



WASHINGTON RETAIL  
ASSOCIATION



# Guide to Navigating Public Safety & Retail Crime

A Washington Retail Association Workplace Safety Resource

v.8.0

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WASHINGTON RETAIL  
ASSOCIATION

*A Washington Retail Association Organized Retail Crime Resource*

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **PURPOSE**

The Washington Retail Association (WR) is the primary advocacy group for retailers across the state, from the largest national chains to the smallest independent businesses. As stewards of Washington State's retail experience, our goal is to protect retail jobs and the employers who provide them.

### **POSITION**

WR is committed to supporting Washington State retailers, including our members and the industry as a whole. With the pervasiveness of retail theft and organized retail crime (ORC), WR stands ready to provide retailers with tools to protect their employees and customers while helping to safeguard their place of business.

WR addresses retail crime on several fronts, the most important of which is as a primary advocate of sound policy.

### **POLICY**

WR has been steadfast in its work to improve our state's laws to ensure protections for employees and employers alike and accountability for criminals.

#### **WR supports:**

- A comprehensive public policy response involving federal, state, and local law enforcement with open inter-agency communication and coordination.
- The Washington State's Attorney General's Interagency ORC Task Force and Unit to share offender information, solve crimes and file charges.
- Updating Washington State's definition of ORC and expanding the definition of theft with significant criminal penalties.
- The passage of the Integrity, Notification, and Fairness in Online Retail Marketplaces for Consumers Act – or the INFORM Consumers Act - which became effective as of June 27, 2023.

The retail industry employs nearly 400,000 people in Washington State, paying approximately \$20 billion in annual wages. It is of paramount importance to ensure the state's statutes support jobs while making workplaces safe. To this end, WR cofounded the Washington Organized Retail Crime Association (WAORCA) and partners with other city and county law enforcement agencies and organizations.

## MULTI-PRONGED APPROACH TO ORC AND RETAIL THEFT

WR is addressing ORC and retail theft head-on with a multi-pronged approach. In addition to the first prong of policy, our strategy includes:

1. Coordination with WAORCA to share information among national, state, and local law enforcement agencies and loss prevention officers.
2. ORC Crime Task Force and Unit which provide:
  - COORDINATION between retailers, law enforcement, and prosecutors at all levels of government,
  - IDENTIFICATION, ENFORCEMENT AND PROSECUTION of ORC theft groups, and
  - A DETERRENT to retail theft criminals, making it known that criminals will face consequences for their actions
3. Passing laws through local, state and federal lawmakers that fund law enforcement, address employee and customer safety by providing tools to help deter and apprehend criminals and establish funding solutions that support major theft enforcement actions.
4. Providing resources for small and mid-sized retailers on how to prepare, prevent, protect, and navigate post-crime incidents.
5. The formation of a long-term public/private partnership (PPP) between retailers and businesses, cities, law enforcement and prosecutors.



*Renée Sunde, President and CEO of the Washington Retail Association addressing the issues of organized retail crime (ORC) with Attorney General Bob Ferguson at the announcement of the AG-led Washington State ORC Task Force.*



***CRIME SCENE DO NOT CROSS***

## **COULD YOUR BUSINESS FALL VICTIM TO ORGANIZED RETAIL CRIME**

Washington State experienced over \$2.7 billion in retail theft in 2021, the second highest in the nation per capita, according to the Retail Industry Leaders Association (RILA).

ORC incidents were on the rise prior to 2020, and the pandemic coupled with a softer approach on criminals seemed to exacerbate the trend. While businesses had to pivot and restructure how they provided goods and services to the public, resourceful criminals exploited security gaps. They stole retail merchandise in bulk before quickly selling it online, in parking lots, and to fencing operations.

Law enforcement agencies in cities throughout the US have reported “flash mob” thefts at an increasing rate. ORC rings have targeted jewelers, pharmacies, high-end retailers, convenience stores, hardware stores, cannabis dispensaries, and other retailers. These groups range in size from a handful at convenience stores to “flash mob” groups of several dozen when descending on large stores or malls. Flash mob thefts occur day and night, whether stores are open or closed. No matter the circumstance, criminals are in and out in a matter of minutes—long gone before law enforcement arrives on the scene.

Having a robust loss prevention plan is a good first step when dealing with retail crime. Businesses should implement countermeasures to deter criminals and prepare their workers for such incidents by adopting best practices to help keep their employees and property safe.

## **Planning**

While laws can serve as a deterrent, they are not guaranteed to prevent all crime in retail businesses. This document is a comprehensive resource to help retailers take a flexible and strategic approach to address retail theft and ORC. It offers specific recommendations that retailers can refer to when drafting crime and safety strategies for their businesses.



## IN THE PAGES AHEAD, RETAILERS WILL LEARN HOW TO:

### Prepare

Recognize the signs that their business is being surveilled for a potential retail crime.

### Prevent

Implement best practices to discourage would-be thieves from targeting their business.

### Protect

Make their retail establishments safe for their customers and employees. Protecting business assets and inventory is important, but protecting customers and workers is essential.

### Post-Crime

Know what to do in the aftermath of a retail crime event.

## ***PREPARE***

### Stay informed/get involved

Stay on top of local/regional crime trends. There are a variety of ways that your business can engage to be part of the solution to fight retail theft and ORC in your region. For information on local meetings with business owners and loss prevention officers, contact **WAORCA** at <https://www.waorca.org>.

