

ERIC Nkabinde and Reg Home of Justicia Simunye show some of the dummy parcels and packages professional shoplifters use to steal merchandise from stores



PICTURE: BONGIWE GUMEDU

# Malls braced for gangs

## Shoplifters 'organised'

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**S**HOPPING malls across the province are bracing themselves for an expected increase in shoplifting over the festive seasons.

And shoplifters have become more sophisticated in their methods and are more organised than ever.

Eric Nkabinde of security company Justicia Simunye said shoplifting was no longer a spur-of-the-moment crime.

"Shoplifting has become an organised crime these days with people working in gangs as planned syndicates.

"The professional shoplifters have gone as far as using under-aged people to do the shoplifting for them because they know if they get caught they won't be sent to prison," said Nkabinde.

He said that shoplifters used dummy parcels to throw off suspicion.

"The most common method used by shoplifters is carrying a dummy parcel into a store. The parcel is either disguised as a pillow bought from another store or a gift-wrapped box with a secret trapdoor. As shoplifters move around the store they simply pop the stolen items into the dummy parcel," said Nkabinde.

He said shoplifters had become so advanced that they used devices that prevent the store's detectors from picking up any stolen items that are

being taken out of the shop.

"They have developed ingenious methods to bypass store detectors. One of their favourite tricks is to line a dummy parcel with layers of tin foil in order to cloak the security tag."

Nkabinde suggested that retailers install CCTV camera to keep an eye on everything that happens in their store.

"Where possible keep counters low, mount mirrors in corners so there are no blind spots and also CCTV cameras can provide numerous benefits as video footage can be used to prosecute offenders."

But not all shoplifters are professionals, he said. Some are just opportunists who don't realise the seriousness of their crime.

A shoplifter, who spoke to the *Daily News* on condition of anonymity, said she did not have any high-tech methods for shoplifting.

The teenager said she usually went into a store and exchanged her old pair of shoes for a new one.

"I pretend to be trying on the shoes and then just walk out of the store wearing the new pair, without paying for them.

"If I want to steal perfume from a larger store I will pretend that I'm testing and looking at the perfume, then I take it out the box and put it in my bag and walk out.

"Security guards at the stores don't think pretty young girls are shoplifters so they don't even check our bags," she said.