

Bill would require guard training - State lawmakers seek to prevent fatal confrontations

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DETROIT -- In an effort to prevent deadly confrontations between shoplifters and store security, state lawmakers this week will unveil a plan to **require** mandatory **training** for all security **guards**.

"We have been so lucky for such a long time in this state regarding security **guards** and their lack of **training**," said State Sen. Phillip Hoffman, R-Horton, one of the lawmakers who on Wednesday will introduce a package of **bills** regulating the security industry.

"Unfortunately, it took the death of several people to bring this to our attention."

In the past year, three people, all suspected of shoplifting, have died and one has been injured in confrontations with security **guards** working at Metro Detroit retail stores. This weekend, another man died in the emergency room of St. John's Hospital after being restrained by hospital security **guards**, who by law are required to have **training** that store **guards** aren't. That death is still being investigated.

The rash of store deaths has prompted lawsuits, demonstrations and accusations of racial profiling -- as well as calls for mandatory, standardized **training** of security **guards** so they are better able to handle confrontation and use of force.

The only requirements of store security **guards** under Michigan law are that "they be 18 years of age, have completed the eighth grade and have a clean, recent felony record," said state Rep. Hansen Clarke, D-Detroit.

"That is not enough to protect the public from killer security **guards**," said Clarke, who is proposing a law that **would require** security **guards** get standardized **training** from Michigan State Police.

"We expect to have legislation that will **require** minimum, mandatory **training** of each and every security **guard** in Michigan," said Clarke, noting only **guards** with arrest powers, such as those who work in hospitals, casinos and shopping center malls, receive even minimal **training**.

Besides **guard training**, Clarke, Hoffman, State Sen. Gary Peters, D-Bloomfield Township, and others are introducing **bills** calling for greater law enforcement oversight of security **guard** companies, and an increase in their licensing fees.

There are 465 licensed private security firms in Michigan and more than 23,000 security **guards**. Some of the costs of implementing the new proposals could be offset by increasing the licensing fees, said Hoffman, noting they haven't been raised since 1965. They now range from \$300 to \$500 a year.

Hoffman said he'll push to have the legislation passed quickly. "I **would** hope we **would** have this passed and on the governor's desk for his signature before the summer recess."

Charles L. Duty, a human resources director for Ypsilanti-based Crime Prevention Security, favors such legislation. "We're in full support of mandatory **training**," said Duty, adding that while officers get some basic **training**, "we don't give them batons, mace or permission to attack anyone."

"We give them a prep radio. Their job is to observe and report, not to try and detain or arrest anyone."

And that's appropriate, said Rev. Horace Sheffield, "until we have some proper **training** in place for these **guards**." Sheffield, who has led rallies protesting the recent store deaths, has called for a moratorium on **guards** attempting to apprehend shoplifters until **training** is provided.

"I'm not saying people should stand by and let people roll wheelbarrows full of stuff out of their stores, but I'm saying maybe it's time to step back and record and report these incidents rather than get physically involved," Sheffield said.

Sheffield will hold a public forum on the issue at 6 p.m. Thursday at the New Gailee Missionary Baptist Church on Gunston Road in Detroit.

While many have described fatal security **guard** -related incidents as a recent phenomenon, they date back nearly three years, at least.

On June 23, 1998, 41-year-old David Carroll attempted to flee from a Rite Aid at Greenfield and Puritan roads. He was chased down by a security **guard** who sat on him until police could arrive and make the arrest.

The **guard** , who outweighed Carroll by 100 pounds, broke two of Carroll's ribs and led to his death, but then-Wayne County Prosecutor John D. O'Hair did not find any evidence of criminal negligence.

Security **guard training**

State lawmakers are to unveil a series of **bills** this week that **would** affect the future of security **guard** companies in Michigan. Among them:

- * Mandate **training** regime for **guards** (no **training** is required now).
- * Increase state licensing fees from \$300 to \$500 a year to a yet-to-be-determined amount.
- * Creation of an advisory commission, from citizens to industry experts, who **would** develop curriculum and **training** standards for **guards**.

Drafts of legislation to be introduced

Security **guard** incidents

Three people have died and a fourth injured in the past year following incidents with private security **guards** at Metro Detroit stores.

April 6, 2001: Alwanda Gail Person Jackson, 36, suffered a fatal heart attack after struggling with a **guard** outside a Rite Aid on Harper in Detroit. The **guard** restrained her by tying her with an extension cord. No one is charged in her death.

Feb. 21, 2001: Gail Hardy, 47, was hit over the head and knocked unconscious by a security **guard** at a Rite Aid in Detroit after using a nail clipper, replacing it on a shelf and ignoring a **guard**'s order to stop. The **guard** has been charged with felonious assault.

Feb. 8, 2001: Travis Shelton, 38, died after trying to steal meat from a Kroger store in Royal Oak Township. A 377-pound security **guard** sat on the back of the legs of the struggling 278-pound Shelton, holding him to the floor until deputies arrived.

June 22, 2000: Frederick Finley, 32, died in a fight with security **guards** outside a Lord & Taylor department store in Dearborn. A **guard** has been charged with involuntary manslaughter.

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