- Consider establishing or joining a crime watch contact group with your local business community.
- Assemble or join an existing retail and law enforcement ORC prevention coalition to collectively develop prevention and reaction strategies relevant to your neighborhood, city, or region.
- Research laws in your area to clarify what actions can be legally taken to protect your employees and business.
- Join with WR to lobby for new legislation that brings meaningful penalties to those involved in crimes.

- Consider supporting the Attorney General-led ORC task force to help monitor, alert, prevent, and react to retail theft and organized crimes.

### Law enforcement/external support

- Establish points of contact with law enforcement agencies.
- Consider hiring private security or off-duty police and have them placed near entrances, exits, and other visible locations.
- Consistently report and document suspicious activity to the local authorities.
- Consider paying for a real-time security monitoring service that could react to visual verification of an incident or receive a text code to alert local law enforcement.

## Communications

- Maintain communication channels with local police or sheriff departments and inquire about regular patrol checks of your premises.
- Make a regularly updated list of law enforcement contact numbers and emails.
- Determine if your jurisdiction can receive 911 texts. A regularly updated list of text-capable jurisdictions can be downloaded from the Federal Communications Commission's website. <https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/what-you-need-know-about-text-911>
- People are loitering and actively observing the business's opening and closing methods and procedures.
- Employee-only or unauthorized areas are entered into "mistakenly."
- Large bags, totes, or backpacks that can conceal stolen items are brought into the store.
- Shopping bags from stores not located at your mall or shopping center are carried into your store.
- Heavy/oversized garments in warm months are worn into the store.

## Warning signs a business is under surveillance and may be at risk:

- Employees report missing keys or access cards.
- Keys for security devices disappear.
- Strangers are taking photos or videos of the business security cameras or devices.
- Both vehicle license plates are missing or are covered up.
- Customers put on sunglasses, face coverings, gloves, and hats before entering your store.
- Employees are asked about staffing and security and seem overly conscious of where employees are.
- Emergency exits are "accidentally" opened or propped open.
- Parked/idling occupied vehicles are seen in front of entry and exit areas (typically parked in Fire Lanes).
- A large group of masked individuals with empty bags suddenly form outside of the business.
- Employees report finding doors propped open.
- Comments on social media discussing or encouraging coordinated criminal activity are posted.

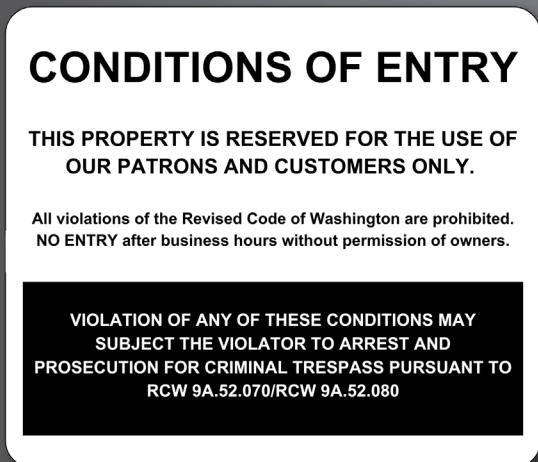
While one or more of the above indicators are present in shoplifting incidents, it is important to avoid profiling customers. You need to focus on the behaviors being exhibited by the person you are concerned about instead of their race or other characteristic that has no bearing on their intent.



## Issuing a Notice of Trespass

Most retail businesses are located on privately-owned properties that are open for public access during business hours. While the property is open to the public, the operators and owners can revoke that privilege. To facilitate this, businesses should conspicuously display “Conditions of Entry” and “No Trespassing” signs on their property, especially if they desire immediate law enforcement action. (See note regarding sign design resources below.)

Trespassing an individual requires a formal warning stating that they must leave the premises immediately and not return or they will face criminal prosecution. You must cite a rules violation or other objective reason for initiating the trespass action such as cutting off security tags from display items.



For the property owner or their representative to trespass someone on the property, they can issue a notice of trespass either in writing or verbally. Verbal notices to the trespasser must be witnessed and documented. For purposes of future legal enforcement, written notices are preferred. The notice should be signed by, and a copy given to, the trespasser or sent by certified mail. Most law enforcement agencies can assist in issuing the notice if the offender is still present.

The notice of trespass should contain specific language per the state’s criminal statute. Trespass warnings can be given for any length of time - from one day to permanently - although a one year notice is most common. Once a person has been formally trespassed, they are subject to arrest if they return.

- A new theft charge following a valid trespass notice can bump up the crime to a burglary charge.
- It is important for the written notice to show the date and length of the trespass.
- If the loss prevention officer or employee knows someone has been previously trespassed, they should give the law enforcement officer a copy of the trespass notice.
- Additional information related to trespass documentation for Washington State can be accessed through the Links section at the end of this guide. Businesses should coordinate with local law enforcement regarding the trespass process.. Some cities have programs in place for businesses to pre-authorize local law enforcement to trespass people who suspiciously loiter in and around a business location after hours.

**Note:** *Print-quality templates of trespassing signs and Notice of No Trespass document are available at no charge on Washington Retail’s website resource page at <https://washingtonretail.org/initiatives/public-safety-resources>.*





WASHINGTON RETAIL ASSOCIATION

Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Business Address: \_\_\_\_\_

(Requests for appeal to this notice may be sent to this address.)

# Notice of No Trespass

Given to:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Warning: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of Warning: \_\_\_\_\_ Store No.: \_\_\_\_\_

Good cause for issuance of Notice of Trespass notice: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## NOTICE

Take notice that as of the date indicated above, you are forbidden from entering or coming upon any and all premises of **[BUSINESS NAME]** for a period of *three years*. This notice and restriction are due to the conduct you have displayed in the store and that your presence impedes legitimate customers and/or interferes with **[BUSINESS NAME]** in conducting its business.

