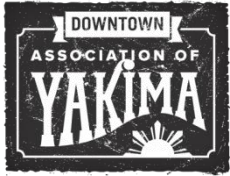


Shoplift Prevention

Shoplifting is a common concern for many retailers. The information and strategies to follow can help deter shoplifters. For more detailed information about these tips or programs to enhance safety, contact police Community Services at 509-575-6197.



The Downtown Association of Yakima (DAY), established in 2015, is a non-profit group dedicated to the revitalization of downtown. As a Washington State certified Main Street Community, DAY follows a proven 4-point approach with the goal of strengthening the revitalization and health of our urban core.

**P.O. Box 1549
Yakima, WA 98907**

509-576-6772

**director@
downtown
yakima.com**

Greet all customers as they enter your store, and make eye contact with each person. This conveys your interest in providing good attentive service and let's people know you're in control of your store. Honest customers will like the attention; dishonest ones won't.

Refrain from distractions like personal phone calls while on the sales floor.

Provide adequate staff. The most vulnerable times for shoplifting occur early in the day, during lunch, and near closing, especially on Fridays or holidays. It is important to have enough staff to provide adequate coverage during these times.

Trust your instincts. If a customer exhibits concerning behavior, step up your level of interaction. Ask if you can hold any items at the counter for them. Help them find the size that they are looking for. If there are additional employees in the store, ask them to help cover the floor while you are offering increased attention to that customer.

Common Shoplifter Traits

Searching Eye Movement: Look for eyes that are checking out the location of staff, customers, store layout, surveillance cameras and mirrors as opposed to focusing on sales room items.

Continual Head Movement: Be alert to customers that are constantly reassuring themselves that nobody is observing them.

Quick, Jerky Body Movements: This type of body language could signal that a customer may be attempting to conceal something.

Wandering or Hiding Behavior: Pay attention to customers who wander from item to item without showing any particular interest in anything. Also notice customers who seek out and linger in areas of the store where observation is difficult.

Aloof Behavior: Note customers who resist all sales assistance and who seem uncomfortable in your presence.

Shoplifting Methods and Techniques

Concealment: Clothes are the preferred concealment method for stolen retail items. Some shoplifters use baggy clothes, others go as far as to make clothes with hidden pockets. Shoplifters also hide merchandise in strollers.

Look online about these additional resources:

- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) information, training, forms
- Crime Prevention Strategies for Businesses handout
- Identity Theft Prevention information and training

Diversion: Be wary of people causing distractions. Always be on your guard for diversionary tactics when a suspicious pair or group arrives.

Misrepresentation: Some customers will steal from your store and then return the stolen merchandise for a cash refund. Refund policies requiring a sales slip that is then carefully examined will discourage refund frauds.

Openly Aggressive: This approach depends on boldness and a disbelief in, or a disregard for, consequences. Thieves will rely on their audacity and the element of surprise to blatantly walk or run out of the store with unpaid property in full view. Early recognition of these offenders and well-designed store layout are the best deterrents against this method of theft.

Palming: Concealing small articles such as lipsticks, perfume, necklaces and bracelets in the hand.

Handling: Customers that inspect three or four items at a time and then returns most, but not all, of the items to the display shelf. Opening sealed boxes and pilfering the contents is another common example of handling.

Team Shoplifting: One customer will serve as a lookout while the other is concealing merchandise. Diversionary tactics are also common here.

Modifications to Clothes: Examples include hidden pockets or hooks for hiding items, extra-long belts with extra eyelets, wide skirts, capes and overcoats. Knitting bags, shopping bags from other stores, briefcases, umbrellas and folded newspapers can also be used as effective pouches for small articles.

Forgetful Shopper Ploy: A customer “forgets” a bag of merchandise in your store. S/he calls to see if the bag is there and then returns, with a friend, to pick up the bag. When s/he picks up the “forgotten” goods, s/he claims that some items are missing. While your staff is in a panic looking for the “missing” items, s/he and/or the friend are stealing items from the store.

Cover Ups: Many shoplifters place their coat or jacket on top of a counter over the article they want. Then, it’s simply a matter of picking up the coat with the item and walking out.



Fitting Room Security

Fitting Rooms: Keep rooms locked and limit the number of items that can be brought in at one time. When the customer leaves, the room should be emptied of any hangers or tags. If you have a suspicious situation, make sure to check the pockets of items left in the fitting room for price tags or cut security tags.

Monitor Items: Employees should regularly check in with the customer and count the items (not hangers) when they check in and out of the room.

