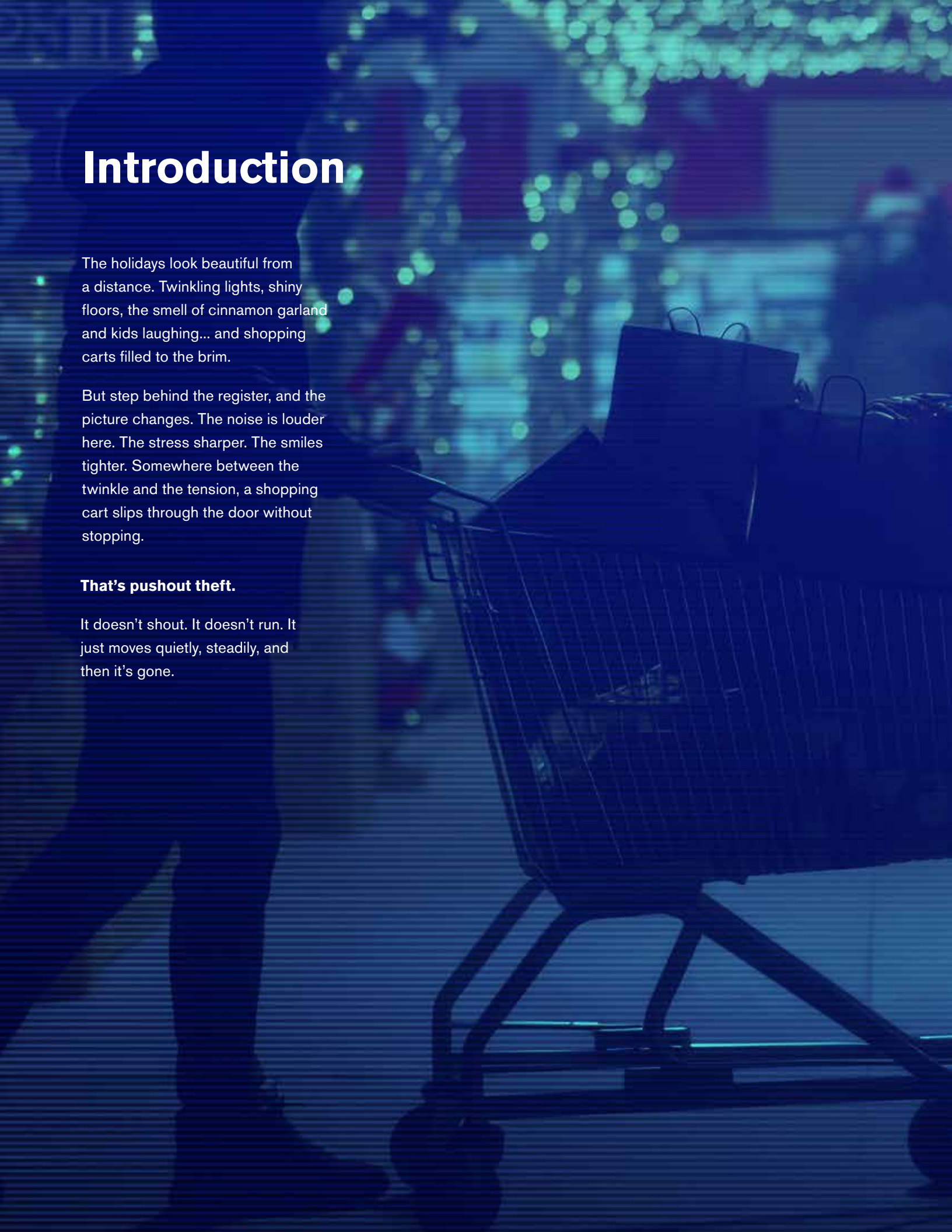


Insights

When the Holidays Push Back

A person is pushing a shopping cart filled with several brown paper bags. The person is seen from the side, wearing a dark jacket and pants. The background is a blurred store interior with warm, glowing lights, suggesting a festive or holiday atmosphere. The overall tone is somewhat somber due to the blue tint of the image.