Should you fail to abide by this notice, you may be subject to arrest and criminal prosecution under [RCW 9A.52.070](#) and/or [RCW 9A.52.080](#) (Washington State)

This notice and restriction apply to all **[BUSINESS NAME]** locations.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person to Whom Warning was Issued  
**[Note: Indicate "Refused" if the person refuses to sign.]**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name/Title of Person Issuing Warning (Print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Witness (Print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Issuing Warning

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## Training employees

Comprehensive employee training can literally save lives.

- Develop and regularly update emergency plans for management, employees, and customers.
- Ensure all your employees receive first aid and CPR training annually.
- Have emergency supplies on-site and accessible to employees, including:
  - First-aid kits, including tourniquets
  - Flashlights
  - At least one AED (automated external defibrillator)
  - Eye-wash station for employees or customers sprayed with chemical irritants

## Identifying counterfeit cash

How should the cashier respond when counterfeit cash is used to pay for a purchase? In an ideal scenario, the cashier would alert the store's loss prevention officer, and the officer would detain the counterfeiter until the police arrive. In practice, this seldom happens. Depending on the loss prevention officer's location in the store, the counterfeiter will usually be out the door before being detained.

When cashiers determine a bill is fake, the counterfeiter will likely shrug their shoulders, take back the cash, and walk out the front door. The trouble is that businesses can't report counterfeit bills if the bills aren't retained as evidence. And attempting to keep a customer's cash without completing the sale isn't a safe practice for store employees.

Every day, counterfeit cash is received by store cashiers, and the bills are either passed along to the next unsuspecting customer as change (the customer loses), or the store includes the bills in the evening bank drop, and the store loses.

Preferably, an employee would reject the counterfeit bills before the counterfeiter completes their purchase. But how can a retailer determine whether a denomination is real or fake? Most companies rely on inexpensive counterfeit detection pens. While these pens can help identify if the paper is fake, they don't always work. According to an agent in Seattle's Secret Service field office, counterfeit detecting marker pens are often worthless. This is the case because modern-day counterfeiters are bleaching the ink off \$1 bills and printing \$100 bill graphics onto the paper. The marker pens only verify if the paper is legitimate, not the printing. When the cashier's pen "verifies" the note's authenticity, employees will oftentimes accept the bill regardless of print quality.

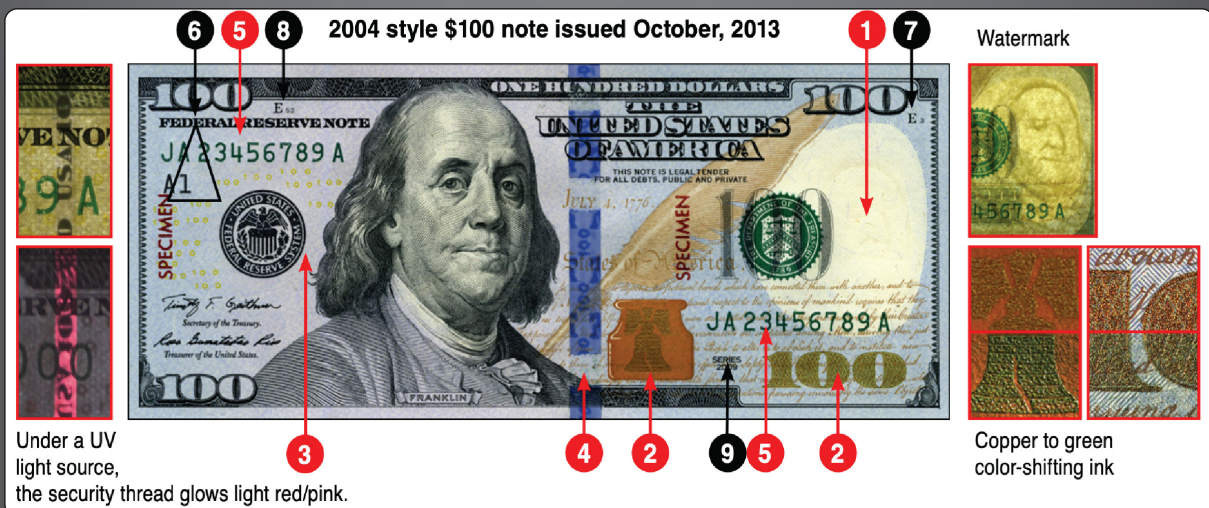
In 1990, vertical security threads were embedded into the new \$100 Federal Reserve Notes (FRN) and by 1993 all FRN denominations received the threads, except for the \$1 and \$2 versions. Each denomination has a unique thread position. (See table on page 12.)

According to the Secret Service, the best tool a business can use to determine whether a bill is authentic or not is to use an ultraviolet (UV) light. When a UV light is held to the security strip, the bill's denomination appears, and the strip glows a unique color.