Electronic Security Systems: Consider using on merchandise.

Bag Check: Consider for large purses, computer bags, or other bulky totes or shopping bags.

Café Doors: Allows for some visibility of the area.

Return Rack: Use for unwanted clothing.

Signage: Post signs that ask customers to see a sales associate before taking items in and out of the dressing room, and indicating that your business will prosecute shoplifting to the highest extent of the law and make sure to follow through on that.

Rules of Conduct and Shoplifting

Have a written set of Rules of Conduct posted for all customers and employees to see. These rules should be from the owner or manager of the property. All employees should have the authority to enforce these rules. The Rules may include, but not be limited to:

1. No person shall engage in conduct that violates any Federal, State, or City law.
2. No person shall loiter or remain on store premises without purchasing a product.
3. No person shall interfere with ingress or egress of others at the entrance to the store.
4. No person shall use the store in ways that they were not intended to be used.
5. No person shall refuse to obey any reasonable request of a store employee.



Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

Changes to your store's layout, lighting, and landscaping may deter crime by increasing visibility and your ability to observe customer activities and suspicious activities outside of your store.

- Position the cash register to facilitate observation and locate it toward the exit of the store. It is important to be able to monitor customers entering and exiting the store to provide good customer service and decrease opportunities for shoplifters.
- Keep store shelves, floors, and other areas of your store uncluttered. Maintaining items in an orderly fashion helps to identify if something has been stolen.
- Ensure your store is evenly lit with no dark pockets or glare and that the outside of your store and parking lot is well-illuminated.
- Do not place merchandise by exits. This prevents grab and run scenarios. This is especially true of expensive or "hot" items - CDs, small electronics, jewelry.
- Do not post signs on windows or doors that block visibility to the outside.
- If you have shrubs and trees in entrance ways or in front of windows, trim them so that they do not compromise views.
- Install an enunciator or bell on your door to alert employees of customers entering and exiting the business.
- Use convex mirrors to allow greater visibility throughout the store. Minimize blind spots.
- Place hangers in alternate directions to prevent grab and run on displays close to the exits.
- Keep small and expensive items in locked display cases.

What To Do If Someone Shoplifts in Your Store

- Report the crime to the police. Call 9-1-1 for crimes in progress, or nonemergency, 509-575-6200 (M-F, 8am-5pm, closed holidays), to report crimes after they occur.
- Write down the details of the suspects, activities, and/or vehicles right after the crime is noticed so that details are fresh in your memory. Make sure to document the variables that are defined, distinguished, and detailed.

- Talk to neighboring businesses about what happened; share information at Business District or Business Watch meetings. It is important to share information so others are aware of any criminal activity happening in the area.
- After a person(s) is arrested, request to pursue charges against the individual(s). Contact the City Prosecutor (509-575-6030) to take the steps necessary to ensure that these cases are aggressively pursued.

Shoplifting and the Exclusion Process

After a person has been caught shoplifting or you as a store owner are suspicious of a person shoplifting, you need to develop a procedure to follow for excluding the person. This procedure should identify behaviors that deserve an exclusion and the response to those behaviors.

Example: When someone is caught shoplifting in your store, the procedure should be to call the police every time and issue that person a verbal or written exclusion.

Exclusions can be a verbal expression, saying that a person cannot enter the premises for a certain amount of time or some form of written documentation describing the exclusion. This can include something as simple as a notation in a log book. In both occasions, document the date and time of when the exclusion was issued.

Also, document the description of person and the description of what was taken. If the person happens to come back onto your property, call the police so they can be arrested for Criminal Trespass in the Second Degree.

Crime Prevention Program Numbers

All Numbers Are Area Code 509

| | |
|--|----------|
| Main Line..... | 575-6200 |
| Block Watch | 575-6197 |
| Explorer Post..... | 575-6071 |
| Crime Free Rental Housing | 575-6184 |
| Criminal Investigations | 575-6212 |
| Property Crimes Unit | |
| Major Crimes Unit | |
| Special Assault Unit | |
| Drug Enforcement..... | 454-4407 |
| Community Services..... | 575-6197 |
| Code Enforcement Hotline (Nuisances, Zoning, Etc.) | 576-6657 |
| Graffiti Removal Process | 575-6101 |
| Neighborhood Development Process..... | 575-6101 |

For details on these programs please visit www.yakimapolice.org

For details on code compliance please visit <https://www.yakimawa.gov/services/codes/>

Sources: City of Portland Office of Neighborhood Involvement and City of Yakima websites