



## Fort Pierce Police Department Crime Analysis Unit

The purpose of the following report is to assess the problem of thefts occurring at Wal-Mart and K-mart since 2006. This report examines data including number of incidents, calls for service, the most popular items stolen and arrest information. Recommendations to potentially combat the problem have also been made and will be found at the end of this analysis report.

### REPORTED THEFT INCIDENTS AT WAL-MART

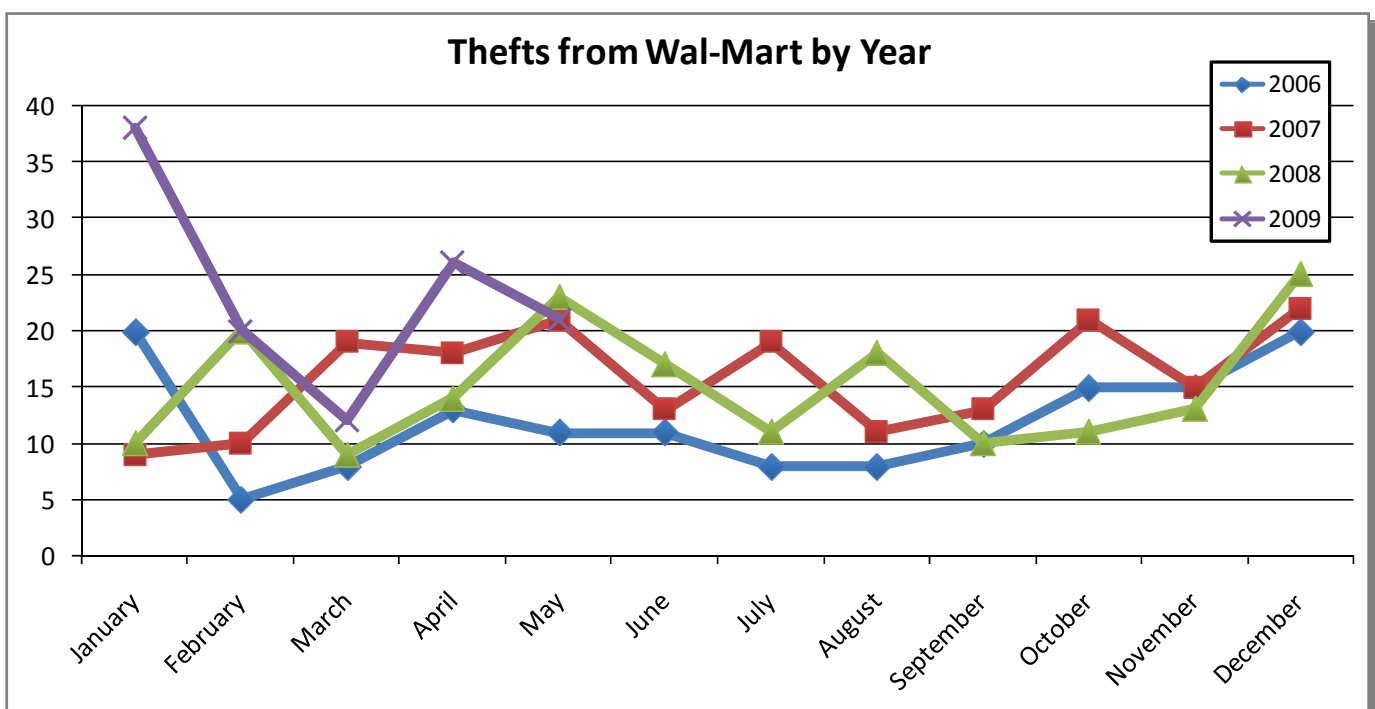
The table below shows and compares the reported thefts from Wal-Mart by year. Also shown is Wal-Mart's percentage of all thefts in the city.

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009
Wal-Mart Thefts	144	191	181	117
% of all Thefts	7.52%	11.38%	11.17%	16.71%

As of June  
2009

As of June 2009, Wal-Mart currently makes up **16.71%** of all thefts in the City of Fort Pierce. This is a significant increase compared to the years 2006 through 2008. Thus far in 2009, we are averaging approximately 23.4 thefts every month. If the reported thefts continue on this track, it is estimated that we will total 280 thefts from Wal-Mart in the year 2009, a **55%** increase compared to 2008.