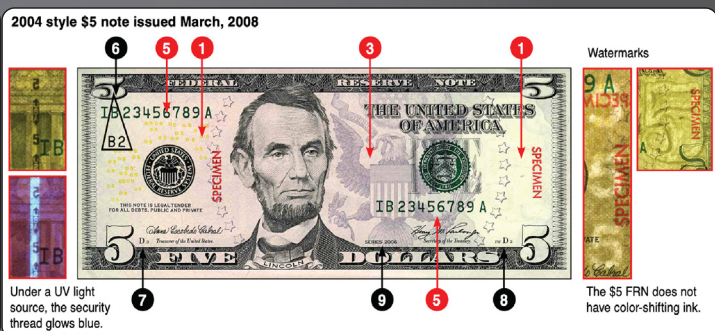
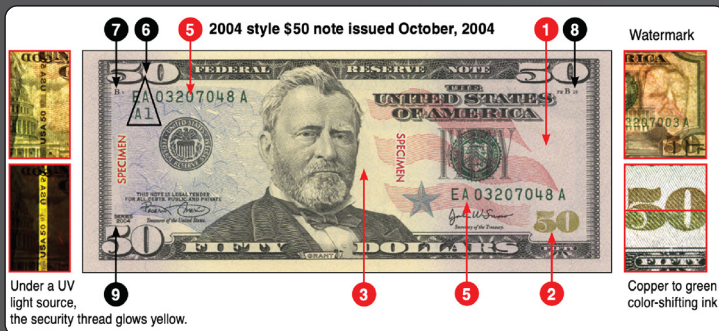
Denomination	Security thread color under UV light
\$5	Blue
\$10	Orange
\$20	Green
\$50	Yellow
\$100	Light red/pink

## What makes Federal Reserve Notes unique

- 2004 style Federal Reserve notes (FRNs) incorporate background colors and large, borderless portrait images.
  - Paper - US currency paper consists of 25% linen and 75% cotton and contains small randomly dispersed red and blue security fibers embedded throughout the paper.
  - Portrait - The 2004 style FRNs have an enlarged and off-center portrait without a frame.
- 1** Watermark - The 2004 style FRNs have a watermark that is visible from either side when held to a light.
  - 2** Color-Shifting Ink - The 2004 style \$10, \$20, \$50, and \$100 FRNs have color-shifting ink that shifts from copper to green as the note is tilted 45 degrees. The 2004 style \$100 FRN has a color-shifting “Bell in the Inkwell.” The \$5 FRN does not have color-shifting ink.
  - 3** Security Thread - All genuine FRNs, except the \$1 and \$2, have a clear thread embedded vertically in the paper. The thread is inscribed with the note’s denomination and is visible only when held to a light. Each denomination has a unique thread position and glows a different color when held to ultraviolet (UV) light.
  - 4** 3-D Security Ribbon - The 2004 style \$100 FRN features a blue ribbon woven into the paper. When you tilt the note back and forth, the bells and “100” move side to side. If you tilt the note side to side, they move up and down.
  - 5** Serial Numbers - The first letter of the serial number on FRNs of series year 1996 or later corresponds to the series year: E = 2004, G = 2004A, I = 2006, J = 2009, and L = 2009A.
  - 6** Federal Reserve Indicators - The 2004 style FRNs have a letter and number designation, which identifies one of the 12 distributing Federal Reserve Banks. This letter and number designation appear beneath the serial number on the left. The number corresponds to the position of the letter in the alphabet, e.g ., A1, B2, C3, etc. The letter matches the second prefix letter in the serial number.
  - 7** Note Position Letter and Number
  - 8** Face Plate Number
  - 9** Series Year



Back Plate Number (Not shown) Found on the bottom right-hand corner of the back of the note. FRN information from the Secret Service counterfeit guide Know Your Money.  
<https://www.secretservice.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2020-12/KnowYourMoney.pdf>



2004 Style	Portrait	Watermark	Security Thread Location & UV Color	Microprinting	Other Microprinting	Color-Shifting Ink in Front Lower Right Numeral
100	Franklin	Franklin	Left of portrait <i>Light red/pink</i>	"THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA" along Franklin's collar; small "100" in the note's vertical borders; "USA" along bottom of Franklin's portrait	"ONE HUNDRED USA" along the golden quill; "USA 100" around the blank space containing the portrait watermark	Copper to Green; Also appears in the bell in the inkwell
50	Grant	Grant	Right of portrait <i>Yellow</i>	"THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA" along Grant's collar	"50" "USA" and "FIFTY" in two blue stars to the left of the portrait; "FIFTY" alongside borders	Copper to Green
20	Jackson	Jackson	Left of portrait <i>Green</i>	"THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA 20 USA" in the border below the Treasurer's signature	"USA20" borders beginning part of text ribbon "USA TWENTY", right of portrait	Copper to Green
10	Hamilton	Hamilton	Right of portrait <i>Orange</i>	"THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA" below portrait	"USA10" beneath torch to the left of the portrait; "TEN DOLLARS" alongside borders	Copper to Green
5	Lincoln	Left: vertical "5 5" Right: large "5"	Right of portrait <i>Blue</i>	"E Pluribus Unum" at top of eagle's shield to the right of the portrait; "USA" between columns of eagle's shield; "FIVE DOLLARS" alongside borders.	On back, "USA FIVE" on edge of purple 5.	None
<b>1996 Style</b>						
100	Franklin	Franklin	Left of portrait <i>Light red/pink</i>	"THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA" along Franklin's collar	"USA100" in lower left numeral	Green to Black
50	Grant	Grant	Right of portrait <i>Yellow</i>	"THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA" along Grant's collar	"FIFTY" alongside borders	Green to Black
20	Jackson	Jackson	Left of portrait <i>Green</i>	"THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA" in the lower oval framing of portrait	"USA20" in lower left numeral	Green to Black
10	Hamilton	Hamilton	Right of portrait <i>Orange</i>	"THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA" below portrait above Hamilton's name	"TEN" in lower left numeral	Green to Black
5	Lincoln	Lincoln	Left of portrait <i>Blue</i>	"THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA" in the lower oval framing of portrait	"FIVE DOLLARS" alongside borders	None
All Federal Reserve Notes are printed on paper featuring red and blue embedded fibers.			Federal Reserve Notes designed before 1990 do not contain security threads or microprinting		<a href="http://www.uscurrency.gov">www.uscurrency.gov</a> <a href="http://www.secretservice.gov">www.secretservice.gov</a> April 2016	

## PREVENT

### Robbery prevention

The terms theft and burglary are often used interchangeably, but they are different types of crime. Burglaries involve entering a house or other type of building with the intent of committing a crime once inside. On the other hand, robbery involves taking, attempting to take, or retaining property from another person by force, threat of force, threat of harm, or fear of harm.

