

Dollar Losses for Jewelry Crime Down in 2007, Crimes Against Traveling Salespersons Up

Incidences of crime and dollar losses for the jewelry industry were down in 2007 from the previous year. According to the Jewelers Security Alliance, overall losses were \$97.1 million, down from \$110.2 in 2006. On premises robbery was down by \$18 million and burglary by \$3 million, however theft was slightly up. The incidence of on premises crime, which includes theft and burglary, also dropped from 1,267 in 2006 to 1,114 in 2007.

Florida was the most active state for burglary with 23%, followed by 11% in Texas and 9% in California. The front door is still the most likely entry spot with 48%. October was the most active month for robberies, and February and May the least. More robberies occurred in 2006 and 2007 on Tuesdays than any other day, and 4-5pm was the most frequent time.

Off premises losses increased in 2007 with \$39.5 million in merchandise stolen, up from \$32.5 million in 2006. Robbery of traveling salespersons comprised the bulk of these losses and was \$35.3 million, up from \$22.6 million in 2006. 51% of all crimes against salespersons occurred in parking lots, with hotel/ motel and residences following with approximately 16% each. 25% of travel robberies occurred in California, followed by Illinois, Georgia, Florida and New York, approximately 11% each.

In 2007, only one member of the industry was killed, the lowest figure since 1980. In November a jeweler in New York was stabbed to death by an employee caught stealing. Violent incidences rose though, with four jewelers being shot and wounded, and five robbers shot and wounded by jewelers.

Most of the thefts, particularly those involving traveling salespersons, are thought to have been carried out South American jewelry thieves. The FBI, which has a task force devoted to the networks, apprehended several members of a Los Angeles based cell in April. After tracking this particular group for three months, agents arrested four men who were carrying stolen gems in Miami, just days before a major show.

So far in 2008, traveling salespersons have been aggressively targeted in Houston. There have been seven robberies to date, most of which occurred in April and May. It is estimated that more than \$3.5 million was taken during these heists. Los Angeles is the only city to have more incidences in the previous five months.

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