

## Holiday Season Shoplifting a Billion Dollar Drain on Businesses

By Nick WillThe season of giving coincides with the season of taking for many U.S. retailers; stores are expecting to lose \$8.5 billion collectively from shoplifting and employee theft this holiday season, researchers say. The Centre for Retail Research in Thorofare, N.J. released a study in early December highlighting possible losses that stores may see. At least \$3.8 billion of the projected losses are going to come from shoplifting, \$4.7 billion from employee theft and \$400 million from vendor and distribution losses. "The Christmas season is an especially attractive time for criminals," said Professor Joshua Bamfield, director of the Centre for Retail Research and the creator of the report. "Thieves take advantage of busy stores to steal high-value, high-demand goods. As a result, retailers face a big threat from professional and semi-professional thieves." The most prevalent items taken are alcohol, women's clothing, electronics, toys, DVDs and jewelry. The City of Oneida has seen an increase in petty larceny arrests over the last two years. In 2011, there were 10 petty larceny arrests in November and December. This year there have been 16 arrests to date, with the biggest shopping weekend still ahead. Oneida City Police Chief David Meeker said that although the number of larceny-related arrests are not significantly higher during the holiday season, people are more prone to taking larger items to try and re-sell them. "We see an increase in shoplifting every holiday season at the store," said Oneida Walmart Store Manager Jim Breed. Breed said that cosmetics, electronics and entertainment items tend to be stolen the most. Walmart and other area retailers like Lowes work hand-in-hand with the local police to identify and forewarn of potential shoplifters. Both Breed and Meeker said they have not seen a significant increase in shoplifting in the area. "While the holiday season is best known as a time of giving, there is a fair amount of taking that goes on as well," said Criminal Defense Attorney Donald E. Kelly of Tully Rinckey PLLC. "Now that many sought-after and pricey gifts are getting smaller and lighter, people caught stealing them need to know they could end up facing felony charges." The following is a list of common holiday season property crimes:

- Fifth-degree criminal possession of stolen property, a class A misdemeanor: Possessing stolen property valued below \$1,000.
- Fourth-degree criminal possession of stolen property, a class E felony: Possessing stolen property valued at or over \$1,000 or possessing a stolen credit card, debit card, or benefits card.
- Fourth-degree grand larceny, a class E felony: Stealing property valued at or over \$1,000.
- Jostling, a class A misdemeanor: Engaging in or enabling pick pocketing or engaging in or enabling stealing from a handbag.
- Petty larceny, a class A misdemeanor: Stealing property valued below \$1,000.
- Third-degree robbery, a class D felony: Forcibly stealing property.