

Thieves tunnel into Joburg liquor store during lockdown, steal R300,000 in whisky, brandy, gin, ciders, vodka, beer

A Shoprite Liquorshop in Newtown Junction, Johannesburg has been robbed in bizarre fashion by thieves who tunnelled through a solid concrete floor to gain access. The incident took place during South Africa's hard Level 4 and 5 lockdown period, during which the sale of alcohol was strictly prohibited.

The manager of the Shoprite Liquorshop in Newtown Junction discovered the theft - and a large hole in the ground - when she entered the store on Friday 29 May. She was returning to prepare for the store's reopening under the easing Level 3 lockdown conditions on 1 June.

With alcohol in high demand during the lockdown period, the store was secured from the outside throughout. But the suspects avoided the mall's main entrance and instead used electrical and stormwater tunnels beneath the shopping centre to gain access to an area beneath the store.

They then tunnelled through the solid concrete floor directly into the liquor shop to gain access undetected.

It is unclear how the thieves knew where to tunnel, nor how long it took them to get through the thick concrete floor, but they returned a few times to steal a large amount of stock.

According to Oswald Meiring, the Shoprite Group's Loss Prevention Manager, the suspects were first recorded on CCTV cameras on 21 May - just 10 days before liquor sales were allowed.

Footage from inside the store shows three suspects, although more may have remained in the tunnel to help move the large quantity of liquor stolen.

Meiring says the thieves made off with whisky, brandy, gin, cider, vodka, and beer to an estimated value of R300,000.

A R50 000 reward, subject to terms and conditions, has been made available for information which leads to a successful arrest. People with information can call 0800 118 879 or email service@asesa.co.za.

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