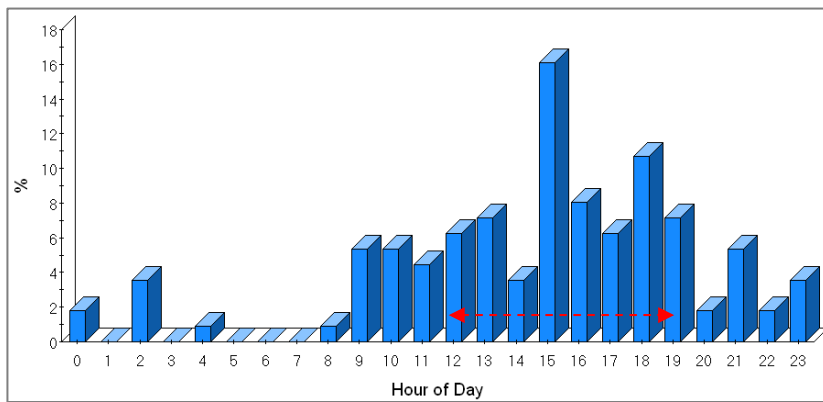
The chart below represents the theft activity at Wal-Mart by month since 2006.



As revealed from the chart, so far this year, we have seen a significant increase in reported thefts from Wal-Mart. As of June 2009, the department has documented 117 thefts from Wal-Mart. At this time last year, there were only 76 thefts. This is an increase of **54%** compared to 2008.

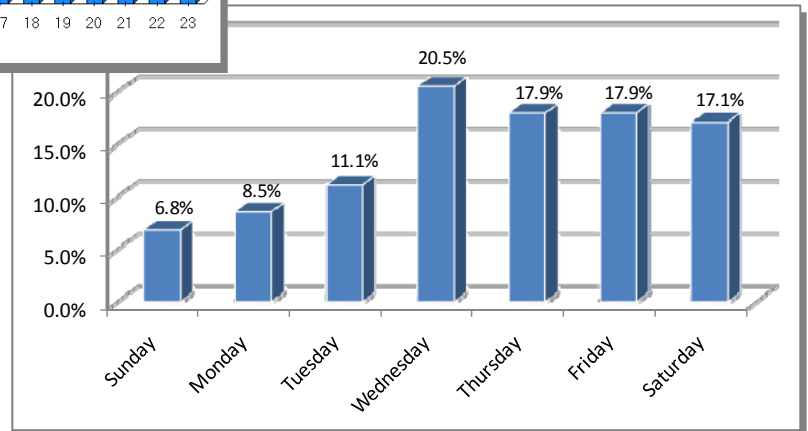
In addition, we can also see a consistent pattern of increased activity in the month on December. This most likely can be attributed to the holiday season being that Christmas is the most popular gift giving holiday.

#### TEMPORAL ANALYSIS (2009 INCIDENTS)



The majority of the reported thefts from Wal-Mart generally occurred in the afternoon hours. Approximately **65.18%** of the thefts were reported between 1200 and 1900.

According to the Problem Oriented Policing guide on Shoplifting, "most shoplifting occurs when stores are busiest, with the majority of incidents occurring late in the week, between Wednesday and Saturday." Looking at the below chart, this definitely proves true for our local problem. **73.3%** of the thefts occurred Wednesday through Saturday.



#### TYPE OF THEFTS

Shoplifting is by far the most frequent type of incident we respond to at Wal-Mart, but it is not the only kind. Other incidents that the police department regularly responds to are thefts from the building (includes thefts of purses and employee theft), conveyance burglaries, purse snatchings and pocket picking. The table below outlines the frequencies of these incidents.

★ *Only 1 in 150 shoplifting incidents are known to the police.*  
*"Shoplifting is one of the most common but least detected and reported crimes."*