Below is a list of best practices that may assist in robbery prevention:

- Robberies usually occur at predictable times, such as opening and closing hours. Robberies increase during holiday seasons due to the increased cash volumes and the presence of larger crowds which can help distract and preoccupy store personnel.
- It is good policy to avoid keeping unnecessary amounts of cash in the till or cash drawer. Keeping only the amount necessary to conduct normal business and transferring the rest to the bank or a safe is ideal. Even more prudent is to install an anchored drop-vault for employees and they should not have a key, combination, or other access to the safe. Posting a notice that the store uses a drop vault and, therefore, cannot make change for large denominations will help serve as a deterrent to robbery.
- Post signage stating the store's policy that no more than a specific amount of cash is kept in the store register(s) at one time, and the store does not accept larger than a specific denomination, such as \$50. Large bills should never be placed in the drawer or under the cash tray since criminals are familiar with this practice, as they should be dropped in a drop safe immediately.



- Signage outside the store should emphasize security policies that limited cash is kept on hand and employees do not have access to the safe.
- Frequent trips to the bank at varying times and routes will serve to decrease predictability. Transport cash in a disguised or atypical container, box, or canister, and have a second person assist in the transportation when possible. Avoid approaching the deposit drop when making night deposits unless it is free of bystanders. Consider employing an armored car service in high-risk areas or when transporting large amounts of cash.
  - Prepare and record bills with non-consecutive serial numbers and series dates of lower denomination bills. These bills should not be used for normal transactions. Instead, they should be placed in a till and included with the cash given to the criminal. A record of the marked bills should be kept in a secure location rather than the till or the safe.
- Customers should never be admitted to premises after closing hours, particularly when an employee is alone.
- Report all suspicious activities. If employees observe individuals or occupied vehicles lingering for periods of time or in a manner that appears suspicious or uncomfortable, they should make a note of the vehicle's license number, color, model or description of the car or individual(s) and call the local police non-emergency number. Keep in mind that suspicious activities may not always be obvious. What defines suspicious activity in one type of business may not be suspicious in others. Behavior and activities that are not normal for a particular retail location could be an indication that a crime is about to happen.



## Security, cameras, and surveillance

- Install a door movement audible alert to announce when someone is entering or leaving the store, such as a buzzer, bell, or chime.
- Install a monitored, silent “hold-up” alarm. This type of alert device can be installed on the floor to be tripped by foot, wired to a money clip in the till, or hidden under the countertop, inside an office, appliance, or other location.
- Locks should be re-keyed and safe combinations or codes altered when employees are terminated for cause.
- Install high-resolution (4K) IP video cameras which can “see” a wide range of contrast details.
- Don’t conceal cameras or make their appearance hidden; cameras should be visible to deter would-be thieves.
- Have a network video recorder in place with 3-4 weeks of storage capacity.
- Consider sharing external camera feeds with local law enforcement.
- Consider a cloud-based backup system for real-time uploads in case thieves take or destroy your recorder.
- Get UPS (uninterruptable power supplies) units to back up your cameras, digital recorders, and internet connection.
- Regularly test cameras and verify your recording and cloud storage systems are functioning correctly.
- Research app-based and other technological solutions that provide greater security for lone employees.



## Employee-related prevention measures

- Give employees access to a secure location to store personal belongings such as coats, purses, and gym bags.
- Make sure that employees don't prop open the secure store doors to service corridors, etc.
- Make it a point to thank employees who report problems that could contribute to crime.
- Post and distribute contact information, such as phone numbers and online portal URLs, to all employees to report crimes, suspicious activities, or emergencies.
- Make emergency contact phone numbers for building management and security readily available and post the information throughout the office or sales area.
- In the event something suspicious or threatening takes place—such as strangers loitering near a door or a telephone threat—make sure your staff knows where to locate telephone numbers for security, police, and fire departments.
- Consider placing a staffed reception or information desk at or near the entrance of your business.
- Ensure all employees are aware of which areas are restricted-access only areas.



- Train staff to require and check identification from repair persons who enter the business and to remain alert while repair personnel are in the business.
- Designate an appointed keeper and distributor of access keys for the business and require staff to immediately report lost or stolen keys to security or business management.
- If the employee(s) transporting the cash feel like they are being followed, they should walk directly to an open business, police precinct, or fire station as a safety measure.

Ensure adequate staffing levels are always maintained, especially during opening and closing, lunch hours, and holiday seasons when increased amounts of money are onsite and employees are more distracted.