Introduction

The holidays look beautiful from a distance. Twinkling lights, shiny floors, the smell of cinnamon garland and kids laughing... and shopping carts filled to the brim.

But step behind the register, and the picture changes. The noise is louder here. The stress sharper. The smiles tighter. Somewhere between the twinkle and the tension, a shopping cart slips through the door without stopping.

That's pushout theft.

It doesn't shout. It doesn't run. It just moves quietly, steadily, and then it's gone.

The Numbers Behind the Noise

We studied a subset of stores equipped with the Purchek® pushout theft solution to understand what really happens when the holiday rush hits.

The results weren't a blip. They were a pattern.

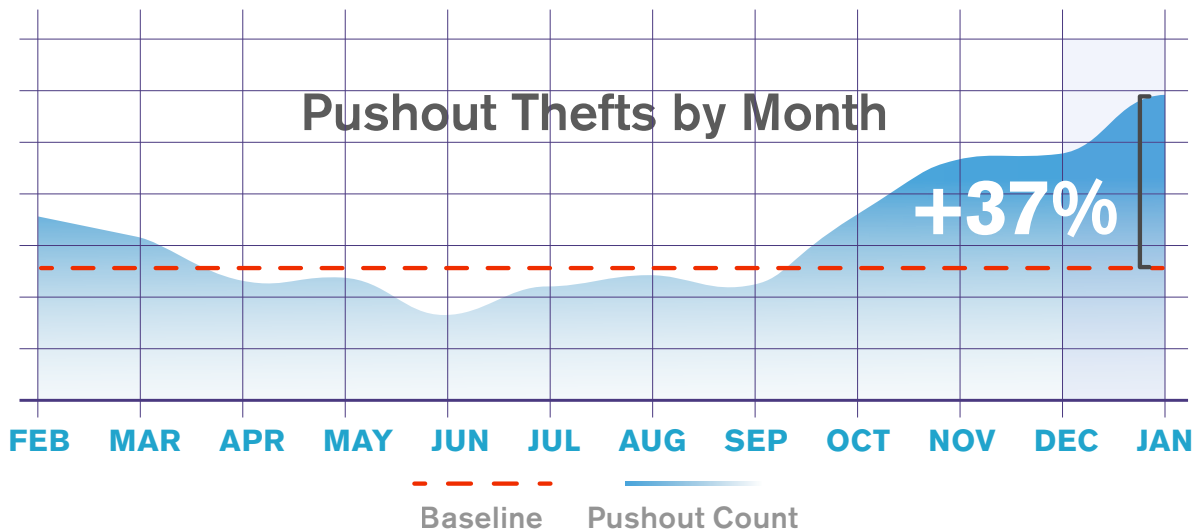
Between October and January, pushout thefts jumped 37 percent compared to the rest of the year.

Pushout Theft Seasonality

February – September: Baseline

October – January: Increase in pushout thefts, peaking at +37%

One store manager described it best: “It feels like the doors forget how to close.” The data simply confirmed what the store teams already knew: the holidays push back! Hard.



It feels like the doors forget how to close.

-A Store Manager

Holiday Pressure

Why does theft climb so fast during the season that's supposed to bring joy?

Because joy doesn't come cheap. Budgets are tight. Families stretch. Shoppers are squeezed until their breaking point.

Last December, just two days before Christmas, a 79-year-old woman in Florida filled her cart with nearly nine hundred dollars' worth of food

and household items. She had about eighty dollars to her name. When stopped, she didn't fight or argue. She told police she had stolen the items so she could "enjoy the holidays with her family." [*The Sun*, Dec. 23 2024].

It's easy to label stories like this as crime. Harder, though, is seeing what's underneath. Financial strain. Loneliness. A holiday that demands more than some people can give.

Now multiply that moment by hundreds of stores, thousands of carts, and millions of chances for people to make a poor choice in a desperate season. That's what the data doesn't show: the heartbeat behind the numbers.

The Holiday Pressure Cooker

Imagine a store at 6 p.m. on a Friday in December. The scent of peppermint mochas from the café kiosk. Intercoms blaring for backup at checkout. A toddler crying somewhere near produce. Associates zig-zagging like swallows from aisle to aisle, heads down and hands full.

