

Courtesy of Jupiter Images/Polka Dot/(c) Getty Images

According to the Retail Council of Canada, retailers across the country lost a combined \$3 billion to shrinkage in 2009. The c-store industry accounts for a healthy chunk of that total with an estimated \$320 million to \$640 million in losses or one to two per cent of the \$32 billion in annual sales generated by the industry says Steve Tennant, vice president of the Canadian Convenience Store Association (CCSA).

When it comes to general retail shrinkage, industry expert Paul Bowron of Reliance Protectron cites a Retail Council of Canada survey that states that 79 per cent of those losses are due to internal (48 per cent) and external (31 per cent) theft. Administrative errors cost a further 19 per cent in losses with fraud representing the remaining two per cent.

With an estimated 300,000 employees (both full and part-time) working at over 31,000 c-store locations serving roughly 3.5 million visitors per day, the opportunities to steal are vast.

Keeping this in mind, Bowron strongly suggests c-store operators re-examine their level of security and begin taking a more proactive role in their battle against retail theft, particularly in light of a continuing global economic crisis that has left many people more desperate than ever before.

For starters, knowing what areas of the store are the highest risk is key says Tennant. In the case of c-stores - cigarettes, lottery tickets and general merchandise are the product areas to focus on. Because c-stores are still predominantly a cash business, the money in the till and in the safe are also major targets for would be thieves.

When it comes to shoplifting, Tennant suggests that store employees take note of any customers that seem to be paying close attention to the staff. If they are

# TAKE A BITE OUT OF CRIME

**Operators hard at work protecting their stores.**



watching the staff intently, they are likely looking for an opening to steal merchandise.

Digital video recorders (DVR) have become a major security tool for all retailers, including c-stores. Chase McKay's Pete Philson says that while

not on site, he or she has the ability to see what is going on in their store.

For Florida-based Gulfcoast Software, an emerging player in Canada, the DVRs are just one part of the solution. The company's national and international Account Manager,



*Gulfcoast Software provides operators with an all-encompassing security package that can monitor transactions live.*

the cameras are very helpful in identifying shoplifters, robbers and corrupt staff, their biggest value is actually in deterring criminal activity.

Most DVRs also allow a store's feed to be accessed remotely over the internet. Philson says this is much appreciated by owners who like their employees to know that even when the boss is

Imed Benzarti, explains that they can provide operators with an all-encompassing security package that can link the POS system for instance to the cameras, safe, alarm, access control and power management systems. This allows for virtual management by a store or chain's owner/manager.

They are then able to monitor transactions live with transaction info, video and audio (where legal) all available. There are many filters and search options available to pinpoint



*Flash Fog stops thieves in their tracks with a thick, fast moving fog that reduces visibility to inches.*



*Courtesy of iStockphoto*

*There are many strategies and products to help operators protect their stores against theft, whether it is an inside or outside job.*

potentially questionable transactions.

Gulfcoast will work with a client to determine certain transactions to flag, creating an exception list that management has instant access to. Whether it's keeping a close eye on voids or having the system note when a stolen credit card is manually entered by staff, real time alerts can be sent immediately to someone in authority.

## 10 TIPS from Reliance Protectron to reduce Internal Theft

1. Hire Smart.
2. Strict Inventory Control.
3. Clear Policies and Procedures.
4. Reduce Temptation.
5. Positive Work Environment.
6. Run a Tight Ship.
7. Shoplift Prevention Ongoing Training.
8. Incorporate Loss Prevention Tools (e.g. intrusion detection and CCTV).
9. Management & Staff Rewards for Shrink Reduction.
10. Great Customer Service.





*Alarms and cameras are no deterrent for mask-wearing thieves. They get in and out as fast as possible.*



For some criminals, specifically mask-wearing smash-and-grab thugs, cameras and alarms are not a deterrent. For them, the goal is to get into a c-store fast, target the high value items - cigarettes, lottery tickets, cash register and ATM - then take off.

In the case of a smash-and-grab heist, retailers are not only faced with the lost cash and/or merchandise, they are also looking at store damage, tons of paperwork and costly down time.

To directly combat these types of criminals, FlashFog Security has

brought to Canada a security solution that has been working brilliantly in Europe for 14 years. According to a company release, "FlashFog is a ground-breaking technology that stops burglars by making it impossible for them to see by using a combination of thick fast moving fog and an incredibly bright plasma strobe light. Visibility is quickly reduced to just inches. Nobody can steal what they can't see!!"

The system is activated by any regular alarm and lasts over 45 minutes. It is harmless, unlike pepper spray, and leaves no residue. Recommended by both police and insurers and approved for use in Canada, FlashFogs are about the size of a computer and sit on a wall or inside a false ceiling.

Whether it's quick-fingered shoplifters, masked burglars or dishonest staff, c-stores face many potential threats in their day-to-day operations. For operators willing to be vigilant in defending their stores, thankfully there are many strategies and products available to help combat the detestable rip-off artists that continue to make a living off the hard work of others.



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