



SIA EDUCATION@ISC:
November 19-21
EXHIBIT HALL:
November 20-21
JAVITS CENTER, NYC

Stopping Flash Mob Robs with CPTED: Enough is Enough!

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- This presentation will cover topics that some members of the audience may find offensive, objectionable, controversial, or with which they disagree. Each person is entitled to their opinion, and so am I as the presenter. My opinions are developed from years of education, training, and experience in this field. I welcome counterpoints from the audience, if you are willing to share it in a civilized discussion, with proper respect to my opinions, as well as the opinions of those in the room.
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Statement of the Problem

- We have created a monster of biblical proportions with social media. Social media has provided the oxygen for the radicalization, and sense of enablement, entitlement, and validation, for this abhorrent behavior.
- Social media has provided the enticement and inspiration for these swarming attacks, and provide a means to sell the products, and get recognition and acknowledgment.
- This is theft for greed, not theft for need!
- Fencing stolen items has moved away from Pawn shops to the Dark Web and E Bay. Regulations were passed for Pawn Shops, but little is done to curb this market of illicit goods.

Where are the consequences?



- We have so much intolerance for different political views, but unexplainable tolerance for young people's malevolent behavior.
- What are the consequences for a teen's actions, when the courts won't prosecute, or wipe their criminal records clean, and are remanded to their often dysfunctional or absentee parent(s) for supervision?
- When did we become a mentally ill nation, with everyone having an excuse for their negligent, hateful, and criminal behavior?
- The self-centered need for recognition and stardom, has created a cottage industry of crime to make fast money, all while they are posting and making TikToks!



How we shop has changed!

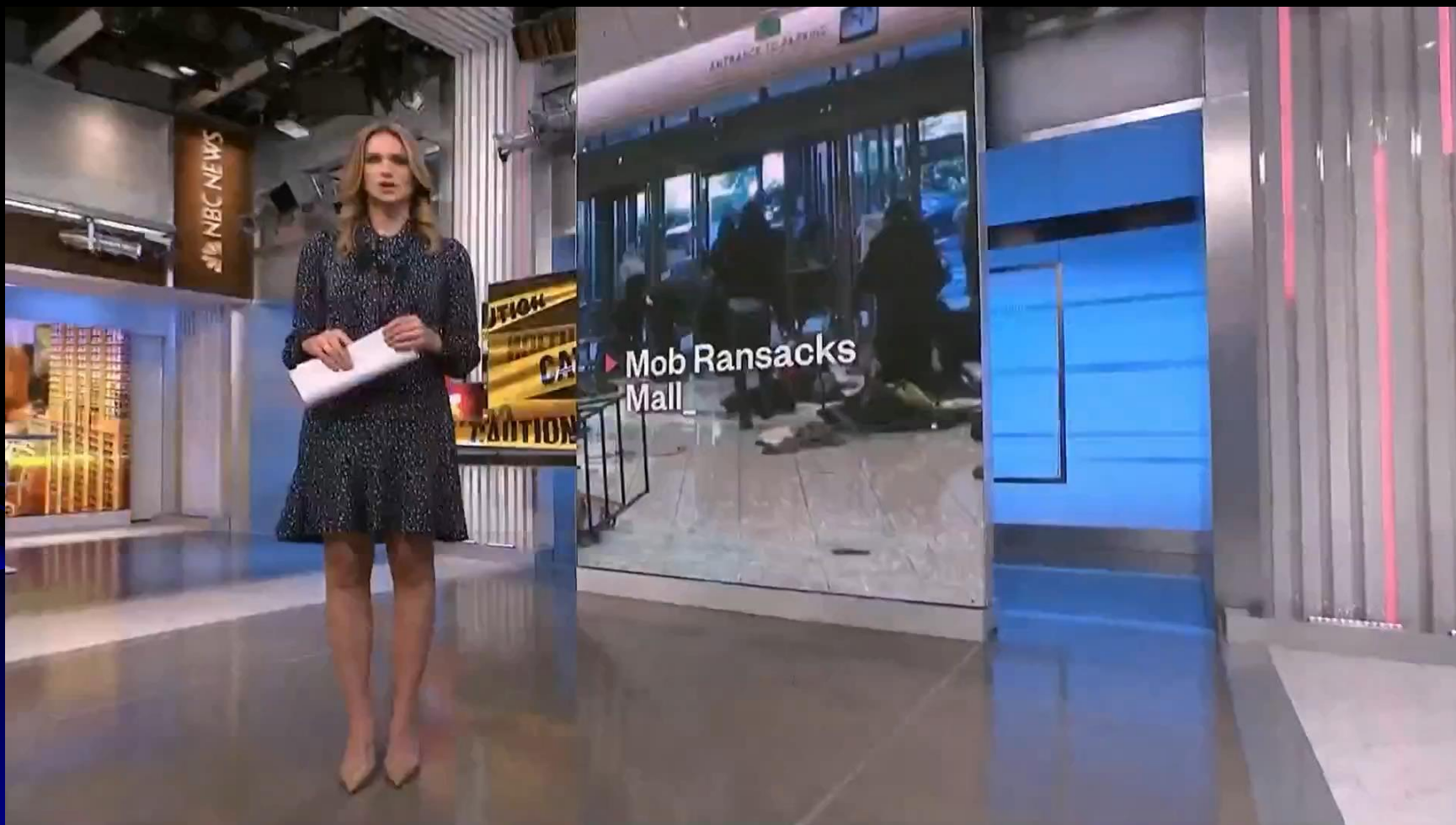
- Going to Main Street to shop has become a luxury, and superfluous.
- Going to Malls to shop has become laborious and unnecessary.
- Shopping on-line has now replaced and surpassed getting off your fat butt, and driving, and finding parking, and paying for gas, and walking to stores, and interacting with clerks!
- Is target hardening the only answer to protect the store assets?

