

# BUSINESS CRIME WATCH



BAY CITY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

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It's December and the holidays are officially upon us. We've already seen an increase in retail fraud and we are just beginning the holiday season. Please remind your employees to be vigilant in greeting all customers that enter your establishment and put the following preventative measures into place.

## WHO ARE SHOPLIFTERS?

- General Public shoplifters are solid citizens who are bored or need to stretch their budgets.
- Professional shoplifters are skilled thieves who have specialized techniques. The pro is the hardest to deter and most difficult to detect. The professionals usually target expensive items.
- Juveniles make up nearly half of all shoplifters. Many do it just for kicks. Some even shoplift in gangs and compete to see who can steal the most.
- Narcotic and Drug Addicts shoplift to support an expensive habit. They are often desperate.
- Kleptomaniacs are persons who steal because of psychological compulsion.

## Preventative Measures

- Greet customers as they enter the store. Attention is good for business and bad for the shoplifter.
- Watch customers' behaviors. Are they watching you? Are they trying to distract you by asking about the product, to look in the back room, for a tissue, to use the bathroom, to call another store, etc.? Darting eyes and nervous hands are frequent clues.
- Be on the lookout for people carrying large purses or shopping bags or who wear unusually bulky clothing. Big open purses and bags that appear to be fairly empty are one of the biggest red flags to look for. After all, your shoplifter needs a place to conceal the items. Pay attention to the condition of the bag and the store name on the bag. For example if he/she is carrying a really beat up bag, know that it might have been used or reused in attempts to shoplift because most retailers will not just give away their crisp clean bags without a purchase being made. Due to the Go Green movement, many bring their own bags with them to put their purchases in.
- Be wary of distracting situations. Pros often work in pairs—one distracts the employee, while the other shoplifts.
- Is your customer shopping alone? Shoplifters will obviously shop together, distract, and shoplift or they will arrive at different times as though they don't know each other, but in reality they are partners in crime.
- Are there children involved? Is your customer distracting you while the child shoplifts or are you distracted by the child which could afford the customer time to shoplift?
- Beware of the customers that might switch price tags on clothing in order to get them cheaper.

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## Shoplifting techniques

- Hiding the merchandise
- A large open bag is a common shoplifter tool. It's placed at the thief's feet, and objects are casually dropped into it. Keep an eye out for shopping bags that are not from local stores. Preventing this is why many stores staple bags shut. Other stores require customers to leave their bags by the front door when they come in.
- Women sometimes use purses to hide stolen items. There is little you can do to stop women from carrying purses and handbags.
- The best prevention in these cases is to watch the customers very carefully.
- The baby carriage or stroller is a great tool for shoplifters. There are always blankets, toys, and other things in strollers (including the baby) that merchandise can be hidden under. Some thieves have even built false bottoms in baby carriages.
- A newspaper can be used to hide small objects.
- Umbrellas with handles are handy for shoplifters trying to steal small items. A common tactic is to keep a closed (but not snapped) umbrella hanging on one's elbow or leaning against a counter, and then to drop items into it.
- Baggy clothes in general are good places to hide stolen items. Some people have extra pockets or hooks sewn into coats and jackets. Beware of the customer with a large coat who keeps his hand in a coat pocket. Some shoplifters have cut slits in the pocket lining, so they can reach for items without being seen. They may make a big deal out of inspecting an item while the other hand slips out and grabs something.
- Some shoplifters are more daring.
- Some shoplifters just grab stuff and walk out with it. They rely on the gullibility and slow response time of sales clerks.
- Some shoplifters grab garments from racks close to the door and run off. This can be prevented very easily by alternating the directions of hangers. This makes the hangers "lock up" when someone tries to remove many at once.
- A common technique, especially if your fitting rooms aren't well monitored, is for the thief to steal garments by putting them on under her own clothes and wearing them out of the store. Others will just put the clothing on and walk out. It's difficult to catch one of these people, because if they haven't concealed the item, they technically haven't stolen it until they exit the store without paying.
- Most shoplifters can't succeed unless they get some privacy. This is why one of the best ways to stop shoplifting is to greet customers as soon as they walk in, then be attentive to them the rest of the time.

## Skilled shoplifters can distract sales associates using the following tricks:

- They enter the store in groups then separate which makes it difficult for employees to watch all of them.
- A pair of shoppers comes in, and while one distracts you with questions, the other steals.
- A single shopper sends the only employee in the store into the back room to find something, and then steals stuff and leaves before the employee comes back.

