



# Shoreline Police

# BUSINESS WATCH

Eastside and Westside Shoreline Police Neighborhood Centers

Partnership for Crime Prevention in the Business Community

Shoplifting Prevention Issue

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Partnership for Crime Prevention in the Business Community

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## Protect Your Business Against

# SHOPLIFTING

According to the FBI, shoplifting has soared 35% since 1987 and now represents the fastest growing form of larceny in the United States. In Washington state alone, shoplifting costs merchants more than \$62,000,000 each year and accounts for as much as 40% of a store's theft loss. That means higher process for everyone-estimated at \$70 a year for a family of four.

Shoplifting is not restricted to one group of people, but is committed by many types of individuals, including juvenile offenders, impulse shoplifters, alcoholics, vagrants and drug addicts, kleptomaniacs, professional thieves, as well as ordinary shoppers. You can help prevent your business from becoming victimized by shoplifters!

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# PREVENTIVE MEASURES: The Premises

## Preventive Measures: The Premises

- Post warning signs that shoplifters will be prosecuted.
- Install annunciators on all unlocked door so that employees are aware of when a customer enters the store, and the customer also knows that their presence is noted.
- Depending on the kind of store, consider installing different devices to help deter shoplifters: convex mirrors, peepholes, two-way mirrors, or surveillance cameras.
- Keep shelves low and aisles clear to increase visibility and ensure that all areas of the store are well-lighted.
- Arrange merchandise so that it is orderly and easily visible to employees.
- Make it difficult to steal merchandise... bolt racks down, alternate the direction of hangers on the racks, tie appliance cords together, chain bicycles, lock small valuable items in cabinets and showcases, keep other valuables away from the store exits.

**PLEASE NOTE:** To comply with fire safety ordinances for door and window security, consult with your fire departments Fire Prevention Division, Shoreline Fire Dept., (206) 533-6500.

## Preventive Measures: Employees

- Have employees greet all customers as they enter the store and ask if they need help. One phrase every shoplifter hates to hear is “Can I help you?” Acknowledge waiting customers with a polite remark such as “I’ll be with you in a minute.” Your customers will appreciate the attention and any shoplifters won’t.
- Train employees to spot potential shoplifters. *Be aware of customers who:*
  - enter the store in a group, then break up and go in different directions.
  - attempt to monopolize a salesperson’s time or distract them. The shoplifter may be covering for an accomplice stealing elsewhere in the store.
  - linger in one area, loiter near stock rooms or other restricted areas or who wander aimlessly through the store.
  - handle a lot of merchandise, but take an unusually long time to make a decision.
- When ringing up merchandise at the cash register, have employees:
  - check the lower racks of shopping carts
  - watch for switched price tags
  - inspect containers which could conceal stolen items
  - tape or staple the sales receipt to the bag
- Show a customer only one valuable item at a time.
- Ensure that there are an adequate number of employees working during peak business hours.
- Periodically review these preventive measures with employees.

**For more information about crime prevention, call one of your storefront offices below:**

*Westside Neighborhood Center  
624 NW Richmond Beach Rd.  
Shoreline, WA 98177  
(206) 546-3636*

*Eastside Neighborhood Center  
521 NE 165 St.  
Shoreline, WA 98155  
(206) 363-8424*



## IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

In an  
Emergency,  
CALL 911



Police  
Non-Emergency  
(206) 296-3311

Shoreline Police  
Precinct  
1206 N 185 St  
(206) 801-2710

Police West Side  
Neighborhood  
Center  
624 NW Richmond  
Beach Rd  
(206) 546-3636

Police East Side  
Neighborhood  
Center  
521 NE 165 St  
(206) 363-8424

# APPREHENDING A SHOPLIFTER

As a business owner, it is important to be knowledgeable of the shoplifting laws in the State of Washington state. They can be obtained by contacting your local law enforcement agency or the Washington Sate Crime Prevention Association.

Washington state law allows you to detain the suspect at any time after you have witnessed concealment of your merchandise. However, customers may not be “frisked”, have their packages randomly inspected or searched unless the suspect has been placed under arrest.

- If you suspect a shoplifter, it is generally advisable to let him/her pass the last possible point of payment before apprehending. **The suspect does not have to leave the store before you detain him/her.**
- Initial contact with the suspect should be verbal, not physical, and a non-custody approach is preferable. Identify yourself and inquire about the merchandise- **“Excuse me. I am the manger of the store. I believe you have some merchandise which you have forgotten to pay for. Would you please come to my office so that we can straighten out this matter?”**
- If the suspect complies, follow rather than lead to ensure that he/she doesn’t dispose of the stolen merchandise en route to the office. It is safer to keep them in sight at all times.
- Call the police immediately.
- While detaining the suspect, make sure that there is an employee present who is the same sex as the suspect. Female suspects should never be detained in private solely by a male.

**SHORELINE POLICE HAVE A RETAIL THEFT PROGRAM. CALL ONE OF THE STOREFRONT OFFICERS TO INQUIRE ABOUT TRAINING.**