

Survey: Employees out-steal customers

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GAINESVILLE — Retail store employees are stealing more than the customers, according to a nationwide survey that also found the industry lost \$27 billion because of worker theft, shoplifters, administrative error and fraud in 1995.

Stealing by employees amounted to \$10.4 billion, while the shoplifting losses were about \$9.7 billion, the study found,

The 1996 National Retail Security Survey was conducted by the University of Florida, which released the results Thursday.

The combination of employee theft and shoplifting amounted to almost 75 percent of the losses. Administrative error was blamed for more than 19 percent, and vendor fraud made up

about 6 percent,

“In today’s extremely competitive retail marketplace, retailers cannot remain profitable incurring even minimal levels of loss” such as those found in the survey, said UF sociology Professor Richard C. Hollinger, who directed the study.

The data were collected from anonymous questionnaires that went to 311 retail companies representing 24 market segments. Restaurants bars, vehicle dealers auto service stations and direct catalog were not included.

Respondents reported an average loss of \$737.31 per incident of employee theft, \$142.49 for each shoplifting incident and \$2,410.33 for each armed robbery.

The survey was financed through a research grant from Sensormatic Electronic Corp. The study also examined 25 loss-prevention systems, and foresees increased use of high-tech detection devices and systems.

The highest levels of losses were among camera and photo retailers. These were followed in order by optical recorded music and video, cards, gifts and novelties, discount stores, jewelry, department stores, specialty apparel, furniture and other categories.

The lowest levels were among retailers who control access to their merchandise such as liquor, wine and beer and consumer electronics.

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