



# Shoptheft Prevention

## Are You Responsible?

*“The reality is, the thieves basically are making as much money out of the business as we are. It’s not a problem that will go away, and it’s not a problem that is up to somebody else to do something about. It’s really up to us — everybody in the retail sector.”*

**Robert Thomas, Sears Canada Inc.**

Canadian retailers lose over \$3 billion dollars in annual retail sales or \$8 million per day in lost inventory due to theft according to the most recent Canadian Retail Security Report from Retail Council of Canada. Shoptheft accounts for 35% of this.

Obviously, the cost of these losses affects:

- retailers, whose profits are reduced by 28.5%, or who must raise prices in a competitive market;
- sales associates, whose pay and hours can be affected; and,
- consumers, who in the end, pay for the losses in higher prices.

In addition, significant resources, equipment and effort are required for apprehension and prosecution of shopthieves by retail, police, courts, correctional and community services. Unfortunately, too few people appreciate that we all pay for these losses. Preventing even a portion of external thefts can translate into considerable savings. The most effective way to prevent theft is to remove the opportunity for the crime to take place.

### **ARREST THE OFFENCE NOT THE OFFENDER**

Trying to observe someone stealing can be difficult as only one in thirty

occurrences is believed to be observed. Your focus should therefore be on the offence and not the offender as removing or reducing the opportunity is a positive function that is always profitable, while making an arrest seldom is.

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### **CRIME PREVENTION DOESN'T COST, IT PAYS!**

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### **CONDUCT A RISK ASSESSMENT**

Conduct a risk assessment of your store and implement prevention techniques that assist employees to do their job. Ask your employees what they would do to deter theft. If they don't buy into your plans, you're wasting your time and money. Most employees want to do a good job. By not doing anything about a problem, you will contribute to employees justifying their own inappropriate behaviours.

### **CRIME PREVENTION IS GOOD RETAILING**

Shortages of product through theft will send legitimate consumers elsewhere. That's not good business! The best defence to shoptheft is providing the best customer service possible. "Killing" potential thieves with kindness is an easy and economical tactic that can change their mindset. On the other hand, inactivity can encourage theft.

Properly trained and attentive sales associates are your best assets. Greet everyone entering your store or sales area and try to make eye contact at least three times. Suggest you'll be close by, if needed. Customers will be appreciative; the thief will be apprehensive. During staff meetings, role-play confrontations to demonstrate expectations and conflict resolution. The risk of injury during apprehension and civil liability should be considered.

### **BE A GREAT NEIGHBOUR**

Form co-operative mutually beneficial partnerships with other retailers, property management, the police and community agencies. You are part of a larger community. We can help each other by working together. Communicate your problems, share your concerns, formulate plans, share training opportunities and come to each other's assistance when required. Mutual aid is another useful tool to have in your arsenal against criminal activity.

### **PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR STORE'S DESIGN**

Your store layout can be a critical factor in reducing opportunity crime. A properly laid out store will not only

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THIS SUBJECT, PLEASE CONTACT:**

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You may also want to examine our Internet site at:

**[www.peelpolice.ca](http://www.peelpolice.ca)**