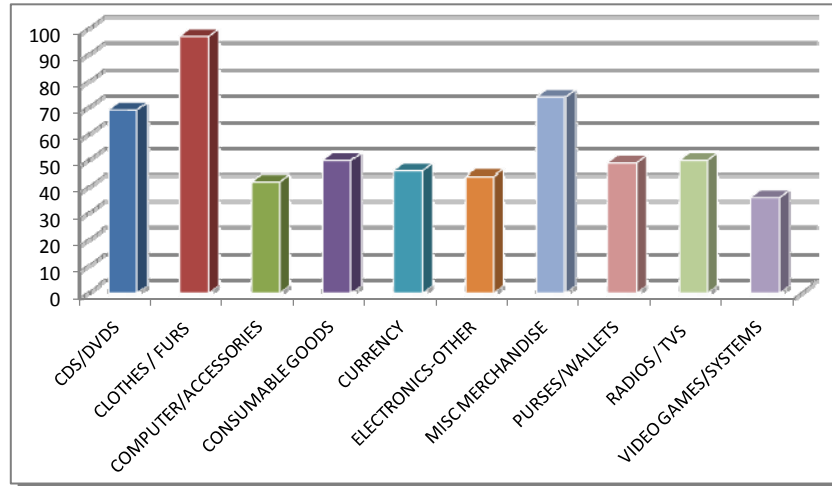
UCR Category	2006	2007	2008	2009
LARCENY/THEFT - SHOPLIFTING	104	167	167	107
LARCENY/THEFT - FROM BUILDING	11	10	6	3
LARCENY/THEFT - FROM MOTOR VEHICLE	5	3	2	3
LARCENY/THEFT - BICYCLES	0	0	0	2
LARCENY/THEFT - ALL OTHER	18	6	6	2
LARCENY/THEFT - MOTOR VEHICLE PARTS	2	4	0	0
LARCENY/THEFT - POCKET PICKING	1	0	0	0
LARCENY/THEFT - PURSE SNATCHING	3	1	0	0
<b>Grand TOTAL</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>117</b>

s Unit

We can conclude from the above figures that our greatest problem lies with shoplifting.

The POP Guide for Shoplifting suggests that “perhaps the principal factor determining a store's shoplifting rate is the type of goods sold.” Well, from clothing to automotive parts, electronics to groceries, Wal-mart sells it all. A few of the most common goods stolen in America currently are “health and beauty products--recorded music and videos, and apparel ranging from athletic shoes to children's clothing.” Wal-Mart, whom sells all of the above merchandise, is the shoplifters dream.

The chart below represents the 10 most common items stolen from Wal-Mart since 2006.



In consistence with America's most common stolen goods, clothing, CD/DVD's electronics and misc merchandise were also the most targeted items at Wal-Mart.

#### ARREST INFORMATION

The tables below include the arrest statistics for Wal-Mart since 2006 along with the demographic information of the arrestees. (The total arrest column may be bigger than the actual amount of incidents since more than one individual may have been arrested.)

Year	# of Incidents	# Cleared by Arrest	% Cleared by Arrest	Total Arrests
2006	144	96	66.7%	116
2007	191	159	83.2%	212
2008	181	162	89.5%	216
2009	117	94	80.3%	122

Since 2006, the police department averages an approximate 80% clearance rate for theft-activity at Wal-Mart.

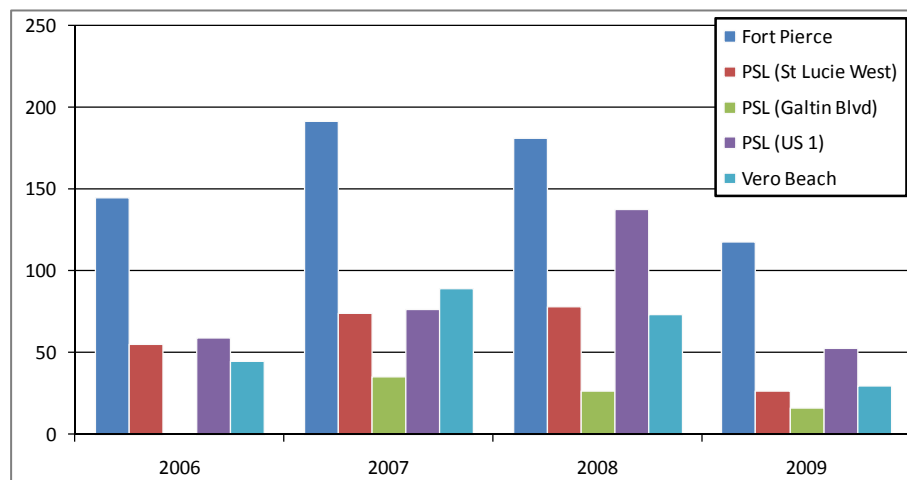
The POP Guide states that “stores that attract younger people in general, and males in particular, are more likely to experience shoplifting: research has consistently shown these groups are more often involved in theft.” Our local problem certainly is in agreement with this statement. Looking at the tables below, you can see that 27.9% of the thefts were committed by white males and that 38.3% of the shoplifters were between the ages 18-25.