The end of days



- Do the people doing these attacks realize the consequences to the businesses, employees, the increase in the cost of product, loss of jobs, the cost and availability of insurance? No, they are too self-absorbed.
- Stores have moved to self checkout to save labor costs, but the potential for loss is large, and totally relies on honesty.
- Fear of wrongful arrest and subsequent litigation has put the fear of God into real loss prevention, and punishment.

- That fear has manifested itself in the decriminalization of many felonies and misdemeanors, resulting in a world with no consequences, hedonistic narcissistic behavior, and opportunistic thuggery.
- The insurance industry is not set up to absorb the losses of this magnitude?
- Are there any real solutions to solve the problem?
- So let's see some real world examples of this crisis at hand.



Rash of Swarming, Snatch-and-Run Incidents Hits High-End Retailers

The incident is one of several recent incidents in the San Francisco area in which looting-style tactics—a swarming form of grab-and-run theft—on high-end stores in the San Francisco area. On Friday night at least 10 stores in San Francisco's posh Union Square shopping district experienced break-ins and theft of more than \$1 million in merchandise, and on Sunday a group smashed glass cabinets and stole merchandise from a mall jewelry store.

The *San Francisco Chronicle* [interviewed](#) Jim Dudley, a criminal justice lecturer at San Francisco State University and a retired San Francisco police officer. Dudley said the incidents "seem to be coordinated, with tools, lookouts, vehicles for getaway, and swarming tactics used by criminals with intent to plunder."

San Francisco is not the only city dealing with this style of flash rob attacks. Stretching from late last month into early this month, [the Chicago area experienced](#) a rash of similar thefts and robberies. In Oak Brook, Illinois, "at least 14 people forced their way into a Louis Vuitton store... and made off with at least \$100,000 in merchandise. ...Surveillance video from the store... shows the chaotic scene as the masked shoplifters pour into the store grabbing handbags and other merchandise while shoppers rush out of the way."

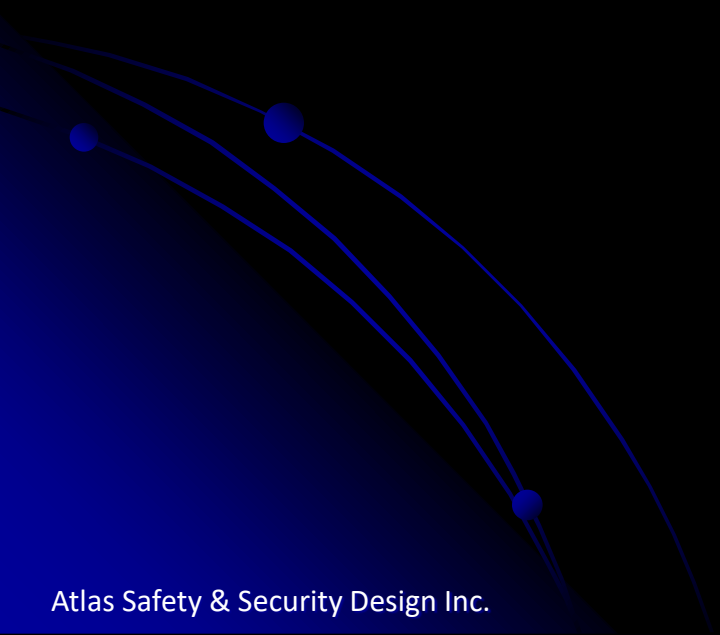
The Oak Brook incident occurred after a similar incident in the nearby area of Northbrook, Illinois, in which another Louis Vuitton store lost \$66,000 worth of merchandise to thieves.

These swarming, flash rob tactics are adding to the growing problem of organized retail crime, or ORC. [Statistics](#) from the National Retail Federation showed that ORC has been rising for years. Data from 2020, the most recent released, showed organized criminal activity cost retailers more than \$700,000 for every \$1 billion in sales. In the study, six in 10 retailers said ORC is a higher priority now than five years ago, and more than half reported that ORC tactics are becoming more and more aggressive.





- This is not just a U.S. phenomenon, but a global one. Look at the decay of moral fiber, as the economic misery worsens, and the lure for social media fame grows, good people who would never before consider crime are advised by their religious leaders to commit shoplifting, to augment their budgets, as they perceive society has failed them, and the availability and ease to market the stolen goods to make fast money.



Measures taken that invited this type of activity:

- 1) Decriminalizing acts that were formerly illegal, and raising the limits to what is grand theft larceny, discourages law enforcement to make arrests, since these will likely not result in prosecution or conviction, or sentencing.

California smash-and-grabs blamed on decriminalization of theft

By [Emily Zantow](#)



A security guard stands outside the Nordstrom store at The Grove retail and entertainment complex in Los Angeles, Tuesday, Nov. 23, 2021. Los Angeles police say a group of thieves smashed windows at the department store at the luxury mall ... [more >](#)

The organized criminal ransacking of stores in California, a state where Democratic lawmakers have dramatically reduced penalties for shoplifting, is part of a nationwide epidemic that retailers say is adding to costs.