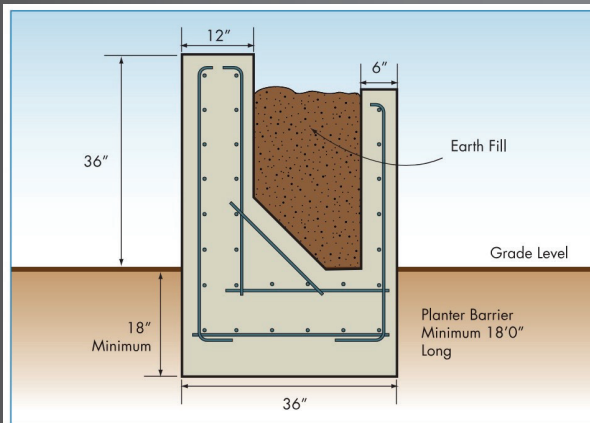
# KEEP OUT

# RESTRICTED ACCESS

## Prevention vs. demotivation

Working to prevent crimes is paramount, but it does not address the allure of a criminal's potential reward for a successful heist. The goal is to remove the motivation to commit the crime in the first place and taking steps to demotivate criminals goes a long way towards prevention.

- Minimize store access after sunset, before sunrise, and when closing or opening your business.
- Install physical barriers to prevent would-be thieves from ramming their vehicles into stores, such as landscaping boulders, storefront crash protection bollards, or gabion baskets filled with stones. See WR's website (<https://washingtonretail.org/initiatives/public-safety-resources>) to download a resource titled *Perimeter Security Design* from the Department of Homeland Security.



Top: Typical engineering detail of reinforced planter with DOS K12 performance, to illustrate concept only; dimensions and reinforcing will vary. *Source: DOS.* Bottom: Planter with concealed crash-rated bollards. *Source: Waus Au Tile.*

- Put preventative measures into place that limit access to high-value items.
- Regularly make a security planning sweep through your store and identify displays that make bulk theft quick and easy, such as a large number of expensive perfumes and colognes that could be swept off a countertop into a shopping cart or handbag.
- Consider placing less costly items on accessible displays and high-priced items behind glass.
- Block access to parking lots overnight or during off/closed hours.
- Remove high-value merchandise from external display cases when closed for business, or consider installing theft-proof steel roll-down curtains, doors, or gates to block access.
- Place high-value items in a secure safe during off-hours.
- For clothing, alternate hangers on racks with some facing inward and others outward to make grabbing armfuls of clothing difficult.
- Be aware that shoplifters ("boosters") increase activity during peak hours and plan accordingly. (<https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/impact-implicit-stereotyping-offender-profiling-unexpected-results>)
- Consider using ink tags on retail clothing pieces. Studies have shown these tags are less expensive than electronic article surveillance (EAS) tags and can decrease theft by as much as 42%. (<https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/reducing-rewards-shoplifting-evaluation-ink-tags>)
- Enforce strict refund and return policies, such as requiring a receipt for refunds and store credit.
- Decrease the height of product displays to increase visibility throughout your store.



# PROTECT

## Planning for crimes-in-progress

- Devise a coding system to announce over loudspeakers to give direction to store employees without making the strategies known to the thieves, e.g., “Code magenta,” or, “Paging Mr. Stevens... you have a call on line 1.”
- Don’t post your business’s “no-detention/non-pursuit” policies in view of the public.
- Consider ways store personnel could intervene safely during different types of ORC events, such as what an employee should say or do, when and how to activate emergency panic switches, call 911, etc.

against a criminal. Do not resist a criminal. The robbery is not worth risking a life. Avoid any actions that could jeopardize the safety of fellow employees and customers. Criminals are much less likely to hurt those who cooperate.

- Tell the criminal about potential surprises, such as if you are expecting a delivery, if an employee is due to return to the store soon, or if anything else might happen that could startle the criminal.
- Explain each action you are about to take in order to comply with the criminal’s demands, such as, “I am going to open the cash drawer now, and it will make a bell sound.” Move very slowly and don’t reach toward them or move in any way that might startle the criminal.
- Be observant, taking in all the details of the criminal to be a helpful witness. Make mental notes so you can complete your witness statement as soon as possible.
- If the criminal isn’t wearing gloves, watch their hand movements and make a mental note of everything they touch. This information will be helpful for the police forensic team when they take fingerprints from the crime scene.

## Armed Robbery

Employee training on the business’s policies and procedures on what to do during a robbery is vital to helping to ensure survival during a confrontation. Taking the time to regularly review and practice employee roles during such an incident will help make their response to an actual event instinctual and reduce the likelihood of injury or worse. Here are some helpful tips regarding armed robbery:

- First and foremost, breathe and stay calm. The calmer you are, the less chance there is of the criminal becoming agitated or dangerous.
- Criminals will usually act nervous. Slowing the criminal down only serves to place your life and the lives of others at risk. The safest choice is to give the criminal what they ask for and do it as quickly as possible.
- Assume every gun to be loaded and deadly.
- If a criminal shows signs of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol, their behaviors can be unpredictable. Their decision-making skills will be impaired, and they won’t think rationally.
- Do not use - or imply - any type of weapon

## POST-CRIME

Experiencing a live crime event is unsettling for most people. Even experienced law enforcement officers become rattled when they come face-to-face with the threat of harm. It is normal for the nervous system to shift into “fight or flight” mode. Our adrenaline surges, cardiac and respiratory rates increase, and our emotions become heightened. With these responses in mind, training for what to do in the event of an actual confrontation and what to do afterward is critical.



### Following a live crime event:

- Contact the police by calling 911 as soon as it is safe to do so. You will be asked to briefly explain the nature of the emergency, your location, when it happened, if you know the suspect's identity, if anyone needs help, if anyone was injured, and if weapons were involved. Stay on the phone with the dispatcher and keep your telephone line clear until the police arrive. Call security companies if applicable. If the dispatcher requests the call to continue, have a second employee contact the business' security company and be sure to inform them that 911 emergency services have already been notified.
- Lock all doors, and do not allow anyone to enter. Ask witnesses to remain until police arrive and don't touch anything the suspect may have touched.

