

# Business crime prevention advice: Retail

## Be professional

- Well-trained and motivated staff are the most effective deterrent in any store.
- Staff should greet each customer and give them prompt attention when they enter your store. If you cannot serve them immediately, acknowledge them by making eye contact.
- Trust your instincts.
- Don't stereotype - anyone can steal and anything can be stolen.

## If you think a potential thief is in your store...

Don't be afraid to approach a suspect a second or third time, asking if you can be of assistance. Thieves feel uneasy when they are approached by attentive staff - it makes them feel that you are aware of their intentions.

Genuine customers will not mind the attention of your staff.

## If you believe a theft has occurred...

- Think about your safety at all times. Get another staff member to assist you, and if you feel unsafe at any point, let the suspect leave.
- Approach the suspect and identify yourself. Stay at a safe distance.
- Be polite. Do not be confrontational.
- Tell them what you saw them do.
- Ask them to return with you to your office.

## If the suspect is cooperative...

- If you are by yourself, walk behind the suspect to the office. If you are assisted, have the other staff member walk in front of the suspect and direct the way.
- Watch to see if the suspect discards any stolen items.
- In the office, seat the suspect in an area where they cannot hide or steal further items. (Suggestion - Keep your office door open while you are speaking to the suspect, or have another employee with you as a witness so the suspect cannot accuse you of ill-treatment.)
- Note any explanations or admissions.
- Call 111 and ask for Police .
- When the Police arrive, they will speak to you first. They will interview the suspect and decide if an arrest is warranted. They will also search the suspect and recover your property.
- Depending on the nature of the property, the Police may take the item/s as an exhibit. If this happens, they will give you a receipt. They will ask the court for authority to return the property to you.
- You may want to consider issuing the suspect with a trespass notice (use our trespass notice form), that will make it illegal for them to return to your shop for up to two years.

## If the suspect is aggressive or runs off...

- It is better to let the suspect go than risk being assaulted.
- If you feel safe enough to follow them, keep a safe distance.
- Advise another staff member that you are following a shoplifter out of the shop and get them to call 111 and ask for Police .
- The person who telephones Police needs to explain where your shop is, what you and the suspect look like, and in which direction you went.
- If you are following the thief, take a cell phone with you if you can. Call 111 and advise the Police that you are following a shoplifter. Also give them your location and direction of travel.
- When you see a Police vehicle, wave it down and identify yourself.
- Give the Police a description of the thief. (Use a witness memory enhancement form - male and female.)

## Children and young persons

All offending by children (under 14 years) and young persons (over 14 but under 17 years) should be reported. This encourages lawful behaviour and assists police to identify those repeatedly offending and their care and protection needs.

Police will interview the child or young person, attempt to recover your property, and place the child or young person with a parent or caregiver.

Unless they commit a very serious crime, most child offenders are dealt with by way of warning and alternative actions plans. Most young persons will also be warned or be the subject of a Family Group Conference and only persistent and more serious offenders will appear before the Youth Court.

Police actions are guided by section 208 of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989 which states that unless the public interest requires otherwise, criminal proceedings should not be instituted against a child or young person if there is an alternative means of dealing with the matter.

You can issue a trespass notice to a child or young person who has been apprehended for shoplifting or was in the company of others who have been caught shoplifting and been trespassed.

## **7 ways to prevent retail crime through “Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design” principles**

### **1 - Control access to your business**

- Clearly define entrances and exits
- Monitor who comes in and out
- Restrict access to hiding places/escape routes
- Secure access points
- Light outdoor areas well

### **2 - See and be seen**

- Keep shelves low and create gaps
- Use mirrors to see blind spots
- Keep windows clear
- Keep shrubbery low
- Light outdoor areas well

### **3 - Clearly define the layout**

- Keep the counter near the entrance
- Secure staff-only areas
- Keep expensive goods secured
- Direct customers with clear signs
- Eliminate hiding places

### **4 - Show your business is cared for**

- Make your premises attractive
- Keep your shelves clean and tidy
- Keep paintwork and signs fresh
- Remove graffiti immediately
- Clear rubbish regularly

### **5 - Use active security measures**

- Install CCTV inside and outside
- Get advice before choosing security systems
- Lock access ways at night
- Alarm points of entry and exit

## 6 - Manage and maintain your business well

- Keep minimal cash onsite
- Regularly secure takings in a safe
- Bank at different times and conceal cash
- Open and empty the till at the end of the day
- Undertake regular maintenance

## 7 - Train staff to be vigilant - eyes on the street

- Greet customers with eye contact
- Watch for suspicious activity inside and out

## Additional Resources

Full Business Crime Prevention Guide:

<https://www.police.govt.nz/sites/default/files/publications/business-crime-prevention-english.pdf>