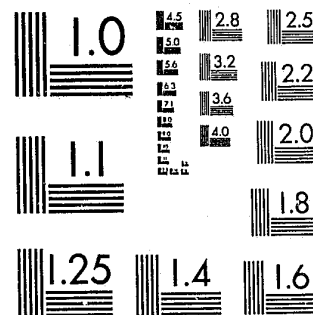


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MARCH 1981



Heavy Equipment Theft

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Contents

- Crime Problems** 1 **Heavy Equipment Theft** 76013
By George J. Lyford
- Cooperation** 6 **Police and Prosecutors—A Professional Partnership**
- Research** 8 **Murder Victimization: A Statistical Analysis** 76014
By Yoshio Akiyama, Ph.D.
- Crime Problems** 12 **Shopping Malls: New Problems for Law Enforcement** 76015
By Tom Mahoney
- Management** 17 **Internal Auditing: A Management Tool** 76016
By Robert H. Gebhardt
- Operations** 22 **Organizing an Arson Task Force** 76017
By Kenneth J. Braun and Robert E. Ford
- The Legal Digest** 27 **Documentary Subpenas and Fifth Amendment Protection** NCJRS
By Kenneth A. Jacobsen
- 32 **Wanted By the FBI** MAR 13 1981

ACQUISITIONS



THE COVER: This month's cover highlights the problem of heavy equipment theft. See story p. 1.

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William H. Webster, Director

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76015
Crime Problems

Shopping Malls

New Problems for Law Enforcement

By Sgt. Tom Mahoney
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Culver City, Calif.

Twenty years ago, a "shopping center" consisted of a single-story row of stores, 20 or so, fronting an open-air parking lot. The center usually contained a drug store, a large grocery store, some sort of five-and-dime, a few specialty shops, and the obligatory barber shop with its prominently displayed rotating red, white, and blue pole. At that time, police and security problems were minimal, and for the most part, increased during the Christmas shopping season and summer vacation from school.

However, times have changed. Today, we are in the age of multilevel, climate-controlled shopping centers, or malls as they are called, generally containing 80 to 120 or more individual stores, boutiques, novelty shops, and restaurants. The barber shop and its classic pole have disappeared, being replaced by unisex hairstyling centers. At least two of the stores in the mall are major chainstores, and where the earlier form of shopping center may have drawn 2,000 to 3,000 customers on a good day, modern malls routinely attract patrons numbering in the hundreds of thousands.

This increase in size and patronage has brought with it more than a commensurate rise in the number and scope of security and police-related problems. Management of most malls find it necessary to employ full-time, uniformed security officers, and even with these forces on duty, many of the major chainstores also hire their own plainclothes security staff to deal with in-house problems.

What Are The Problems?

Externally, most of the problems are confined to the parking areas. The high volume of customers frequenting the malls each day necessitates the construction of expansive outdoor lots or multileveled, closely packed indoor parking structures. These areas quickly become the haunts of auto tamperers and thieves. In some instances, the poorly planned but decorative landscaping adds to the number of hiding places available to muggers and purse snatchers. The size and configuration of these areas often make them difficult for police and security personnel to patrol effectively.

The seasonal high volume of traffic through these areas also gives rise to traffic congestion problems as motorists fight for ingress and egress. Private property traffic laws are, at best,

difficult to enforce, and minor traffic accidents and hit-and-run collisions become serious problems.

Inside the mall, problems can be much greater, and in many cases, even more difficult for police and security personnel to detect or deter. Petty theft by shoplifting is undoubtedly one of the biggest problems facing shopping malls. Both the amateurs and the professionals are attracted to the stores, and sufficient numbers of active shoplifters can literally strip an unprotected mall in a matter of a few days.

Forged checks and stolen credit cards are also prevalent offenses. The passage of forged and nonsufficient funds checks and the use of stolen credit cards can easily account for millions of dollars in lost merchandise and profit if preventive measures are not instituted early to suppress their use.

