

FBI partners with retailers to fight organized retail theft

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

In response to Congressional legislation intended to combat the growing problem of organized retail theft, the FBI has worked with the National Retail Federation (NRF) and the Retail Industry Leaderâ€™s Association (RILA) to create the Law Enforcement Retail Partnership Network (LERPnet). This new database, which launches April 9, will be used by loss prevention industry experts and law enforcement to share information and help stop theft by criminal organizations which costs the retail industry an estimated \$30 billion each year.

Traditionally, individual retailers reported thefts to local law enforcement, but no uniform method of tracking these crimes across jurisdictions existed. Based on the concerns of the retail industry and the FBI, Congress passed legislation signed by the President in January 2006 that required the Attorney General and the FBI, in consultation with the retail community, to establish a task force to combat organized retail theft. The task force, initiated in 2006, is currently staffed by DOJ and FBI personnel and has worked closely with the NRF and the RILA to build LERPnet.

â€œRetailers and manufacturers lose billions of dollars each year because of organized retail theft, and that loss is inevitably passed on to consumers in the form of higher prices,â€• said Assistant Director Chip Burrus of the FBIâ€™s Criminal Investigative Division. â€œThe Law Enforcement Retail Partnership Network database will allow retailers and law enforcement to work together to combat this problem.â€•

The database, which is housed and run by the private sector, will allow retail members to track and identify organized retail theft via a secure web portal. To date, 32 retailers representing 46,000 stores have signed on to participate, and 16,000 organized retail theft incidents are already included in the system. Law enforcement will also be able to access LERPnet via Law Enforcement Online to search reported incidents and track retail theft throughout the country. This partnership between law enforcement and private industry provides for greater efficiency in fighting organized retail theft, enabling increased arrests, prosecutions, and recoveries of stolen merchandise.

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