

HARLINGEN POLICE DEPARTMENT

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

2016-0039

HONOR



COURAGE



INTEGRITY

Public Service Announcement / Theft Trend

Over the past month, the Harlingen Police Department's Crime Fusion Center has discovered a pattern of thefts occurring at local Department, Clothing, and Home Improvement Stores. According to information provided by the affected stores, the suspect(s) selects an item without paying for it, and then goes to the service desk and returns the item, claiming that the item(s) had been paid for but the receipt had been lost. The policy of some local stores allows person(s) to return items without receipts and receive store credit. Depending on the affected store's procedure, the service desk then issues the suspect a gift card for a specified amount. The suspect(s) then uses the gift card to make another purchase (usually the next day or so). In other reports, the suspect(s) search the outside garbage cans for receipts. When a receipt is found, the suspect then walks into the store, selects an item listed on the receipt, and then returns the item for store credit, as if the item had been legitimately paid for. The Harlingen Police Department is currently investigating several theft cases throughout the City, where the above tactics have been used. The thefts are being committed by individuals, teams, and by both male and female suspects. H.P.D. has information that these types of crimes are occurring in other Valley cities as well. H.P.D. encourages local businesses to report these types of incidents, as well as any other crimes or suspicious activities occurring at their businesses.

Retail Crime Prevention Tips:

Supervise the Selling Floor – Be out of the floor as often as possible. Walk the floor continuously and identify possible theft targets. Encourage employees to keep their heads up and eyes open.

Give Shoplifters an Uneasy Feeling – Greet or acknowledge every customer who enters. Provide personal customer service as much as possible. Make frequent eye contact with customers. Place security tags on vulnerable / expensive items. Install additional security measures in "blind spots" (i.e., lighting, mirrors, and cameras). Issue criminal trespass warnings to all known shoplifters. Encourage close relationships between sales employees and Loss Prevention personnel. Encourage Employee involvement.

Shoplifting – When possible limit access by way of entrance & exit doors and have these monitored by employees (or Loss Prevention). Limit access to expensive merchandise. Use electronic tags that cannot be removed by a non-employee without damaging the merchandise. Have employees working registers to properly discard or destroy receipts left behind by valid customers.



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