- Ensure all customers and employees are safe and injuries are attended to as needed.
- Do not discuss details of the event with other witnesses. It is important that your memories and recollection of the crime are untainted by others' memories until you have given your statement to the authorities.
- The responding officers will need suspect description and direction of flight to immediately broadcast to other officers in the area. Be as detailed as possible. Making recorded audio notes on your smartphone can help to preserve first impressions and may be easier after a traumatic event than physically writing out the information.

### When to call emergency 911

- A crime is in progress.
- A situation begins to escalate into an emergency endangering life or serious threat to property.
- A crime has occurred.

### When to call your local law enforcement's non-emergency phone number:

- Your business has been burglarized and the suspects are not on scene.
- Your business vehicle has been broken into and the suspects are not on scene.
- You have additional information to add to a previous statement/case report.
- Your business received a bad check or were the victim of fraud.



## First aid

### General first aid

If it's safe for you to do so, administer first aid immediately for critical injuries and notify emergency services (EMS) as soon as possible. Continue administering first aid as needed until paramedics can safely take over care of the wounded. If someone is bleeding profusely, apply pressure to the wound with your hands or a knee until medical help arrives and takes over.



### Pepper spray and bear spray

Increased incidents of employees being sprayed by thieves or through exposure by law enforcement are being reported. Pepper sprays often contain an active ingredient called capsaicin which is derived from chili peppers. These sprays will inflame the mucous membranes of the eyes, nose, and lungs. These sprays are oil-based and can also cause temporary blurring of vision, and congestion, making it difficult to breathe.

If an employee or customer is sprayed with a pepper or bear spray:

- Direct the affected person not to touch their face.
- Address the eyes first:
  - Flush eyes with cold water or saline solution for 15 minutes while rapidly blinking.
  - Do not hold the eyes open manually.
  - Be careful not to pour water over the person's forehead to avoid runoff of spray back into the eyes.
  - Use a towel to protect runoff down the person's clothing, thereby potentially spreading the spray.
  - Wash skin with soap and water, being careful not to spread the pepper spray to other objects or people.
  - Safely remove and store affected clothing securely in plastic bags before laundering (or discard the clothing in the trash to avoid further cross-contamination).
- Remove the affected person from the area to avoid particles remaining in the air.
- When helping a person that has been sprayed, avoid exposure by avoiding direct skin contact.
- Always wear gloves.
- Contact lenses should be removed and disposed of immediately.
- Dilute the spray carefully from skin and eyes by flushing with water and the wind from a fan.
- Monitor the victim's breathing and call 911 if breathing symptoms worsen.

## Witness statements

As soon as feasible, witnesses should begin writing down details of the crime while their thoughts are still fresh. Using a witness statement form can help witnesses as they recall their experience in writing. The witness statement should include as much detail as recollection allows. WR has a witness statement form template available for download on our safety resources page. (<https://washingtonretail.org/initiatives/public-safety-resources>)

Important crime details are specified in the form itself, including descriptions of the suspect, weapons used, getaway vehicle, and an accounting of what was stolen and item values. See the images below and the online resource for clarity.


If the witness recalls additional information in the hours or days following the event, it is important this information is provided to law enforcement as soon as possible to help as they work with prosecutors to prepare the case.

Witness forms should ideally be kept in several locations in the business, including behind the cash registers/point-of-sale terminals, employee break room, and office areas. A copy should also be included in employee manuals and in safety manuals. Regular safety training meetings should include reviewing the company's witness statement form and training on what employees should pay attention to during a live crime event.

**Witness Statement**  
In an emergency, call 911 first. Explain why you are calling and give location. **Stay on the line.**

Business address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Suspect description**

Appearance of Gender	Appearance of ethnic origin	Estimated age
Height		Language accent
Weight		Hat/cap – color/type
Body type/build		Shirt/tee/logos
Eyewear		Trousers/shorts
Tattoos		Coat/logos
Scars/moles/marks		Mask color/type
Posture/gait/limp		Shoe style/color
Jewelry/chains		Gang affiliation
Necklaces		Dominant hand
Earrings		Rings
Piercings	Watch	

Police/Sheriff case #: \_\_\_\_\_ Page #: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of incident: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of incident: \_\_\_\_\_

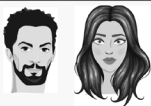
Suspect's name if known to witness: \_\_\_\_\_  
Has the suspect previously been issued a Notice of Trespass?  Yes  No

Employee/witness name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Employee/witness phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Employee/witness email: \_\_\_\_\_

Responding officer's name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Responding officer's agency: \_\_\_\_\_  
Responding officer's phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Responding officer's email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Other witnesses \_\_\_\_\_

**Facial appearance**

Hair color	Hair texture	Eye size and shape
Skin color	Eye color	Hair style
Shape of eyebrow	Shape mouth/lips	Shape of nose
Cheeks (full/sunken)	Facial hair/color	Chin clefts
Neck/Adams apple	Missing teeth	Complexion




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Speech peculiarities, including accents, tone, pitch, or noticeable speech disorder, such as stuttering \_\_\_\_\_

Was anything dropped or left behind? \_\_\_\_\_

**Type of weapon**  
Knife, blade, bat, baton, other (describe) \_\_\_\_\_

Gun notes (circle type of gun below)