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## ACT NOW!

- Most importantly, once you suspect you have a shoplifter on your hands, you must provide the best customer service ever, and fast.
- This is the best way to deter shoplifting. Build a connection with the customer and exchange names. Once you have a name, whether it's a real name or not, the shoplifters are less likely to shoplift from you because they know you are on top of your business.
- Install convex mirrors, closed circuit TV cameras or security officers.
- Train your personnel to spot shoplifters and make sure they are vigilant.
- Pay particular attention to fitting rooms and other isolated areas.
- Try to arrange your counters and displays in a way to deter shoplifters.
- Put displays in full view of all employees.
- Lock anything small that can be easily slipped into a pocket or handbag, in counter cases when possible.
- Keep expensive items away from entrances.
- Most people employed in a retail environment are faced with shoplifting incidents on a regular, if not frequent basis. Unfortunately though, most do not know exactly how they should handle the situation.

## Bay City Ordinance-

### Sec. 102-88. – Major snow event—Parking prohibitions.

(a) *Parking prohibition.* No person shall park or allow to remain parked any vehicle on any portion of any roadway within any area designated within the city during a major snow event, or park or allow to remain parked any vehicle in violation of any parking restriction instituted as part of a declared major snow event as provided in this section. The registered owner of any such vehicle shall be responsible for the cost of removal.

(b) *Definitions.* The following words, terms and phrases, when used in this section, shall have the meaning ascribed to them in this section, except where the context clearly indicates a different meaning:

*City manager* means the city manager for Bay City, or in his absence, his duly authorized representative.

*Roadway* means that portion of a street or highway improved, designed or ordinarily used for vehicular traffic, including portions designated or used for the parking of motor vehicles.

*Street or highway* means the entire width between the boundary lines of every way publicly maintained.

*Vehicle* means every device by which any person or property is or may be transported or moved upon a roadway.

(c) *Procedure for declaration of a major snow event:*

(1) When the city manager finds, on the basis of falling snow, sleet, or freezing rain, or on the basis of a forecast by the U.S. Weather Bureau or other weather service that weather conditions will make it necessary that motor vehicle traffic be expedited and that parking on city streets will be prohibited or restricted for snow plowing or other purposes, the city manager shall put into effect a parking prohibition on parts or all of city streets by declaring a major snow event in the manner prescribed in this section.

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(2) When considering the issuance of a declaration of a major snow event under subsection (1), the city manager shall take into consideration the recommendations of the director of public safety and the director of public works or their duly authorized representatives.

(d) *Notice of major snow event.* The city manager, upon declaring a major snow event, shall request public announcement of such parking prohibitions and/or restrictions in the areas designated by means of broadcast and/or telecast from various commercial stations serving the city and on the public access channel of any cable television franchisee servicing the city, and he may cause such declaration to be further announced on the city website when feasible.

(e) *Record of major snow event.* The city manager shall prepare such declaration of major snow event and cause it to be posted in the city hall for such period of time as the major snow event regulations are in effect.

(f) *Removal of parked vehicles.* After the initial notice of a major snow event has been given as provided in this section, a motor vehicle parked on any roadway within any area designated shall be removed in accordance with the following schedule:

(1) Within two hours for any motor vehicle parked on state trunk lines and streets designated as major streets by the city's street plan; and

(2) Within eight hours for any motor vehicle parked on streets designated as local streets by the city's street plan.

(g) *Enforcement procedures:*

(1) Members of the department of public safety are hereby authorized to remove or cause the removal and/or impounding of any vehicle that obstructs or otherwise impedes traffic on any street in the city. Such vehicle may be removed and conveyed by or under the direction of a member of the department of public safety by means of towing to a vehicle pound. The director of public safety is authorized to engage the services of any private vehicle towing operator to remove vehicles under the direction of a member of the department of public safety where the same are found in violation of this section.

(2) Before the owner or person in charge of such vehicle shall be permitted to remove the same from the custody of the department of public safety, he shall furnish evidence of his identity and ownership; he shall sign a receipt for the vehicle and shall pay a fee to cover the cost of removal plus the cost of storage; and he shall pay an additional storage fee for each day the vehicle is stored in the vehicle pound in excess of the first 24 hours the vehicle is impounded.