Another serious problem is employee thefts. There is often a large turnover in sales and clerical help, especially during the holiday seasons, and many of these employees leave their jobs taking with them quite a bit more than the management and the law allows.

Law Enforcement and a Shopping Mall

In October 1975, the Fox Hills Mall opened its doors for the first time in Culver City, Calif. The 130-plus store mall with its large, expansive parking lots and three-story parking structure, set on over 60 acres of land, make it one of the largest shopping malls on the west coast. To complicate matters, the mall opened its doors at the very beginning of the Christmas shopping season.

The immediate effects upon the police patrol function were seen in increased calls for service to the mall and an increase in the number and type of crime reports being generated. Chainstore security personnel began almost at once to arrest both adult and juvenile shoplifters. In the beginning, responding officers were required to do all of the crime and arrest reports, as well as handle the transportation of suspects to the station for booking procedures.

The large and difficult-to-monitor parking lots began to fall victim to increasing auto thefts and auto tamperings. This was not because the area was a "bad place" but simply because the dramatic increase in the number of vehicles present naturally caused an incident increase in real numbers if not in percentages.

The resulting increase in calls for service, along with the increase in per occurrence worktime, directly affected the number of officers available for other service calls within the city and decreased the amount of patrol time available to officers.

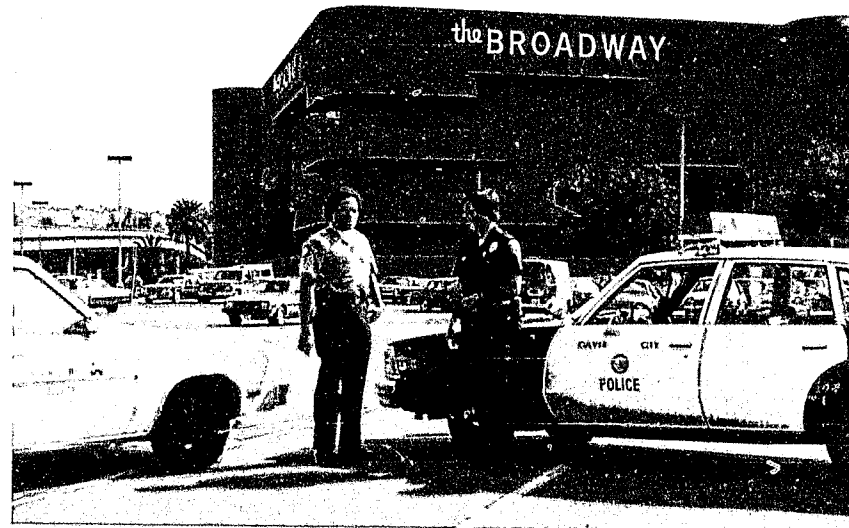
Within weeks it became apparent to the Culver City Police Department that the mall would require adaptive changes in such areas as patrol patterns, distribution of available manpower, adult and juvenile arrest policies, and crime reporting policies and procedures.



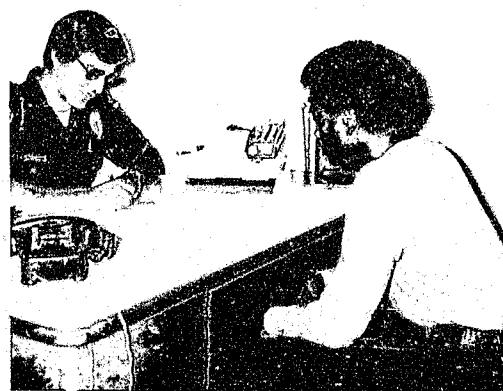
Sergeant Mahoney



*Elvin C. "Ted" Cooke
Chief of Police*



Mall security and police department personnel patrol the vast parking areas.



A police officer interviews a victim in the mall's security office.



Fingerprint equipment in the mall's security office facilitates the processing of detainees.

