

Community service for teens who set off flares in Walmart

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A judge has ordered community service for two teens whose marine flare stunt at a Cape Breton Walmart caused about \$4.5 million in damage last November.

Smoke from the flares filled the Walmart in North Sydney, N.S. on Nov. 6, sending shoppers running for the exits, coating merchandise with sticky residue, and forcing the store to remain closed for several days. The company hauled away truckloads of goods that could not be washed.

CTV Atlantic reported that Cape Breton Regional Police laid charges against three teens last November in relation to the incident, including mischief over \$5,000, being a common nuisance, and breaching probation orders under the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

Crown Attorney Steve Drake initially asked the court for more than \$1 million each in restitution from the pranksters. The judge called the request “completely unrealistic,” opting instead for 200 hours of community service and 18 months of probation for the two teens.

Both were sentenced under the Youth Criminal Justice Act, and their names cannot be published.

“I don't like to mix the youth matters with the adult matters, but you can imagine yourself the consequences for an adult that caused \$4.5 million in damage to a local business,” Drake told CTV Atlantic on Wednesday.

The court heard the incident was a prank gone wrong. One of the teens had searched for information online about how to use the marine flares, and tested one in the woods prior to the incident at Walmart.

“One guy dared the other guy to set it off at the Walmart, and they went on this dare,” Drake said. “It was a prank. I don't think they understood the consequences of what could happen.”

He said the caper not only impacted Walmart, but the community at large.

“We had EHS, police, fire, and the hazmat team was there as well,” Drake said. “You can't compute that (cost).”

A third teen, believed to have actually lit the flare, has pleaded guilty to unspecified charges. He is enrolled in a restorative justice program, and will return to court in July.

With a report from CTV Atlantic's Kyle Moore

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