SEX/ RACE	FREQ	% TOTAL
FEMALE-BLACK	104	15.6%
FEMALE-WHITE	161	24.2%
FEMALE-HISPNIC	31	4.7%
<b>FEMALE TOTAL</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>44.4%</b>
MALE-BLACK	113	17.0%
<b>MALE-WHITE</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>27.9%</b>
MALE-HISPNIC	69	10.4%
<b>MALE TOTAL</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>55.3%</b>
UNKNOWN	2	0.3%
<b>Grand TOTAL</b>	<b>666</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

AGE	FREQ	% TOTAL
10-17	85	12.8%
<b>18-25</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>38.3%</b>
26-32	121	18.2%
33-39	90	13.5%
40-50	82	12.3%
51 and Up	33	5.0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>666</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

#### WAL-MARTS IN SURROUNDING JURISDICTIONS

Upon contacting the surrounding jurisdictions of Port St. Lucie and Vero Beach, it was found that Fort Pierce had significantly higher rates of thefts from Wal-Mart every year since 2006.



Looking at the chart to the left, it is revealed that Fort Pierce experiences the highest amount of activity at Wal-Mart. The store with the second highest frequency of incidents would be the Wal-Mart located on US 1 in Port St Lucie although the numbers are far-off.

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total
Fort Pierce	144	191	181	117	<b>633</b>
PSL (St Lucie West)	55	74	78	26	<b>233</b>
PSL (Galtin Blvd)	0	35	26	16	<b>77</b>
PSL (US 1)	59	76	137	52	<b>324</b>
Vero Beach	44	89	73	29	<b>235</b>

### VERO BEACH IMPLEMENTATIONS

The Vero Beach Police Department has not attempted to implement any preventative shoplifting strategies with their local Wal-Mart.

### PORT ST. LUCIE IMPLEMENTATIONS

Crime Prevention at The Port St. Lucie Police Department has implemented a few preventative strategies to combat shoplifting/theft at their Wal-Mart locations. Below are the prevention tactics put into practice.

- **Safety Day:** An annual shoplifting/theft awareness day for Wal-Mart employees. The Crime Prevention Officer would visit the Wal-Mart locations one day out of the year with a prepared PowerPoint presentation to educate employees about shoplifting, what tactics are used to shoplift, how to detect shoplifters and what to look for.
- **Theft Awareness Pamphlet Distribution:** The Crime Prevention Officer also regularly visited the Wal-Mart locations and distributed theft awareness information pamphlets to the customers.
- **Special Detail:** The Port St Lucie PD established a special detail for officers at Christmas time since this is the time of year most thefts occur.
- **Signs:** The Crime Prevention Officer recommended to Wal-Mart that signs should be posted to deter potential shoplifters/burglars and to instruct the customers to lock their vehicles. For example, he recommended that "Lock It or Lose It" signs should be posted in the parking lot. (Note that PSL had a big problem with vehicle burglaries at the Wal-Mart locations. In contrast, our biggest problem lies with shoplifting.)

The Crime Prevention Officer that helped implement the above strategies is now a road patrol officer. Since he transferred, the Safety Day and distribution of theft awareness pamphlets are no longer in operation.

Although no statistics could be provided, the officer I spoke with stated that the implementations had a very positive effect on not only the employees but the customers as well. He repeatedly emphasized the importance of police presence at Wal-Mart.

### WAL-MART'S NEW SHOPLIFTING POLICY (Effective July 2006)

What once use to be called "Shoplifter Apprehensions," Wal-Mart's shoplifting policy is now being referred to as "Investigation and Detention of Shoplifters." In particular, as a result of deep cuts, scheduling changes and other restructuring at Wal-mart stores, the once "Zero-Tolerance" policy that prosecuted all shoplifters to the fullest extent has now changed to only prosecute shoplifters that steal merchandise whose retail value exceeds \$25. Not only that, but "the shoplifter must be at or between the ages of 18 and 65" or Wal-Mart will decline to prosecute the shoplifter.