Changes in Reporting and Arrest Procedures

Working in conjunction with the Fox Hills Mall Security Department, the Culver City Police Department set aside and equipped a room containing report writing equipment, fingerprint facilities, and the necessary desk and telephone. This office is connected to the mall security office and is centrally located within the mall.

Members of the chainstore security departments were taught the proper methods for completing basic misdemeanor crime and arrest forms. They were also instructed to bring arrestees, when possible, to the centrally located security/police office and to complete the necessary forms there. After completing the paperwork, they were to contact police dispatch for a patrol unit.

Officers responding to these misdemeanor arrests were to take into consideration several factors:

- 1) Did the arrestee have valid identification and some indication of community ties?
- 2) Did the arrestee have any outstanding arrest warrants?
- 3) Was there any indication of violence or resistance in the apprehension?
- 4) Was the arrestee intoxicated or under the influence of a drug or narcotic?
- 5) Was the arrestee an adult or juvenile?

If the arrestee was an adult with apparent ties to the community, had valid identification and no outstanding arrest warrants, he was given a field "misdemeanor release" citation, similar to a traffic ticket, and advised to appear in court at a later date. The citation was then forwarded with the accompanying arrest paperwork to the district attorney's office for filing of criminal charges. Such releases were always authorized by the on-duty watch commander.

If the subject arrested was a juvenile, officers made every attempt to contact responsible parents or guardians. They would then be instructed to come to the mall security office or the police station to pick up their child. Only in extreme cases were juveniles incarcerated at the station or taken to a juvenile detention facility.

These changes have been successful. Security personnel have become adept in properly completing necessary paperwork, and the "dead time" initially incurred in the handling of such arrestees has all but been eliminated.

Community Relations Efforts

The police department began a series of community relations programs at the mall in an effort to curb incidents of shoplifting and bad checks. Community relations and detective personnel collaborated to produce instructional handbooks to explain private person's arrest procedures, to suggest preventive measures, and to offer tips for improving efficiency in reporting occurrences to the police department.

The programs were well-received. Members of the department met with shop managers and sales employees in one of the mall's restaurants. These meetings were generally held just before the start of the business day. The pamphlets were handed out and lectures were presented on subjects ranging from "Shoplifter Recognition, Apprehension and Prosecution" to "Holding the Line Against Bad Check Losses." Afterwards, question-and-answer periods were held and notes compared between store employees regarding past occurrences and methods in which they were handled.

