The Town of Hayden is offering these crime prevention and asset protection tips for the summer.

We ask your business to protect its interests by taking reasonable precautions and to lower the number of opportunities to be victimized.

In general, you can refuse service to “anyone”…you are cautioned to base this refusal on a pre-established and posted rule. Recognize, please, that you cannot refuse service to anyone based solely on any federally protected class characteristic (race, creed, gender, religion etc). Posting a sign at the door that reminds your patrons of this clearly established principle is a great idea. It saves everyone from the element of surprise.

The best asset protection you can offer is good customer service. This could be extra employees who are very helpful to your customers. This could be your current employees being very service oriented to your customers helping them in any way they can…reaching things on low shelves, reaching things on high shelves; etc.

Limiting the number of customers in your store could be beneficial. Posting a sign that clearly states a limit on customer counts and not straying from those customer counts are good things.

Prohibiting backpacks and other large items where merchandise can be hidden is a great idea. Reusable shopping bags that are verified empty when the customer enters should remain empty while the customers are being helped in your store. Only after items are PAID for should items be put in the bag.

Whatever your rules are, clearly post them so that all customers- locals and visitors alike- know them. Enforce the rules consistently and with professional courtesy—but firmness. (We had a lot of practice during COVID-19, the same principles apply.)

Some stores reduced shelf supplies of those items deemed to be higher risk for theft and for those items that are too low of margin to absorb the loss through the possibility of increased sales by legitimate customers during our travel season. Evaluate your stock and supplies.

Special Note: **Grocery Stores**: Protect your fresh produce from tampering. It has been said that members of certain groups have been known to lick and or spit on fresh produce forcing the shopkeeper to discard it. The members of these groups have been known to collect discarded produce from the dumpsters after hours to avoid paying for it. Many stores have resorted to holding produce in coolers and supplying it upon demand. Others have very attentive staff at the produce counters helping their customers and lowering the chance of this type of tampering. Meat counters and meat cases are also targets of tampering. The same protections could apply…however, with the cost of these products, it could be best to carry the selection to the front of the store for checkout. Leaving the meat in the hands of the customer leads to tampering and waste (this could look like GREAT customer service?).

Special Note: **Gas Stations:** With the cost of gas far exceeding anyone’s wildest imagination, it is likely that gas theft will be attempted through many different means. The best advice that can be given is…if the pump isn’t activated by a card…do not authorize sale. Inside sales should be “CASH on the barrelhead” and the pump preauthorized for that exact amount…nothing more. Do not activate any pump for any “pay inside” until a CASH payment OR the exact amount of the fuel purchase has been prepaid by card. (This authorization of the full amount by the card service company “guarantees” payment). Many cards presented by the opportunistic criminal aren’t valid and thus, the attempts to pay with those cards AFTER the gas is dispensed are unsuccessful…your tank of gas is gone.

Special Note: **Restaurants:** When possible, have patrons pre-pay for their meals. We know this bucks the trend of good service in restaurants, but, members of certain groups take advantage of dine-and-dash opportunities in restaurants leaving business owners with a loss.

**In General**: People who have encountered members of certain groups in the past say that politeness goes a long way with them. Firmness is the next important trait. Do not deviate from your rules or practices. Providing any gift or consideration to members of these groups results in continued asks from other members of the group who come through town. Appreciate when they do business with you…do not let them do harm unto you.

Please limit loitering on your property and determine what your limits are.

Be aware that if you provide any “extra service” to members of these groups, others will expect the same. Consider, for your own wellbeing, limiting time in the store by limiting access to restroom facilities. Since many restrooms are out of view of your staff, this leaves your storage areas and business more vulnerable and stretching your thin assets even thinner.

Consider doubling your efforts to verify identification on controlled purchases. State law requires checking for VALID identification from any person who appears to be under age 50. It is wise practice to check ID for people purchasing tobacco products as well. The fact that you are attentive to this lawful task indicates that you are paying close attention to other details.

Watch for counterfeit currency. Take time to verify the validity of the bill/s presented. Remember that $20 and $50 notes are the most commonly counterfeited bills. Counterfeit bills of other denominations are circulated, so be aware.

Watch for, and guard against, short-change schemes. Take time with any cash transaction and attempt to ignore distractions while working with cash. Remember that “slabbing” the bill received will lower the chance of the “I gave you (bigger bill).” Play “dumb” when it comes to the whole “well if it works better I can give you this other one” trick. Just ignore that and provide change for what you already have. Don’t let anyone “buy back” smaller denominations of bills or offer to sell you smaller denominations in the middle of a transaction.

Practice that no merchandise leaves the counter for any reason until it is PAID for. Recent activities have centered on the “I forgot my wallet” scheme. The second player gathers the bags of goods and tries to walk out while the first player “looks” for their wallet.

Cash management is HIGHLY important. Not many people are brazen enough to attempt it, but till taps and robberies are very costly crimes. Till Tapping is when an actor reaches over and grabs the cash out of the drawer while their conspirator distracts you. Robberies are just that…violent crimes aimed at getting your cash. If robbery isn’t a threat, burglaries in an effort to collect that visible cash certainly are. Some criminals believe it is safer to break into a place after hours and work to get the significant amount of cash “they KNOW is there” than taking it by force.

Cash management means: Limit the amount of cash in your drawer or till at all times. Secure extra cash in a safe. Set a very strict policy on large bills. If you chose to make change for a larger bill, ensure that the change is completely in your till and do not replenish that money or secure the large bill until there are NO people able to watch your moves. Many thefts are committed when bandit one tells bandit two where the money bag is stored. Don’t show anyone where this is.

We anticipate two waves of people who, sadly, pose the greatest threat of loss for our business. The first wave is part of those people travelling to the Rainbow Family Gathering. Travels are starting now and continue through July 4. The second wave will be those same people returning to their homes or travelling to their next destination. This second wave could last from July 4 through July 31 (or beyond).

The police department, and other authorities, recognizes that not all members of any group are either bad or good. Each group of people has people who practice good citizenship and ones who are criminally inclined. We are providing this information because trends have shown that crimes of opportunity increase when certain associates of the Rainbow Family are present.

We ask your business to protect its interests by taking reasonable precautions and to lower the number of opportunities to be victimized.

Please reach out to any member of your police department with questions.

Call 9-1-1 for life threatening emergencies./ Call 970-879-1090 (Routt County Communications) to report other crimes or to ask for assistance.