According to the modified policy, guidelines instruct “workers not to stop shoplifters for items under \$25.” However, according to our statistics, so far in 2009, we have arrested 26 individuals for stealing merchandise with a retail value less than \$25 from Wal-Mart. This question was presented to Loss Prevention at Wal-Mart and the officer stated that there are a few exceptions to this rule. If an individual were caught shoplifting items whose retail value was less than \$25, Loss Prevention would let the individual go free unless:

- The individual cannot present a valid ID
- The individual is uncooperative with employees
- The individual is a juvenile without a parent present
- The individual is a second time offender

If the individual meets any of the above criteria, then Wal-Mart indeed prosecutes.

#### CONTACT WITH CORPORATE

Contact was made with Wal-Mart Corporate Office. The individual instructed that I should contact the General Manager at our local Wal-Mart and that she would be able to answer all our questions.

#### CONTACT WITH WAL-MART

Contacting the Wal-Mart in Fort Pierce revealed a number of security measures that are forthcoming for the prevention of shoplifting. The Loss Prevention Officer noted that they have ordered and are awaiting a large shipment of Spider Wraps. Spider Wraps are security devices that wrap around high-risk merchandise such as computers, TV's and video game systems. This prevents shoplifters from walking out of the store with unpaid merchandise.

Also awaiting shipment are Locked Take-Hooks. This security measure locks certain merchandise to the counters (cameras, camcorders, memory cards) with a cable and hook. The item remains hooked to the counter until a customer wishes to pay for the item and at that time, a store employee must unhook the item from the shelf.

Just recently implemented at Wal-Mart is a receipt check at the door. It should be noted that the store employee is only required to check for receipts when the customer is in possession of large, expensive items such as TV's or vacuums.

The Loss Prevention Officer also mentioned that their store is open for further recommendations for preventative strategies. If recommendations are proposed, they would have to be approved by the General Manager. As long as they do not violate Wal-Mart policy, Corporate permits individual Wal-Marts to implement new strategies.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Presenting receipt for all purchased items before exiting the store. To prevent customers from walking out of the store with unpaid items, designate an employee to receive and quickly review the receipts of purchased items. Although Wal-Mart has implemented this strategy for large, expensive items, it is recommended that a receipt be presented at the door for every purchase.
- Reducing the number of exits. Wal-Mart has 3-4 exits located within its store. We can encourage them to reduce the amount of exits by locating a store employee at the garden exit. This prevents customers from carrying merchandise outside where there is usually less natural surveillance. Also, merchandise located in the store should be prohibited from being purchased at the garden check out
- Post Signs. Posting warning signs on high-risk merchandise to remind customers that shoplifting is a crime and that shoplifters will be prosecuted. \*Posting general signs throughout the store only has a marginal deterrent effect on customers but one well-known study showed that when specific merchandise was prominently marked with large red stars as being frequently taken by shoplifters, shoplifting was virtually eliminated.
- Banning Known Shoplifters. Banning offenders who have been repeatedly arrested for shoplifting 3 or more times may serve as a deterrent for the offender and also other customers. This approach can be accomplished by posting the pictures of banned shoplifters in stores. This way, not only will the employees know who the offenders are but the general public as well.

## REPORTED THEFT INCIDENTS AT K-MART

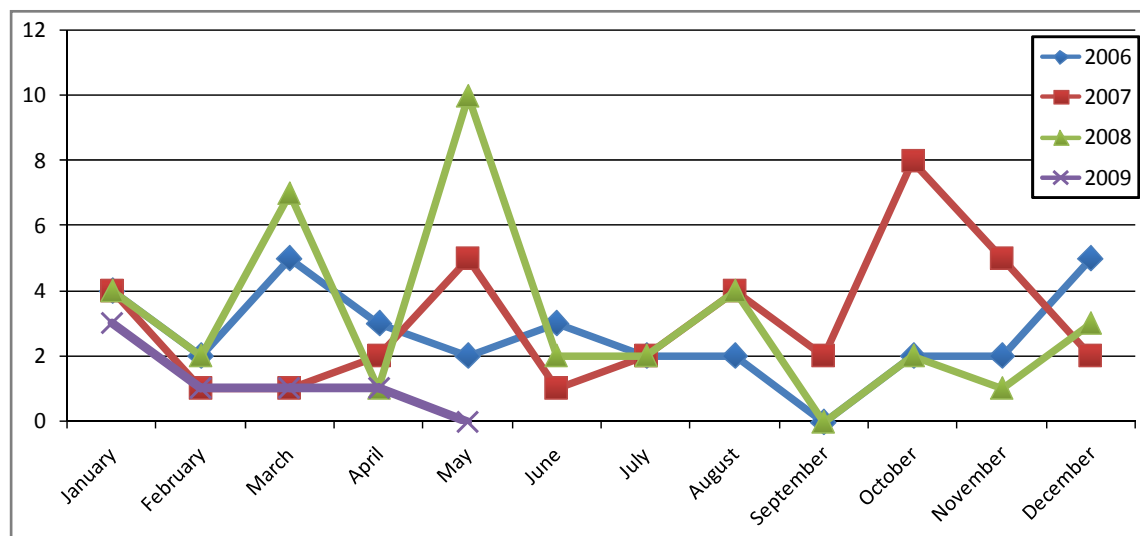
The table below shows and compares the reported thefts from K-Mart by year. Also shown is K-Mart's percentage of all thefts in the city.

