

SHOPLIFTERS COST A LOT OF PEOPLE A LOT OF MONEY

Each year, stores lose millions of dollars worth of merchandise to shoplifters. Everyone who is a consumer pays for these losses through higher prices for merchandise. Consumers also have to bear the costs of security measures necessitated by shoplifters. Taxpayers are burdened with the costs associated with the arrests and prosecution of offenders.



Contact your local district station crime prevention office for more information:

- Fair Oaks District Station 703-591-0966
- Franconia District Station 703-922-0889
- Mason District Station 703-256-8035
- McLean District Station 703-556-7750
- Mount Vernon Station 703-360-8400
- Reston District Station 703-478-0904
- Sully District Station 703-814-7000
- West Springfield Station 703-644-7377



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FAIRFAX COUNTY
POLICE DEPARTMENT

SHOPLIFTING



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SHOPLIFTING IS BAD FOR BUSINESS

According to Virginia law, it is not necessary to actually steal something to be found guilty of shoplifting. Concealing property while still on the premises, altering price tags or transferring goods from one container or package to another, assisting someone else to steal or actually stealing are all the same under the law and are punished as shoplifting. Most shoplifters are committing a misdemeanor which is punishable by a fine up to \$2,500 or placed in jail for up to one year. However, some violators are punished as felons. In addition to the fines sentenced, a felony conviction also carries an imprisonment sentence of one to five years in a state penitentiary. Shoplifters are also civilly liable to their victims for the stolen merchandise and any expenses incurred during prosecution .



High dollar losses due to crime, such as theft, can force retailers out of business. Businesses which do survive crime losses are forced to charge customers higher prices to pay for the cost of thievery.

BUSINESSES CAN COMBAT SHOPLIFTING

Employees can help thwart shoplifters by

- Being familiar with shoplifting laws and following the store's established procedures if the presence of a shoplifter is suspected.
- Watching for customers who are nervous, have wandering eyes or linger around display tables or racks.
- Observing customers' hands, pockets and purses, especially noticing open packages, shopping bags and book bags.
- Carefully watching groups, particularly if one member attempts to draw attention away from the rest of the group.
- Ask if customers need help. Criminals do not want attention.

Employees should know some of the techniques used by shoplifters:

- Bulky coats, pants or other clothing, and maternity outfits provide places for concealment of merchandise.
- Packages, bags, knapsacks and purses are natural hiding places.
- Folded newspapers or magazines may be used for concealment.
- Items such as fake casts, hollowed out books, umbrellas or belts and hooks under coats can be used.

Store layouts can help deter shoplifters:

- Mount mirrors in corners so there are no blind spots.
- Counters should be low, with a maximum of waist height if possible.
- Arrange displays so that missing items are noticed quickly and easily.
- Make it hard to leave the store without paying for merchandise.
- Expensive items should be placed near the center of the store.
- Place registers near doors.