



FLORIDA BANKERS ASSOCIATION

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Florida bankers team with law enforcement to deter robberies

A new statewide program is designed to reduce the number of bank robberies

TALLAHASSEE—Florida ranks ninth in the nation for bank robberies and Florida bankers intend to do something about it. The Florida Bankers Association (FBA) has teamed with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), the Florida Highway Patrol (FHP) and Fraud-Net to implement the “No Hats, No Hoods, No Sunglasses” program, which was launched statewide today.

“Bankers aren’t just going to hope robbers won’t come. We’re going to be proactive by implementing policies and technology that will help prevent bank robberies and apprehend robbers if attempts are actually made,” said FBA President and CEO Alex Sanchez. “The ‘No Hats’ program is one more layer of protection for banks, employees and bank customers.”

Banks and financial institutions participating in the voluntary program will post information throughout their branches notifying customers that they should remove hats, hoods or sunglasses when entering the building. If customers refuse to remove these items, they will be directed to a more experienced teller or an area of the bank with more security features. No customers will be denied service.

“We know that the ‘No Hats’ program can be effective because we’ve looked at the facts and evaluated the numbers,” said Rick Lee, FBA chairman and president and chief executive officer of Citizens Bank of Florida. “We believe we’ll see immediate benefits.”

Similar programs launched in other states have produced positive results. Missouri implemented a “No Hats, No Hoods, No Sunglasses” policy in 2002 and saw robberies drop 33 percent. Three years later, in 2005, the number of robberies lessened even more; the state had a 47 percent decrease in bank robberies as compared to 2002.

The number of bank robberies in Florida rose nearly 40 percent in 2007 to a total of 361. Many of Florida’s robberies—nearly 40 percent—involved the perpetrators wearing facial disguises, ski masks, theatrical masks, head coverings or helmets in attempts to prevent being identified. The

simple act of removing hats, hoods and sunglasses while inside banks will make it easier to identify anyone committing a crime.

“Florida is the fourth most populous state in the country and in 2006, we were ranked ninth for bank robberies,” said Florida Department of Law Enforcement Commissioner Jerry Bailey. “Implementing simple, straight-forward deterrence programs like this will help protect bank employees and customers.”

During the past year, 66 percent of bank robbers in Florida used or threatened a weapon. National statistics reinforce how dangerous bank robberies can be: during U.S. bank robberies in 2006, 13 people died, more than 80 hostages were taken, 75 employees were injured and 17 customers were injured.

“Law enforcement has always played a supportive role...we would much rather prevent crimes than chase criminals,” said Colonel John Czernis, director of the Florida Highway Patrol. “The new ‘No Hats’ program makes a lot of sense and we think it will also make a big difference.”

More than \$2.4 million was stolen during bank robberies in Florida in 2007. Nationwide, more than \$72.6 million was stolen by bank robbers in 2006.

“It would be naïve to think that we can stop every single robbery that occurs in our state. That said, we have the responsibility to do what we can to ensure the safety and financial security of our customers, employees and institutions,” said Bret Rock, director of Fraud-Net and a FBA liaison for to the Robbery Reward Committee. “I am confident the “No Hats’ policy will be well-received and the desired affect of reducing the numbers of bank robberies in Florida will be achieved.”

Fraud-Net is the FBA’s dynamic, online database that facilitates the sharing of information between financial institutions and law enforcement officials to assist in the prevention of financial crime.

About the Florida Bankers Association: The Florida Bankers Association was established in 1888, and is one of Florida’s oldest trade associations. Its membership includes more than 300 financial institutions ranging in size from small community banks, thrifts, and trust companies to medium-sized banks operating in several parts of the state, to large regional financial institutions that are headquartered in Florida or outside the state. Nearly 96 percent of banks operating in Florida are members of the FBA.

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