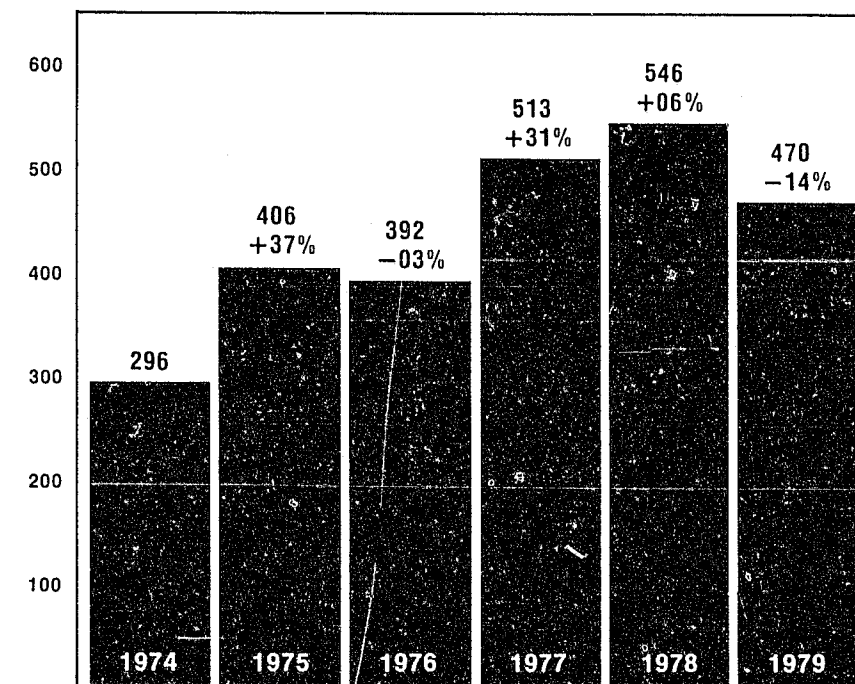
Changes in Patrol Procedures

By the end of 1977, several changes had been made in procedures for patrolling the mall. First, the mall itself was considered a separate police patrol district, with a car assigned almost exclusively to police the mall. Officers were instructed to patrol the parking areas and to make frequent high-visibility walk-throughs of the interior when not handling radio calls or arrestees. Along those same lines, every effort was made *not* to assign mall-related calls for service to other police units within the city.

Second, as the third Christmas season approached, additional uniformed and plainclothes officers were assigned on an extra-duty basis to patrol the mall and immediate surrounding areas. Almost immediately, the arrests for in-progress crimes, such as auto theft, burglary from motor vehicles, and possession of stolen property, increased. Officers, while filling out field contact cards, arrested persons for outstanding warrants on similar charges and began to become familiar with mall "regulars."

Figure 1

GRAND THEFT AUTO - PASSENGER VEHICLES



Traffic enforcement was stepped up in an effort to control the increasing traffic jams occurring on peak traffic days. The main thoroughfare through the mall was made an official city street, allowing officers to cite motorists for traffic violations and unlawful parking.

By the beginning of 1978, virtually all of the requirements for police services to the mall had stabilized. As depicted in figures 1, 2, and 3, the years 1977-1978 were more or less the turning point for enforcement efforts. Shoplifting occurrences began a noticeable decrease, as did instances of auto theft and burglary from motor vehicles. (Although these statistics reflect the number of reported crime citywide, they are affected most by the occurrences at the Fox Hills Mall.)

Crime prevention programs have increased. Programs such as "Safety City," aimed at instructing young people in basic safety laws, have been instrumental in maintaining a well-respected image of the police department with mall patrons and employees.

There was, and still is, an excellent working relationship between the Culver City Police Department and the mall management and security staffs. Combined efforts have made the Fox Hills Mall a safer, more desirable place for people to shop.

What Was Learned?

The intense environment of the Fox Hills Mall brought about major changes in patrol and reporting procedures for the department. It soon became clear that such environments require adaptive changes in the law enforcement approach of any police agency having a shopping mall as one of its responsibilities.