Then a blur of motion at the exit. Nobody sees it at first. Everyone's busy. But the shopping cart is already gone. That's how it happens. It's not cinematic. It's not dramatic. It's the

silence that gets you. Pushout Theft silently thrives in the buzz of holiday shopping.

When the pushout data was mapped out, the trend was clear. October is the warning shot, November and December climbs, and January explodes.

The unfortunate irony is the season built on giving becomes the one where taking, hits an all-time high. That's not a coincidence. It's a signal

that the store's defenses, no matter how seasoned, are stretched thin by human limits. Pushout thefts even happen right under the noses of security guards posted at the exit. Why? Pushout thefts don't rely on stealth. They rely on familiarity. To a busy associate or security guard, a cart of unpaid merchandise looks exactly like the one that's been purchased. That's what makes pushout thefts so costly and so easy to miss.

From Incident to Intelligence

Every theft tells a story, but most stores only see the last page. When teams start connecting those dots, time, place, and behavior, they realize it's not random. It's a pattern that can be learned, even predicted. That's what we call theft intelligence.

Tools like the Purchek® technology help stop the act in real time, while systems like FaceFirst® identify the patterns hiding beneath it, the repeat

offenders, the familiar faces, the time of day when risk quietly spikes.

It's not about catching people. It's about understanding people. When you understand behavior, you can change outcomes.

**Every theft tells a story,
but most stores only
see the last page.**

Making What You Have Work Harder

Many retailers already have the foundation. If you're using CartControl[®], you're already running on Gatekeeper's SmartWheel[®] technology. It guides your carts. Keeps them contained. But they can do more!

With Purchek[®], they evolve from helpers to protectors, locking automatically when a cart filled with unpaid merchandise nears the exit. No risky confrontations or dangerous chases. Just quiet prevention. Think of it as your store's second sense, not eyes in the back of your head but calm at the front door.



The Bigger Picture

Pushout theft isn't always about what leaves the store. It's what stays behind. The anxiety. The self-blame. The weariness that creeps into the staff who continue to watch it happen.

One associate told us, "It's not losing the product that hurts. It's feeling like I failed."

That's what safe technology changes, not just loss numbers but morale. It restores balance in a season that constantly tips toward chaos.

Loss doesn't end at the cash register; it echoes on the balance sheet. Every shopping cart that slips through the door unnoticed chips away at profit margins that are already stretched thin. Multiply those moments across hundreds of stores and suddenly shrink isn't just a security issue... it's an EBITDA problem. At 3% operating margin, a single \$500 pushout theft means the store must sell over \$16,000 in merchandise just to break even. It's money slipping through the cracks while everyone's heads are down, trying to keep up with the rush. **The irony is that the busiest time of year can also be the least profitable once theft is factored in.**

So yes, theft rises every year during the holidays. The data is clear. But so is the solution.

Plan early. Learn from what the numbers tell us. Turn incidents into insights. And let the systems you already trust do more of the heavy lifting. Because when the holidays push back, and they always do, your stores can push back smarter.

At 3% operating margin, a single \$500 pushout theft means the store must sell over \$16,000 in merchandise just to break even.

About Gatekeeper Systems

Gatekeeper Systems' expanded product suite of intelligent cart solutions offers solutions for EVERY retailer's needs to minimize merchandise loss, reduce asset and labor expenditures.

Gatekeeper's loss prevention and cart containment solutions utilize patented locking technology to put an end to cart-based shoplifting, shopping cart loss, and uninformed decision-making. Cart management solutions increase safety and reduce labor costs by maximizing productivity while simultaneously resulting in a positive store image.

Intelligent pushout theft prevention solutions stop thieves and their cart full of unpaid merchandise from leaving the store. Customizable technology allows retailers to defend their entire store or just a high loss department based on the store's unique layout.

Business Intelligence solutions provide increased visibility for informed decision making. Increase efficiency, optimize fleet size, and perfect the entire customer shopping experience with store and enterprise-level analytics.