limit number of entrances/exits.
- Place cashiers near the exit, with full view of the store.
- High-risk merchandise should be located away from exits and restrooms and in areas that provide the best chance of theft detection.

## Security Measures

### *Entrance / Exit Security*

The biggest deterrent to shoplifting is to make the shoplifter feel as if they are being watched, beginning at the store entrance.

- Greeters should make eye contact with the customer entering and check all packages or large bags brought into the store.
- Have greeters tag all merchandise being returned and direct the shopper to the customer service area.
- Encourage the use of shopping carts to prevent shoppers from using personal bags to store items.

### *Parking Lot Security*

Store security should include the parking lot and the outside perimeter of the store. Thieves will hide merchandise behind products that are stacked against an inside fence or wall with small crevices accessible to the outside, to be retrieved at a later time.

- Cameras monitoring the activity in the parking lot, as well as entrances to the store, should be strategically located and produce high-quality pictures.
- Lighting should be bright enough to eliminate dark corners or blind spots.
- Security fencing and walls should extend to the floor of the structure to prevent access from underneath.



## Security Measures

Store security should include checking and sealing bags and boxes at the cash registers. Unsealed items should be rechecked at the exit.

## Electronic Security Devices

There are numerous security products available to assist the store in shoplifting prevention.

- EAS ( Electronic article surveillance) tags pinned into a garment or fixed to a box
- “Spider” webbing that is wrapped around the box.

Ink tags are different from electronic tags, but are just as effective. Instead of sounding an alarm, the tag releases ink which will ruin the garment. The ink tag must be removed by the clerk to prevent the release of the ink.

## Fitting Room Security

- Keep the fitting room doors locked when not in use.
- Install café-type doors to allow staff to monitor use.
- Limit number of items allowed to be taken into the dressing room.
- Post signs that direct customers to contact a sales associate prior to entering the fitting room.
- Issue color coded tickets or tags to indicate the number of items taken into the fitting room.
- Use a return rack for unwanted items.

## Return Policy

- Require receipts for merchandise returns for cash.
- Require a photo ID and signature for returns without a receipt and only provide merchandise vouchers.
- Regularly inventory returned merchandise against receipts to deter false returns.



## Store Design

Cash registers should be placed near the exit, along one wall to allow the clerk full view of the store.

*Natural Surveillance* uses the store’s physical features along with lighting, fixture design and placement to maximize visibility throughout the store. Good, natural surveillance will allow the store employees to easily monitor customer activity in their departments, as well as throughout the store.

- Wider, uncluttered aisles, reduce overcrowding and create long sight lines.
- Use shoulder height display fixtures.
- Use bright lighting.
- Locate destination points, such as lay-away or restrooms to the rear of the store.
- Prevent display placement from creating alcoves or nooks that can conceal customer activity.

*Natural Territorial Reinforcement* looks at using the store design to create defensible areas within the store. Encouraging “ownership” of departments by the staff increases security:

- Use a “Bull-pen” or a “store-within-a-store” concept with a dedicated cashier.
- Making clear delineations between public space and private space with adequate signage.

*Maintenance* is one of the most important parts of the CPTED principals. A well-maintained store gives the perception the employees take pride in their work and their store. It is the most cost-effective of the CPTED principals since it does not require changes in store design:

- Uncluttered aisles.
- Neat product displays.
- Clean restrooms and fitting rooms.



## Product Displays

*P*roduct displays can be “customer friendly” and still be secure from shoplifters.

*M*aking a few adjustments in the way a product is displayed can help prevent losses in almost any department.

- Alternate hanger directions on racks to avoid “grab and run” losses.
- Keep display and clothing racks away from entrances and exits to discourage “hit and run” thieves.
- Arrange items neatly to make it easier to detect missing items.
- Keep empty boxes in the storage room rather than on the shelf with the merchandise or stored below the shelf.
- Limit shelf supply, especially when stocking expensive, high-risk products.
- Stock to the front of the shelf.
- Locate merchandise such as luggage and backpacks away from high-risk merchandise and away from outside exits.
- Create clear sight lines when displaying merchandise in aisles.
- Display empty cases of DVD's, CD's and video music.



*O*ne way to prevent shoplifting of popular/high-risk merchandise is to display them within dedicated secure sections of the store that provide a higher level of customer service.

- “Bull-pen” style areas.
- Glass enclosed and locked cabinets.
- Specialty counters that provide individual customer service.

## Security Measures

*S*ecurity measures do not start and stop at the door.

*T*he ultimate goal of a store is to provide their customers with an enjoyable shopping experience. Good security can accomplish that goal, while still providing the shoplifter with fewer opportunities.

- Aisle video cameras allow employees to view activities of the shoppers in specific aisles, usually used for high-risk products such as cosmetics or pharmacy items.
- Wide and open aisles allow viewing from one aisle to another.
- Mirrors should be strategically placed so shoplifters can see themselves and the employees can see shoplifters.
- Mirrors should be placed to oversee any areas the employees cannot directly oversee.
- Encourage employees to make eye contact and offer assistance to all customers as they enter the employee's department.
- The use of “self check-out” should be limited to a few items with a maximum allowed .
- Self check-out stations need a dedicated clerk for quick customer service.
- The use of cable locks and security hangers allow the customer to examine the product, while preventing it from being taken.
- Encourage the use of supermarket style baskets or carts to remove the excuse of putting things in pockets or personal bags.
- Seal bags of legitimate purchases to reduce impulse stealing.
- Post warnings or highlight high risk items with obvious, bright markings to increase threat of detection.