Ms. O'Malley, an independent, and five other district attorneys in the Bay Area said this week that they are forming an alliance against organized retail theft.

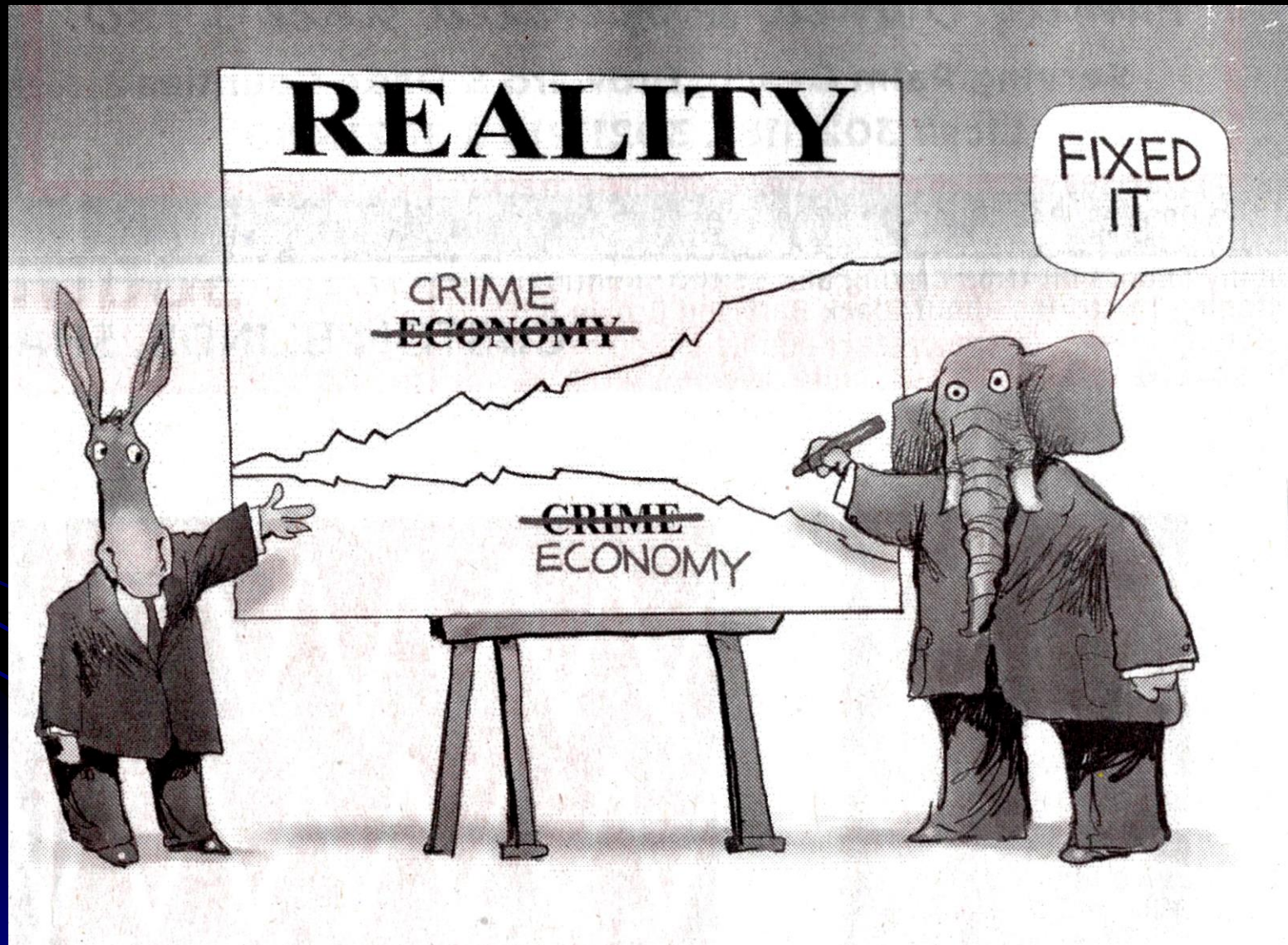
Some business owners and police say the rise in theft can be traced back to a law the Democrat-controlled state passed in 2014 that reduced the classification of some thefts up to \$950 from a felony to a misdemeanor.

San Francisco Police Chief Bill Scott told ABC7-TV this week that the growth of the organized theft rings are linked to the fact that there are "less consequences" for nonviolent theft, robbery and property crimes.

"I mean if you are in that business, and that's what you do for a living, commit crimes, you're going to probably go toward the crimes that are less likely to have consequences that's less likely to be caught, particularly when you have 40 or 50 people rushing at one time," said Mr. Scott, a 33-year police veteran.

Laura Cooper, executive director of the Major Cities Chiefs Association, echoed his sentiments in a statement to The Washington Times.

"As we've witnessed brazen smash and grabs, consequences are key," Ms. Cooper said this week. "Without deterrents and accountability, communities will be victimized and businesses terrorized."