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009
K-Mart Thefts	32	37	38	6
% of All Thefts	1.67%	2.21%	2.35%	0.86%

As of June  
2009

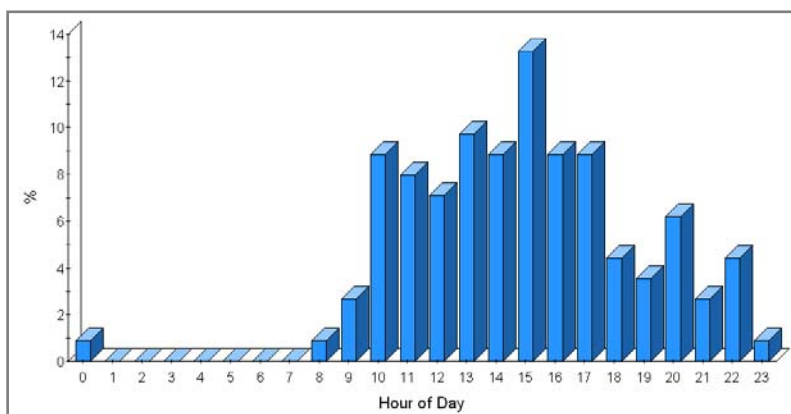
As of June 2009, K-Mart currently makes up less than .90% of the total thefts in the City of Fort Pierce. This is a significant decrease compared to the years 2006 through 2008. As of June 2009, the department has documented 6 thefts from K-Mart. At this time last year, there were only 24 thefts. This is a decrease of **75%** compared to 2008.

The chart below represents the theft activity at K-Mart by month since 2006.



Once again, you can see the significant decrease in activity in the year 2009. The Police Department documented 3 thefts in January, 1 in February, March and April and none in May.

## TEMPORAL ANALYSIS



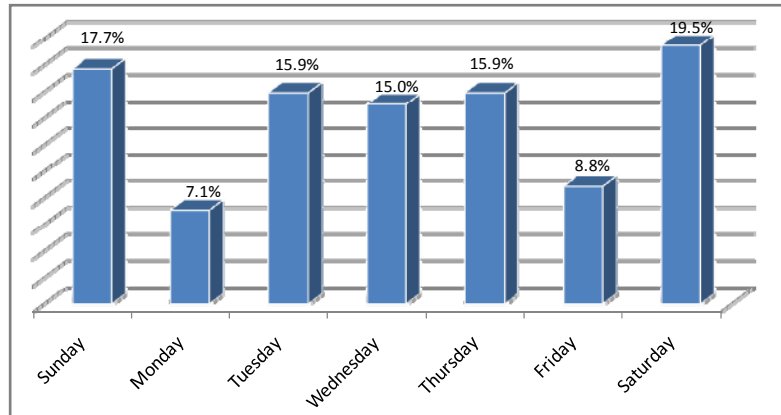
The temporal analysis of the thefts from K-Mart looks very similar to the Wal-Mart in that the majority took place in the afternoon hours. Approximately **73.5%** of the thefts were reported between 1000 and 1700.

Prepared by Crime Analysis Unit



Looking at the chart to the right, we see that most of the incidents occurred on the weekends. As you will see later in the tables to follow, the majority of the offenders arrested for shoplifting at K-Mart were juveniles. According to the POP Guide, "juveniles commit

much shoplifting, and consequently, high-risk times include non-school days." We can certainly make this correlation since we see most activity occurring on the weekends.



