



## BC Crime Prevention Association

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Q: My spouse works in a Japanese restaurant which has encountered several 'dine and dash' customers. They are always teenagers. It is very frustrating for the employees working in the restaurant.

On the most recent 'd and d' my spouse ran outside of the restaurant and caught one of the teenage girls. She was brought back, they called the police, who never came. They were made to pay the bill and then let go.

They never asked for their Id's (which could have been very useful information).

I was worried hearing this. I have told my spouse should this happen not run after them outside the restaurant (for her safety). I have also suggested that she mention to the owners to create a new policy and ask for a piece of ID from suspicious teenagers until they pay for their meals. The owners seem uninterested in this. (With the previous example all the owner wanted was to be paid for the bill and not in obtaining the ID of who these people were). Is this Id policy a good idea?

Any information or suggestions regarding crime with restaurants in Vancouver would be much appreciated.

Thank you.

A: There are many aspects to your question concerning 'dine and dash' customers that need to be considered, namely:

1. Obtaining Food by False Pretenses is a criminal offence under S.364(1) of the Criminal Code of Canada and therefore is a legitimate situation reportable to police.
2. Safety of restaurant employees is important and is addressed through WorkSafe BC regulations - you are correct in saying that it is unwise to pursue a "dine and dasher" because of the potential risk of injury to the restaurant employee and employers should not allow staff to be exposed to such risks.
3. A good practice in the circumstances you describe would be for the server who suspects a particular group might not pay the bill to ask before the order is placed which of the customers will be taking responsibility for the bill once the meal is finished - this puts an onus on one individual who will be held accountable by the restaurant.
4. Strategic seating (where feasible) of potential dine-and-dashers in a corner or as far away from the exit can be helpful as it enables staff to keep a closer eye on the customers behavior.
5. Police cannot be called merely to act as enforcers and persuade customers to pay the bill
6. Once a restaurant chooses to ask for identification for the purpose of (a) recording names and addresses and (b) subsequent collection of the money owed for the meal, the restaurant has entered into a civil arrangement and it is no longer a police matter.

Because of the complex factors involved, the restaurant is urged to contact the local Community Policing Centre in Vancouver to seek further advice on the points listed above and any other aspects of this problem. A list of these offices and their contact phone numbers can be found at: <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/police/CPC/cpc.html>