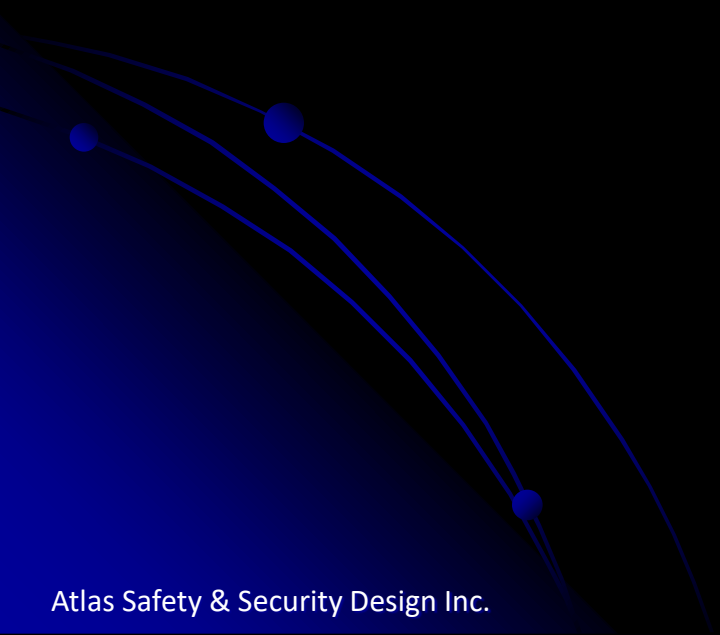


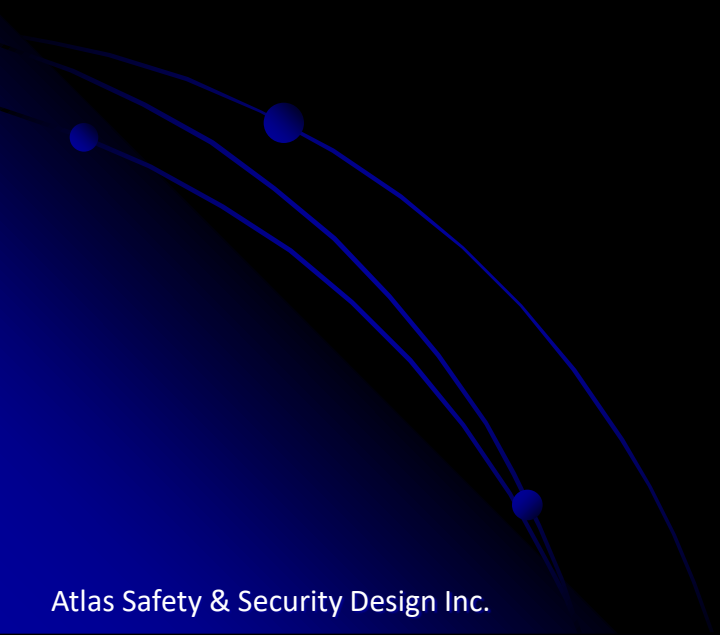
Measures taken that invited this type of activity:

- 2) Refocusing law enforcement efforts on the objective of incapacitating the most serious criminals, and de-emphasizing and under-reporting crimes of opportunity, that would cause a reduction in reported crimes.
- There was no UCR crime reporting on these types of crimes. So there was no central or uniform recording clearinghouse.

What does this mean today?

- The implementation of CPTED and security ordinances has resulted in a decrease in reported crime. We have designed it to make crimes harder to commit.
- Therefore, less crime opportunity and the result will be less crime.
- An example is the increased difficulty to steal cars with new technologies.





Remember the Walmart Greeter??



29 charged in 6-state shoplifting ring that hit pharmacies



This undated photo provided by Tulsa County Sheriff's Office shows Linda Been. State and federal authorities announced Thursday, Jan. 13, 2022 that they arrested and charged more than two dozen people for taking part in a multistate shoplifting ring that made off with more than \$10 million in stolen goods over the past few years. They allege that Been, whose name is listed in jail records as Linda Gann, would provide shoplifters with a detailed list of items to steal and pay for their expenses when they traveled out of state. (Tulsa County Sheriff's Office via AP) (Uncredited)

TULSA, Okla. – State and federal authorities announced Thursday that they arrested and charged more than two dozen people for taking part in a multistate shoplifting ring that made off with more than \$10 million in stolen goods over the past few years, most of which was over-the-counter medications.

CPTED is a course of consequences

- These are the consequences if we are not empowered and enabled to take the necessary action to protect the assets, people, and product.
- Letting this continue is the death knell for brick and mortar stores.

Role of CPTED

- The physical built environment has a significant impact on crime reduction and how assets are protected.
- Fraud prevention models have primarily focused on fraud as a solely white collar crime and strategies emphasized internal controls and regular audits.
- CPTED principles offer a holistic and interwoven approach that works with the spatial environment, and embraces technology without relying too heavily upon any one technology to be the be all end all for crime.

- Classic CPTED incorporates mechanical, organizational, and natural approaches, and use the principles of territoriality, natural access control, surveillance, legitimate activity support, management and maintenance to attack retail crime.
- Situational CPTED is accomplished through increase the effort, increase the risks, reduce the rewards, reduce provocation, and remove the excuses.
- 2nd Generation CPTED focuses on the human element, values of the community, and social connections to reduce the opportunity and fear of crime.

- Organizational solutions focuses on steps that can be undertaken by engaged parties where people are the basis of security solutions with the ability to observe, report, defend, protect, and intervene.
- Mechanical solutions refers to target hardening with locking systems, gates, access control, video surveillance, and physical barriers.
- Natural selections include the design of the environment to be used in a way as to work more effectively for the legitimate users, while deterring illegitimate users of a space.

