

The benefits of DNA Intruder Spray Systems – a guide for jewellers and pawnbrokers



Jewellery Theft – The Facts

Figures released by SaferGems – a joint initiative established by the British Security Industry Association (BSIA), T.H. March Insurance Brokers and the National Association of Jewellers (NAJ) – have shown that jewellery thefts and smash and grab raids are still a very real issue in the United Kingdom. In 2018, there were 640 crimes and suspicious incidents reported by both the jewellery industry and Police to SaferGems.



SaferGems also recorded 77 robberies / smash and grab incidents during 2018 with 4 of the incidents involving firearms. During these incidents approximately £7.4 million pounds worth of goods were stolen including £4 million worth of prestige watches as they remained the most sought after items stolen during the year. These statistics serve to highlight the importance of taking appropriate measures to protect sellers of jewellery, watches and antiques from such crimes.

What is Forensic Marking?

Forensic (or DNA) marking is the method of using a covert, unique marker to deter theft and other crimes, by linking marked property or offenders to a crime scene. The marking can come in the form of a property marking solution to mark possessions/assets, a liquid solution to mark criminals, and even a transferable gel-like solution for Police to use in covert operations. Forensic property marking uses a unique forensic signature / code with a UV glue to enable individuals to discreetly mark items such as jewellery. The unique forensic 'code' is then registered to a master database. Discreet in nature, the liquid marking can also only be seen under a UV light. With each liquid solution having its own individual code, this method enables the Police to link criminals to the exact scene of a crime and return the item back to its original owner.



How can Forensic Marking help protect Jewellers?

For the jewellery sector, forensic marking can also be a vital way to forensically link criminals to the scene of a crime, providing essential evidence to help secure convictions.

Employing forensic marking and overtly advertising the fact that the system is in use, with appropriate signage, acts as a powerful deterrent to stop thieves from committing the crimes in the first place.

Forensic Intruder Sprays are used to mark the offenders during a burglary, robbery or smash and grab raid, rather than the items themselves, and can be extremely useful in protecting stores both during the day and out of hours. Spray systems can be integrated into a shop's existing alarm system or can be used as a stand-alone system with its own panic button. If an offender gains entry into a premises, the spray system can emit a burst of forensic solution onto the criminal. Although invisible to the human eye, the marking fluid can be seen under Police UV lights, and stay on human skin or clothing for weeks, sometimes even months, after the offence. The spray itself is harmless and contains a forensic code with a unique identifier linked to a database, proving vital in linking a suspect to a crime and providing indisputable evidence in a court of law. Consideration should always be given to the track record of various companies in relation to criminal convictions. Those products that have been challenged in the criminal courts and secured a conviction are better placed to deter a potential thief. Details of such a track record can be found on the company websites.

Success Stories

SelectaDNA Intruder Spray deters crime at home and abroad

Jewellery stores in Belfast city centre are being successfully protected from break-ins and smash and grab raids by the SelectaDNA Intruder Spray. The spray system has already been used to ward off criminals from other retail outlets in the UK, including convenience stores, newsagents, supermarkets, financial institutions and petrol stations.



A spokesperson from Chubb Northern Ireland, whose company installed the spray systems together with their own security locks, said: "The jewellery stores are on a busy high street and stock high quality diamonds and custom-made jewellery. The fact that here have been no break-ins or attempted break-ins since the systems have been in place (2011) is excellent news for the owner."

The hi-tech system works by emitting a burst of forensic DNA solution when an offender forces entry into the premises, marking them with an invisible and harmless, synthetic spray that stays on skin and clothing for weeks. It also links the criminal to the break-in, providing irrefutable evidence that can be used in court to ensure conviction.

The spray can be integrated into an existing shop alarm system or run stand-alone with its own panic button. Warning signs and window stickers are supplied to alert potential criminals that the system is in use and to dissuade them from targeting the protected premises.

Meanwhile, a number of jewellery stores in East Lancashire, which were being regularly targeted by robbers, are now

protected by the SelectaDNA Spray, thanks to the Lancashire Partnership Against Crime. Police have praised the deterrent value of the spray, saying it encourages criminals to think twice.

A Police Officer from Darwen East Division Neighbourhood Policing Team said: "The SelectaDNA Spray is harmless, but you won't be able to scrub it off hair, skin or clothing. As soon as we pick up the culprit, it will be immediately obvious to us if they have been in a particular shop at a particular time. It's a deterrent and a new tool that encourages criminals to think twice."

There have been no break-ins or attempted break-ins since the systems were installed in May 2010. The spray can also be used to protect stock being stored in warehouses or depots. Luxury retailer Louis Vuitton has deployed the hi-tech spray system to successfully protect some of its delivery areas.

Internationally, the spray is being used by a high-end watchmaker in Norway, by pawnbrokers in Sweden and by jewellers in the Netherlands and France to protect their valuable goods.

SmartWater Solution links notorious gang to high profile jewellery raid

For well over a year, Police forces across England were on the hunt for one of Britain's most elusive gangs. During a period from November to May, the gang's robberies netted them goods with a value of up to £1.5 million from upmarket jewellers, a large proportion of which were designer watches.



In December the following year, the gang decided to return to Jeremy France Jewellers in Winchester, who had been their first target in November, where they'd stolen goods valued at £200,000. This time, however, Jeremy France Jewellers were prepared. The three men entered the store and pointed a gun at a staff member and two members of the public. Little did they know, Mr France had installed a hi-tech SmartWater system and upon seeing the gang enter the store, he was able to hit the panic button to release the spray. As soon as the system was activated, the spray came down over the thieves as they exited the premises, soaking them in DNA-like solution.

The SmartWater solution has an inorganic forensic fingerprint identifier, which enables criminals to be linked to the exact scene of the crime. Although invisible to the naked eye, when under UV light the solution is clear to see. It is also extremely difficult to remove, and only the slightest speck is needed to make the essential link.

The following May, the Police investigation was coming to a close as the Police arrested the three gang members. After raiding their homes, Police uncovered two firearms, and immediately sent them to the SmartWater laboratory for analysis. In the laboratory, forensic investigators found that one of the guns was covered in a SmartWater solution. They were able to decode the solution and determine exactly where the solution came from, linking it to the spray system at Jeremy France in Winchester.

This evidence proved vital in securing a collective 28 year sentence for the jewellery thieves and served as a stark warning to other criminals.

Advice for choosing an Asset and Property Marking solution

Forensic marking solutions are most effective when chosen from a reputable supplier who is a member of a trusted trade association, such as the BSIA. Members of the BSIA's Asset and Property Marking Section offer a high-quality service and all adhere to a rigorous Code of Ethics in order to promote and maintain a high standard of customer service and benefits to the consumer.

Customers can have more confidence in products that have been independently tested to an applicable standard. With this in mind, forensic marking products should be tested to PAS 820 which describes tests to give a classification of product for its ability to survive weathering. Although items kept indoors will not experience the full effects of the weather, the marking product may still be affected, for example by sunlight through windows, so this is a useful guide for consumers.

For more information or to find a reputable asset and property marking supplier near you, visit:
www.bsia.co.uk/sections/asset-and-property-marking