Figure 2

LARCENY - BURGLARY FROM MOTOR VEHICLE

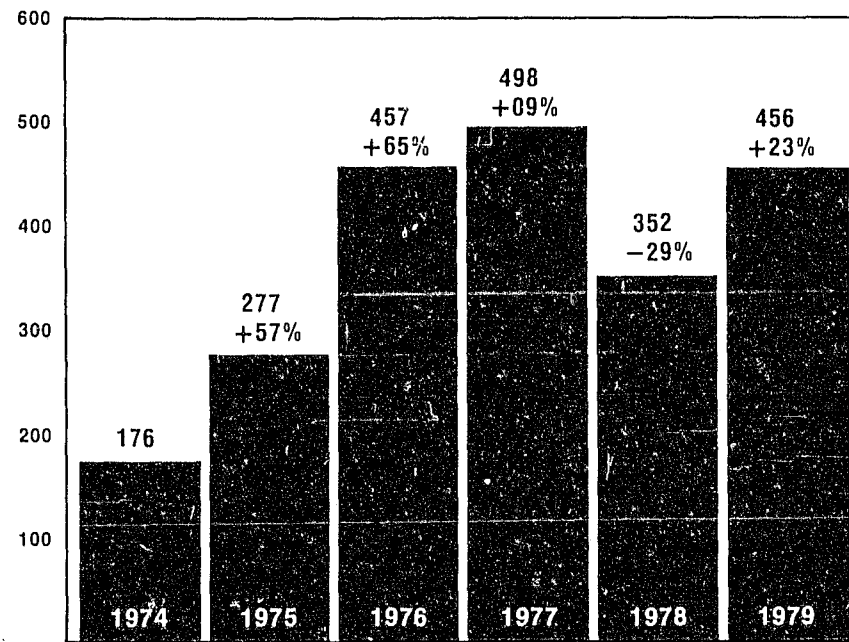
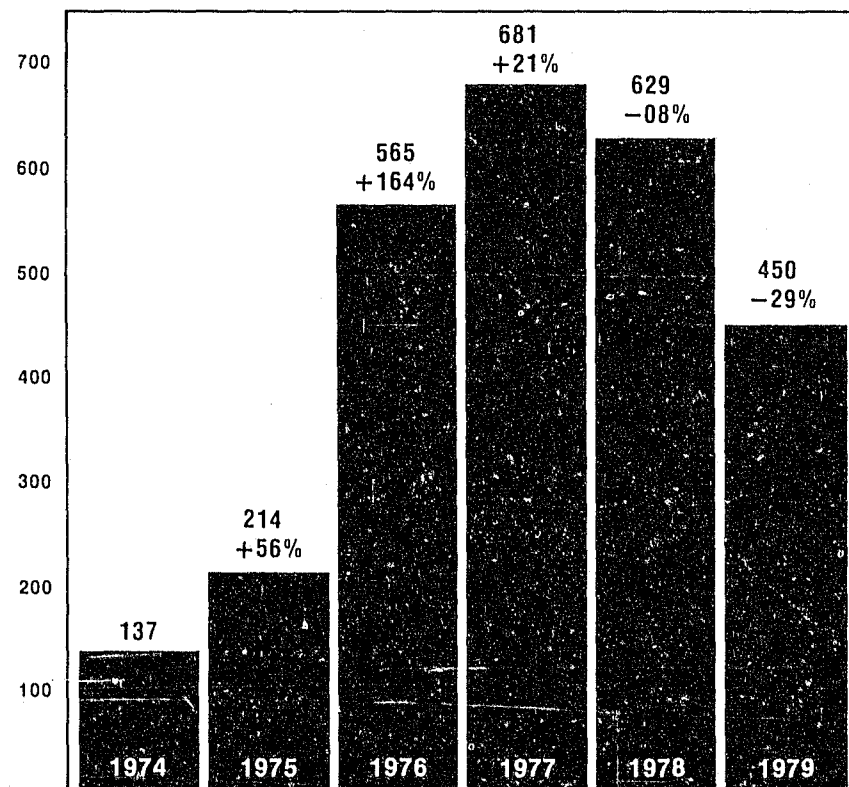


Figure 3

LARCENY - SHOPLIFTING



Some suggestions for those agencies with new or proposed shopping malls would be:

- 1) Try to become involved in the physical planning of the mall *before* it is built. Make sure that planners and architects are aware of modern, effective lighting techniques and are equally aware of the dangers of over-landscaping.
- 2) Establish a centrally located police office or substation within the mall. Make the location clearly identifiable so that customers, as well as potential criminals, are aware of your presence.
- 3) Contact mall management and security staffs and develop mutually acceptable enforcement and response policies. To be effective, one cannot exist without the aid of the other.
- 4) Plan your crime prevention efforts early. Inform merchants, management, and security of your department's policies on private person's arrests, crime reporting, and nonsufficient funds and forged check offenses. Bring preventive measures and alternatives to their attention early.
- 5) Train your personnel so that they can be aware of the types of problems that can develop at a shopping mall and plan ahead for solutions. Develop patrol procedures for such contingencies as the Christmas shopping season and the summer break from school when malls become "playgrounds" for juveniles.

There are no "sure-fire" answers to mall law enforcement problems. Each mall will be different in relation to its location, the demographic makeup of the area, and its size and facilities. Law enforcement's responsibilities lie in making it as safe and secure as possible. A coordinated, preventive approach to policing a shopping mall can bring about nothing but positive results.

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