- It used to be that using video surveillance and the threat of prosecution would deter potential criminals, for they thought that they were being observed there would be a decrease in offenses, because they thought they can be caught or recorded for criminal prosecution.
- But the consequences of decriminalizing theft under \$950 has had the chilling effect of people just not caring, because the police won't make an arrest, because the state won't prosecute them!

- Management and maintenance policy and procedures provide for maintenance of broken equipment or upkeep of physical barriers, and also the enforcement and responsibility to insure that P & P are enforced as it pertains to the security and upkeep of the facilities and equipment.
- Having security staff that are trained and enabled to make an arrest is critical for the protection of staff, assets, and customers. Require staff to call police!

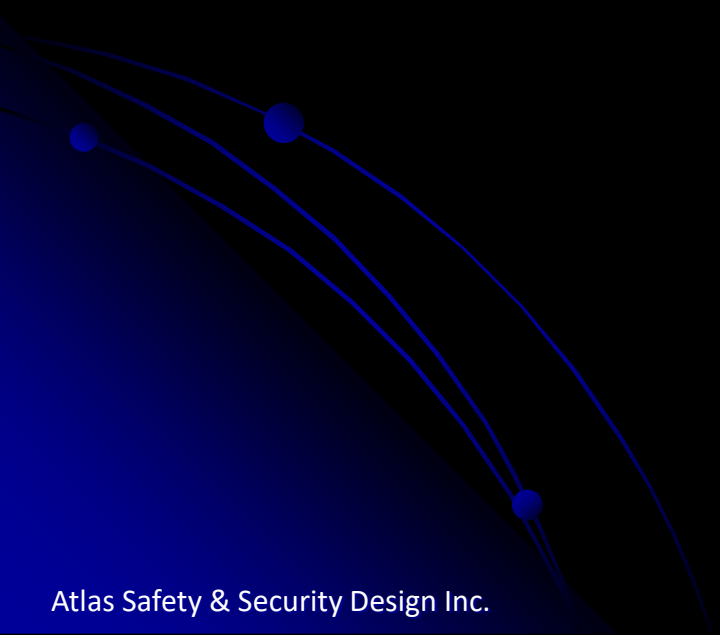
Inadequate Security Measures

- Businesses are taking some protective measures, with great value being given to the installation of security equipment, but without prosecution of repeat offenders, capable trained operators, empowered guard services, and strict access control, resistance is futile.
- Most security systems have little value in prevention from group attacks and are only used for evidence.



Self Help No clerk stores!





One size doesn't fit all threats

- The public has a tendency to place all retail theft in the same category, lumping together organized theft, survival theft by the homeless street people, and teenagers and younger adults acting out by stealing. Each of these threats needs to be seen as distinct problems with distinct solutions.

Inadequate Security Measures

- State budget cuts and bail reform laws return criminals to the streets before they have served their full jail sentences, which could raise the crime rate.
- Inflation, social media influence, decriminalization, and access to low risk high gain assets make it very easy.
- Police are not making arrests since they are confronted with the lack of political will to prosecute offenders.
- Ban the criminals from the store so they can be charged with trespass if they return.

New anti-theft gates installed at several SF Safeway locations



SAN FRANCISCO (KGO) -- A new anti-theft device is being installed at two San Francisco Safeway supermarkets.

They are sliding barriers at the self-checkout area that open when a receipt is scanned.

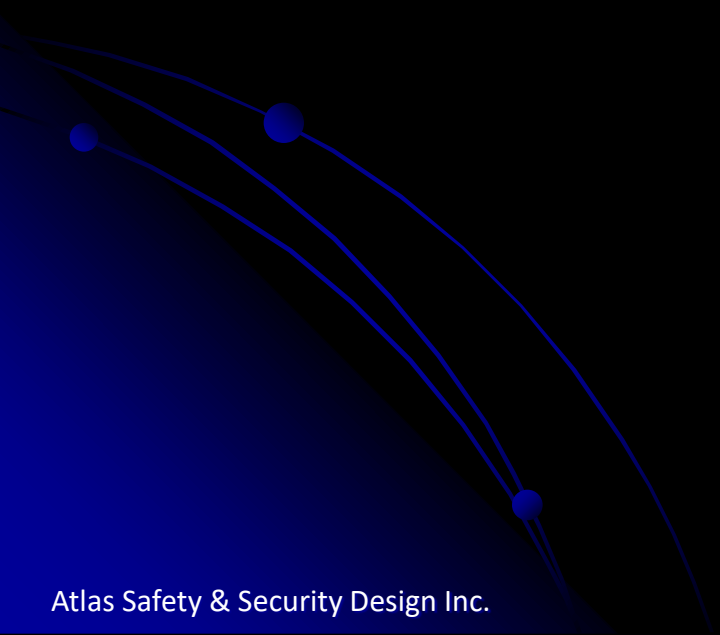
MORE: SF Safeway's classical music used to deter loitering turned off after disturbing nearby neighbors

Shoppers say they've been installed at two stores, in the Fillmore and in the Outer Mission.

Safeway stores have been targeted by shoplifters in recent years.

MORE: San Francisco's Castro Safeway adds security gates to prevent shoplifting, report says

Other supermarkets have installed similar types of gates and barriers and consolidated entrances in response to theft.

