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Burglars get few bucks for their bangs

TAMPA — Thieves drive their way into three Carrollwood businesses Tuesday but leave with little to show for it.

By **PAULO LIMA**
of the Tampa Tribune

Forget smash-and-grab break-ins. Burglars who struck three Carrollwood businesses Tuesday morning resorted to a crash-and-grab technique.

Between 6 a.m. and 7 a.m. Tuesday, someone plowed a car or truck through the fronts of three businesses within two miles of one another on North Dale Mabry Highway.

While they seem to have the crashing part down, the thieves apparently need work on the grabbing. They inflicted several thousands of dollars in damage to the businesses but got only a few telephones to show for their efforts.

Computer Renaissance at 14405 N. Dale Mabry Highway had the most damage. The impact shattered two 5-by-7-foot glass panes and pushed their supporting metal beams into the store about a foot.

While the glass bore spider-webbed shatter patterns, it did not yield to the intruders. Store manager Jim Funk credited a protective window film they installed less than two months ago.

"We've had other incidents of attempted break-ins in the past, so we put in that 3M safety film on the windows," Funk said. "We did



BOB WESTENHOUSER/Tribune photo
Kenneth Lyles of A-Christian Glass cleans up outside Computer Renaissance, the most severely damaged of three businesses rammed by burglars Tuesday morning.

something defensive, but we never thought about reinforcing the beams."

Funk said preliminary estimates placed the damage to his store at \$2,000.

Tire treads were visible on the sidewalk outside Uptech Computer, 11127 N. Dale Mabry Highway. Again, the thieves failed to get inside the store,

but managed to dislodge a portion of a wall beneath the storefront window.

The alarm drove the crooks away empty-handed.

About 7 a.m., the thieves got inside the GTE Phone Mart at 12400 N. Dale Mabry Highway. A witness saw a green sport utility vehicle, possibly a Jeep Cherokee, backed up on the sidewalk.

The car shattered a glass front door, leaving its mangled metal remnants hanging by the hinges.

The thieves struggled to steal a fax machine on a display pedestal, but were unable to disconnect the wires. A few steps away, a stack of identical fax machines remained undisturbed in their boxes. The intruders escaped only with a few cordless phones and business telephone systems.

"It's comical to me," said David Greene, a sales clerk. "They obviously didn't case the place." [This] business is not unheard of, but such drastic measures are usually used on businesses that sell such items as jewelry and guns that are easier to peddle on the street.

"It doesn't sound like it was someone who knew what they were doing," said Hillsborough sheriff's Detective Rick Garcia, who is investigating the burglaries.

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