



TESTING TIME: Reggie Horne, managing director of Justicia Investigations, watches Frans van Biljon conduct a (simulated)

Hi-tech ways to home in on domestic crime

Employers turn to hidden cameras and lie detector tests to catch the culprits

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Domestic security has taken on a whole new meaning in South Africa with the advent of hi-tech, close-circuit television monitoring and polygraphs.

While white-collar crime still leads the way in costs to the country, petty crime at homes - mainly committed by domestic workers - is slowly catching up.

It is estimated that the country's economy is losing millions of rands through petty theft.

One of the country's leading private investigators, Reggie Horne, managing director of Justicia Investigations, said employers get a shock when they discover what their domestic workers are up to when they are alone at home.

"The bottom line is that the majority of employers don't know their domestics well. Some have had the same domestic for 20 years and know them only as Beauty or Cynthia.

"Is that their real name? Where does she live? You will be shocked to know how little employers know about the personal details of their domestic," said Horne.

Horne said there had been a huge increase in crimes committed by domestics. However, employers are fighting back and are hiring private investigators to assist them catch the culprits.

In some cases hidden cameras are installed in the home while in some instances domestics undergo polygraph tests.

"A number of employers who suspect that their children are being abused by domestics have also contacted us to install hidden cameras at their homes," he said.

Horne said recently a client, a Durban businessman, had about 245 000 and a .22 rifle stolen from his home on the Bluff. The two domestic workers and a gardener underwent



CAUGHT IN THE ACT: A domestic worker is caught going through the briefcase of her employer



ON CAMERA: A gardener uses a bucket to steal CDs from the home of his employer.

found to be deceptive during the polygraph test and was questioned further, resulting in the money and firearm being recovered.

In another instance a hi-fi set and jewellery worth R50 000 were stolen from the Kloof residence of a senior executive of a large corporation.

Two of his domestic workers underwent polygraph tests and one failed. After further questioning, he confessed and the stolen property was recovered.

In another incident a firearm was stolen from a residence in Asagay. On submitting a painter and domestic worker for polygraph testing, the painter did not pass. He was questioned, confessed and the firearm was recovered.

"Numerous cases of smaller amounts of money, ranging from R100 to R1 000, being stolen have been investigated. In each case, the domestic servant has been connected either by obtaining covert camera footage or by polygraph testing.

"An avid music CD collector residing in Durban North, who had collected CDs valued at thousands of rands over the years, noticed that his CD numbers were diminishing grad-

and footage was obtained which enabled us to link the gardener to the crimes. What he was doing was entering the house with a bucket as if he was going to clean the windows.

He would then put the CDs in the bucket and walk out of the house.

The gardener was arrested, charged and received a suspended sentence. He told us that he had sold the CDs at a taxi rank for R10 each.

"Recently we obtained footage from a house which captured a domestic opening the briefcase of her employer and removing money from his wallet.

"In another case, a day after a Morningside family departed for an overseas holiday over the festive season, their home was broken into and ransacked. Our investigations connected the daughter of a retired domestic employee to the housebreaking.

"The suspect confessed to the housebreaking and admitted stealing keys to the house and having duplicates cut while her mother had been employed with the family. The suspect revealed that her boyfriend, who has a criminal record, had the stolen property in his possession. On searching his premises, the goods