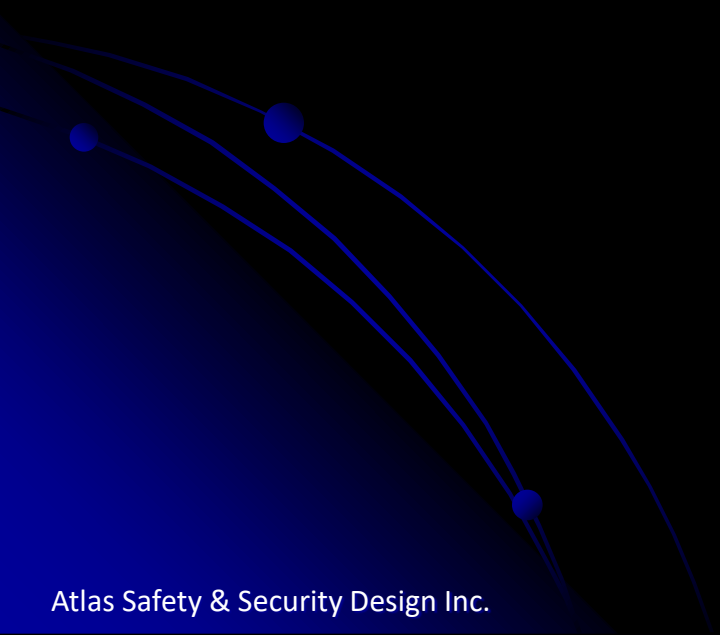


Retail crime going up

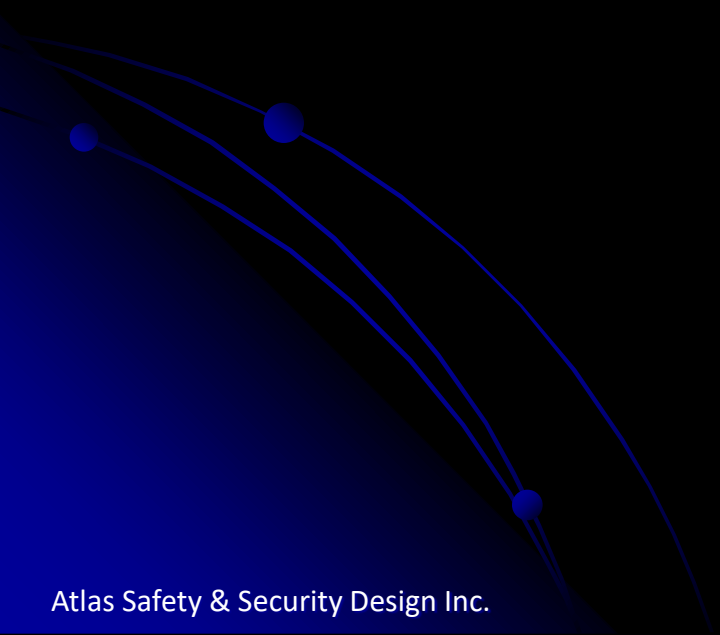
- The Retail Industry Leaders Association, a retail federation for crime prevention, shows an increase in crime for box stores and large retailers.
- Well known retailers are pulling out of some areas, resulting in abandonment of shopping areas, and feeding the scourge of urban blight.
- Now that stores are leaving empty buildings for a long time, it can be an attractive magnet for crime or homelessness, and accelerating the depression of the neighborhood. It has real rippling effects from the individual, to the store, to the community, to law enforcement generally.

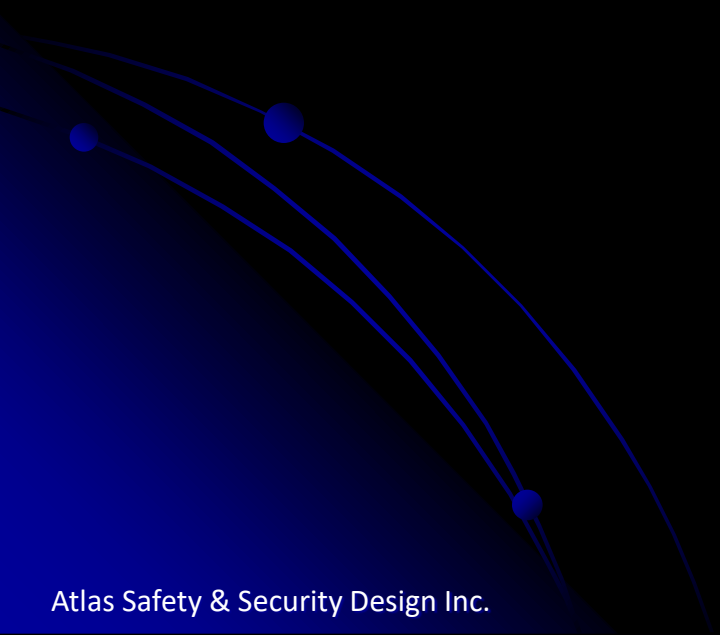
The slap of reality

- The life cycle of physical security interventions is limited.
- State and local governments are rolling back spending on law enforcement and building security.
- Corporations are cutting back security staff personnel and budgets, and just absorbing shrinkage.
- Capable guardians that were so important in reducing crime, have been pink slipped, assimilated, or lost through attrition.



- Most people will choose law abiding behaviors when given the opportunity to commit crimes, as their personal character, integrity, or moral code and laws help them resist crime opportunity when presented.
- As a nation we must implement broad measures to combat crime in its modern context.