**What was stolen?**

Item description	Qty.	Value each	Total value

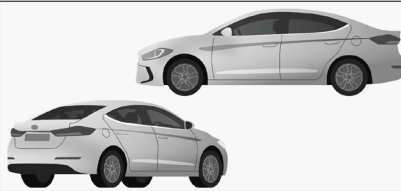
Police/Sheriff case #: \_\_\_\_\_ Page #: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of incident: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Surfaces the suspect may have touched with their bare hands \_\_\_\_\_

In which direction did the suspect make their escape? \_\_\_\_\_

Did you take any photos, video, or audio recordings? (If so, be sure to forward to the responding officer as soon as possible) \_\_\_\_\_

**Vehicle description**



Type of vehicle	Make/model	License plate/state
Color	Number of doors	Headlight type/shape
Tire profile	Wheel design	Tail light shape
Window tint	Existing damage	Burned out bulbs

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## If an organized team or “flash mob” theft occurs

- Contact 911 if it is safe to do so, keeping in mind that placing a call or text to 911 may not be prudent if perpetrators are armed and see the employee doing so.
- Businesses should have written response plans included in their employee handbooks.
- Direct store staff and customers to stay out of the perpetrators’ way as much as possible.
- Response protocols should include having employees make notes of what they saw and experienced, specific details and descriptions of the assailants, tactics used in entry/exit, transporting of stolen goods out of the store, and details about getaway vehicles if seen.
- If video surveillance footage of the incident is recorded, make several copies to share with law enforcement, submit to insurance companies, use in future employee training, and one copy for safe off-site storage.
- Consider sharing your experience with the media and other retailers.
- Monitor and identify how much and what type of product was stolen.
- Photograph and secure any physical evidence left by the suspects to assist law enforcement with their investigation.
- Put strategies, policies, and procedures in place ahead of time for employees to provide first aid to each other and patrons after an event until EMS arrives on site.
- Review instructions, response policies, and protocols during staff meetings to keep this potential threat at top of mind for all employees.
- Document plans to safely evacuate customers out of the store following an event and regularly run response drills with employees.
- Designate a meeting area for all staff to assemble post-event to ensure all employees are safe and accounted for.





## Ways to help the Prosecutor

Prosecuting attorneys must have a solid case before taking it to court. Retailers who have been victimized by retail crimes can play a pivotal role in the perpetrator being held accountable rather than walking away and repeating their offenses. Key components of the prosecutor's case include video surveillance footage, an itemized list of the goods stolen and each item's value, a notice of trespass, and detailed witness statements.

### Surveillance footage

- Deputy prosecuting attorneys often want to see footage showing the perpetrator before filing charges.
- Video surveillance proof is extremely helpful for prosecuting retail cases and is necessary for trial.
- Loss prevention officers (LPOs) must get surveillance footage to law enforcement officers as quickly as possible.

### Trespass notices

If the identity of the suspects is known to the store's management or loss prevention officers, provide copies of previously issued trespass notices to law enforcement or the prosecutor's office for the jurisdiction where the crime occurred.

### Proof of amount stolen

- Deputy prosecuting attorneys must be able to establish the amount the defendant stole.
- The total amount stolen is an element the prosecutor must prove beyond a reasonable doubt at trial for theft and organized retail theft (ORT) cases.

- This can be provided by:
  - An itemized list of goods stolen with prices.
  - A statement from the loss prevention officer who viewed the surveillance video or saw the theft and can testify as to the items stolen and their total value.

## Employee care

Be aware of how a crime event may affect the mental health of employees—thefts can have emotionally debilitating effects on store employees, who will need the understanding and support of management in the hours and days that follow.

## Navigating the mental and emotional aftermath of a crime

After suspects have fled, the most common immediate reaction is one of relief due to the crisis being over. This may be followed by feelings of shock, anger, denial, fear, helplessness, and anxiety.

The hours and days following a theft can be difficult, especially when alone during the evening hours. The stress and emotions following the event can leave a person tired and fatigued. Other common aftereffects include:

- Feeling alone and frightened—more so if living alone.
- Needing to vent and discuss the details of the theft in detail, or not wanting to talk about the event at all.
- Worrying the suspects may be trying to find you and the other witnesses.

- Loss of appetite or overeating as a coping mechanism.
- Experiencing restlessness, sleeplessness, or waking up throughout the night.
- Feeling apprehension or vulnerability, afraid it could happen again.
- Feeling unsafe, agitated, jittery, and hypersensitive to sounds.
- Feeling uncertain, irritable, forgetful, and unsociable.
- Preoccupied with the theft and reliving it through recurring thoughts.

## Coping strategies



Victims of a crime can take steps to recover with purposeful self-care, including:

- Avoiding the use of drugs or alcohol.
- Daily exercise, eating healthy meals, and getting sufficient rest.
- Talking with trusted people for support and setting boundaries whenever the victim feels overwhelmed.
- Journaling thoughts and feelings, especially if the victim is emotional or is having trouble sleeping.
- Encourage maintaining daily routines while allowing time to take breaks and asking for help when needed.

If emotional responses and recovery are affecting the victim's personal life, family, or work, they should be encouraged to consider seeking professional help.

### Suicide and crisis intervention hotline:

Call or text 988

### Local assistance and help:

Call 211 or go to [www.wa211.org](http://www.wa211.org)

## KEY LINKS AND RESOURCES

For an up-to-date list of safety and crime resources, download our latest content from WR's Resource page at <https://washingtonretail.org/initiatives/public-safety-resources>.



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