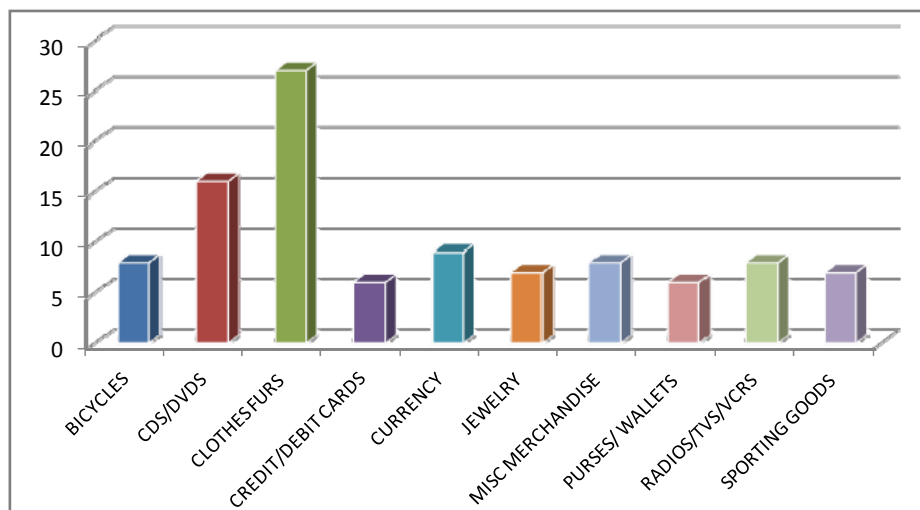
#### TYPE OF THEFTS

The table below outlines the frequencies of the UCR theft types.

UCR Category	2006	2007	2008	2009
LARCENY THEFT - FROM BUILDING	3	1	2	0
LARCENY/THEFT - ALL OTHER	4	1	3	0
LARCENY/THEFT - BICYCLES	3	1	1	0
LARCENY/THEFT - FROM MOTOR VEHICLE	1	0	2	0
LARCENY/THEFT - MOTOR VEHICLE PARTS	1	0	2	0
LARCENY/THEFT - PURSE SNATCHING	1	0	0	0
LARCENY/THEFT - SHOPLIFTING	19	34	28	6
<b>Grand TOTAL</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>6</b>

Shoplifting was again the most frequent type of activity reported to the police at K-Mart.

The chart below represents the 10 most common items stolen from K-Mart since 2006.



Similar to Wal-Mart, the most common items stolen from K-Mart were clothing and CD/DVD's.

#### ARREST INFORMATION

The tables below include the arrest statistics for K-Mart since 2006 along with the demographic information of the arrestees. (The total arrest column may be bigger than the actual amount of incidents since more than one individual may have been arrested.)

Year	# of Incidents	# Cleared by Arrest	% Cleared by Arrest	Total Arrests
2006	32	19	59.4%	24
2007	37	34	91.9%	42
2008	38	29	76.3%	32
2009	6	3	50.0%	5

Since 2006, the police department averages an approximate 69% clearance rate for theft-activity at K-Mart.

Looking at the tables below, you can see that 40.8% of the thefts were committed by white males. Unlike Wal-Mart, the majority of the offenders arrested for theft were juveniles. Approximately 48.5% of the arrestees were between the ages of 10-17.

SEX/ RACE	FREQ	% TOTAL
FEMALE-BLACK	22	21.4%
FEMALE-WHITE	9	8.7%
FEMALE-HISPANIC	0	0.0%
<b>FEMALE TOTAL</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>30.1%</b>
MALE-BLACK	28	27.2%
MALE-WHITE	42	40.8%
MALE-HISPANIC	1	1.0%
<b>MALE TOTAL</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>68.9%</b>
UNKNOWN	1	1.0%
<b>Grand TOTAL</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

AGE	FREQ	% TOTAL
10-17	50	48.5%
18-25	19	18.4%
26-32	6	5.8%
33-39	11	10.7%
40-50	11	10.7%
51 and Up	6	5.8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

#### K-MARTS IN SURROUNDING JURISDICTIONS

No comparative analysis was conducted for the reason that neither Vero Beach nor Port St. Lucie has K-Mart stores in their jurisdiction.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

It is the recommendation of the Crime Analyst Unit to designate Wal-Mart only as the focus of compound problem project. Seeing that K-Mart has significantly reduced its theft activity so far this year, I recommend focusing our efforts toward Wal-Mart but that we continue to monitor the activity at this location as well.

Prepared by Crime Analysis Unit