- If the employees are not vested, and just contract employees working for a minimum wage, they are not going to be capable guardians and observe, report, and intervene! It's not worth getting hurt or killed.
- So then, who is the capable guardians that are able and willing to intervene? With the crimes being primarily property theft in nature, lethal force cannot be used. Thus, increasing the value and importance of deterrence.

What do we do?

- The future is not that the retail organized crime wave will happen, but rather what we did to prevent it, or protected our businesses, shopping hubs, and residents from its corruption and coercion.
- We must take the necessary pro-active steps that will preserve economic wealth, stability, and safety of our families and businesses.

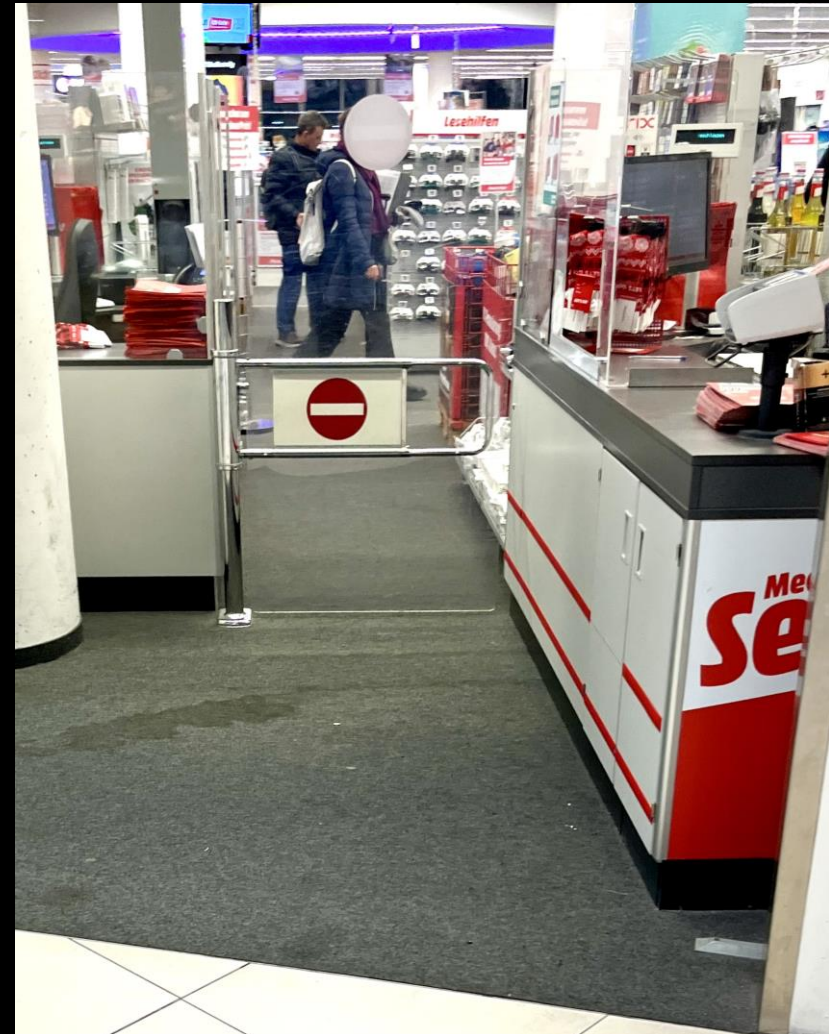
What we can do

- Implementing CPTED on an infrastructure level in our communities, so that security is built in, which reduces the opportunity and makes it more difficult to commit.
- Economic measures taken to reduce unemployment, and increase legitimate opportunities to be self-sustaining.
- As always, the first step is to conduct a security risk threat vulnerability assessment.
- Once that is completed, then the business knows what the assets are and what measures they are willing to take to prevent loss and shrinkage.

Where are the solutions?

- Access control is critical – check in and check out
 - * Sallyports, vestibules, controlled entrance and exits
- Lock up items of value
- Designing against vehicle ramming attacks
- Designing against breakage of display cases and exterior windows.
- Require staff to call police and report the incident
- Have policy to arrest and prosecute
- Ban repeat offenders from stores
- Have armed security guards
- Have video surveillance overt and covert
- Monitor social media for organized posts
- Have laws that have enhanced sentences

Design matters









Second Generation CPTED

- Social Cohesion
- Connectivity
- Community Culture
- Threshold Capacity - New Jack City Syndrome - Tipping Point

2nd Generation CPTED

- Threshold Capacity - is the ability for any given space or neighborhood to support its intended use. For example, excessive quantities of similar land uses in too small an area, such as abandoned buildings or bars, can create opportunities for crime. When a place is functioning, either over or under capacity, it can be detrimental to neighborhood safety. There is a tipping point where too many criminals are overpowering the legitimate users.

New Jack City Syndrome

WESLEY SNIPES ICE-T MARIO VAN PEEBLES JUDD NELSON

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and power...
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is up
against cops
who know its streets.

