



Baby Formula Thefts tied to Illegal Drug Manufacturing

According to public and retail officials, baby formula theft is a growing national problem. Large-scale organized crime rings are going after baby formula in order to manufacture illegal drugs, such as cocaine and heroin. Cans of powdered baby formula are used as mixers for those drugs.

Retailers often lock up baby formula to deter theft. Cans of the product typically sell for between \$20 and \$30 and are a "staple" of shoplifting rings.

Across the country, organized crime rings targeting baby formula have been arrested. In California, one such ring allegedly stole more than \$6 million in formula and other items.

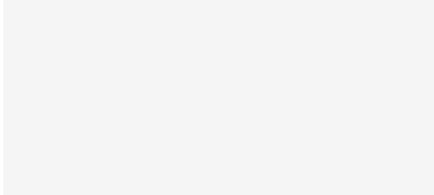
Mary Lau, president of the Retail Association of Nevada, noted that the National Retail Federation's 2010 survey found that 89% of retailers were victimized by organized crime rings in the past year.

According to USA Today, a number of United States senators are preparing legislation aimed at curbing organized theft of medical items, such as prescription drugs and baby formula.

"We hope that whatever national legislation is proposed does not cause hardship for parents who need to be able to buy formula for their babies. Curbing crime and making the ingredients that can be used in illegal drug manufacturing harder to steal are important, but we should never lose sight of the needs of legitimate consumers of these products," said Mary Lau, noting that RAN is also examining proposed legislation in Nevada that would require a doctor's prescription to purchase some cold, cough and allergy medications because those products can also be used in the production of methamphetamines. "We need to make sure that proposed solutions are both effective and also do not cause a hardship to those who need these products for legitimate medical reasons" Lau said.

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