(h) *Termination of major snow event.* Once in effect, a prohibition under this section shall remain in effect until terminated by notice given substantially in the same manner it was declared; provided, however, that any street area which has been cleared of snow and ice from curb to curb for the length of the entire block shall be automatically excluded from any parking restriction imposed by this section.

(i) *Travel advisory.* The city manager may also issue a travel advisory during the period of the major snow event. The travel advisory shall urge extreme caution to those finding it necessary to travel during the course of a major snow event, so as not to interfere with snow removal or emergency vehicles.

(j) *Relationship to other laws.* Any provision of this section which becomes effective by declaration of the director or upon the occurrence of certain weather conditions shall, while temporarily in effect, take precedence over conflicting provisions of law normally in effect, except that it shall not take precedent over provisions of law relating to traffic accidents, emergency travel of authorized emergency vehicles, or

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emergency traffic directions by a police officer. Nothing in this section shall be construed to permit parking at any time or place where it is forbidden by any other provision of law.

(k) *Penalty.* In addition to liability for towing, storage, and any other impound fees related to the removal of a vehicle from a roadway during a declared major snow event, a person who violates a provision of this article shall be responsible for a municipal civil infraction punishable by a fine as a Class F violation, plus costs. Under this article, a repeat or subsequent offense is an offense that occurs within 12 months of a prior offense. These penalty provisions do not apply to subsection (i).

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### **BOARD AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS:**

- Zoning Board of Appeals December 12, 2017, 7:00 PM-8:00 PM @ Commission Chambers
- Historic District Commission December 13, 2017, 5:30 PM-6:30 PM @ Commission Chambers
- Planning Commission December 20, 2017, 7:00 PM-8:30 PM @ Commission Chambers

City Hall will be closed for the holidays on December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>.

Sanitation Collection will have a 1 Day Delay for the week of December 25 - 30, 2017

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### **DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY UPDATE**

During the month of November the Bay City Department of Public Safety handled the following calls:

- Responded to or self-initiated 1718 law enforcement related incidents
- Made 340 traffic stops
- Wrote 234 reports
- Took 47 traffic crash reports
- 66 Fire related calls for service
- 326 Emergency Medical Services (EMS) related calls for service

For more information on what is happening in your neighborhood, go to [www.crimemapping.com](http://www.crimemapping.com)

11/1- Retail fraud at an east side convenience store. Suspect was a white female wearing a pink hoodie. The hood was worn up to conceal her identity. Suspect left store on a bike.

11/2- A west side storage building was broke into and vandalized by kids. The building does not have power and no suspects at this time.

11/5- Retail fraud of liquor from an east side convenience store. Suspect stole a couple bottle of liquor and walked out the door. Incident was recorded and suspect was identified.

11/7- Retail fraud at a west side convenience store. Incident was recorded and both suspects were identified. Charges are pending.

11/9- Retail fraud at an east side convenience store. Both suspects were identified and charges are pending.

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11/9- Retail fraud at an east side convenience store. Suspects were identified by a worker and charges are pending.

11/12- Retail fraud from an east side convenience store. Suspect was detained in the parking lot by police and arrested on the charges.

11/15- Retail fraud of liquor from an east side gas station. Suspect was located and arrested.

11/16- Retail fraud of prescription medication from an east side drug store. Suspect was detained on scene and report was sent to the prosecutor's office for charges.

11/18- Retail fraud at a west side gas station. Suspect was a white male, 30's wearing a Detroit Lions jacket and stocking hat.

11/19- Retail fraud at a west side convenience store. Female suspect was known to the clerk and identified. Charges are pending.

11/20- MDOP to a west side gas station. Suspect damaged a coin operated air compressor in attempt to steal the coins. No suspects at this time.

11/21- Report of employee fraud at an east side restaurant. It appear an employee was improperly checking out customers and pocketing the money. The investigation is ongoing.

11/27- Retail fraud at an east side convenience store. Suspect was a younger, thin, white male, wearing a gray sweatshirt and black sweatpants. Suspect has not been identified.

11/27- Retail fraud of liquor from a west side convenience store. Happened on 2 separate occasions. Suspect is a white female who put the items in her purse while an accomplice distracts the clerk. Suspects leave in a dark colored car (possibly a Chevy Impala) or a dark colored Saturn Vue.

11/27- Breaking and Entering of an east side bar. Suspect is believed to be an employee. Cash and safe was stolen. Under investigation.

 *The Bay City Department of Public Safety*  
*would like to wish everyone a*  
*Safe and Happy Holiday Season* 