NEW JACK CITY

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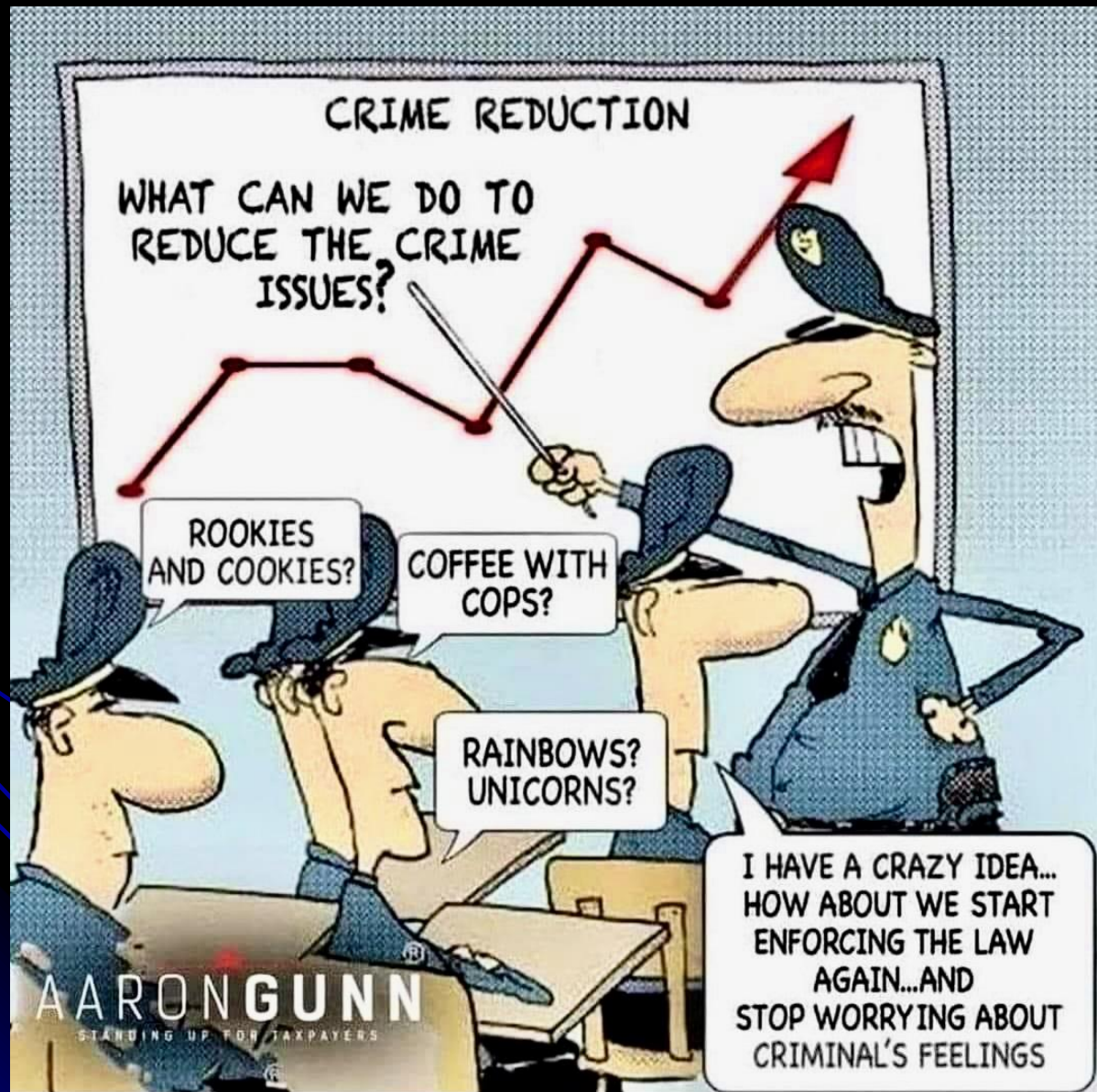
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Is there any hope for salvation?



Where are the consequences?
Where is the accountability?
Where is the responsibility?
Where is the civility?



Conclusion

- Research has demonstrated that criminals understood CPTED principles of Territoriality to evaluate the risk of being caught.
- Research findings suggest that the mere presence of one or two security attributes don't have a significant effect on deterrence, but rather the cumulative effects of multiple features.
- CPTED principles don't work as effectively in isolation, as they collectively.

- Courts are holding property owners liable for failing to take reasonable and sufficient security precaution to prevent criminal attack on their invitees and employees.
- CPTED principles are organized around layering strategies and integration of strategies, by leveraging all users of a space to protect an asset, that includes employees, management, and the general public.
- As always, the process starts with the risk threat assessment process with CPTED.

- There is a careful delicate balance of making security overwhelming, and having all the products behind security barriers, which defeats the primary goal of stores to encourage conspicuous consumption in the store.



- CPTED is about controlling the built environment and manipulation of how humans react and respond to the measures to protect the physical assets of the retail experience.
- Therefore, CPTED principles and strategies can readily be applied to deter flash mob robs due to the physical nature of the assets, cash, product, or equipment.
- However, the laws and CJS must be enabled to arrest, prosecute and punish offenders with serious consequences.

In 2025 expect more!

- Crime is not spread evenly across all places, peoples, or times. To be effective, prevention measures must be directed to where crime is most concentrated, i.e. focusing on hot spots, repeat offenders, fencing stolen goods, and close down online illegal enterprise markets.
- We can expect more crime, not less, until the rule of law is revived, civility is restored, and there are indisputable consequences.

For more information:

THANKS FOR COMING...

21st Century Security and CPTED

Designing for Critical Infrastructure
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SECOND EDITION

Randall I. Atlas, Ph.D.

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Q&A

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