Lululemon Employees Say They Were Fired for Trying to Stop Shoplifters, Company CEO Stands By Decision

Lululemon CEO Calvin McDonald is doubling down on the company's decision to fire employees who "intervened" in a robbery while working at a Georgia store.

"We have a zero-tolerance policy that we train our educators on around engaging during a theft," McDonald said during an appearance on CNBC's "Squawk on the Street."

> *"The [employees] knowingly broke the policy, engaged with the thieves…that was what resulted in the termination."*
>
> *Lululemon CEO Calvin McDonald on backlash after firing staff who intervened in store robbery.@CNBC @SaraEisen $LULU pic.twitter.com/mBMZCJ1E3l*
>
> *— Squawk on the Street (@SquawkStreet) June 2, 2023*

Original story below:

If Batman and Robin are looking for side gigs, they might want to avoid job-seeking at Lululemon. Crimefighters need not apply, according to two recently fired employees from an Atlanta store.

Former assistant manager Jennifer Ferguson and worker Rachel Rogers say that they were canned by Lululemon corporate after they verbally confronted three masked men who were robbing the

Peachtree Corners store.

In a video that has since gone viral, masked men are seen grabbing armfuls of Lululemon gear and carrying the loot out to a waiting car. As they come back for more, Ferguson can be heard saying, “No, no, no, you can march back out.”

Related: Lululemon Stock Surges After Strong Q1 Earnings Report, With Massive Earnings Overseas

The thieves, who had reportedly pulled this off nearly a dozen times before, go back in for more anyway, and after spouting a few expletives at the workers, they take off for good. Ferguson and Rogers called the Gwinnett Police Department in the moments that followed and the thieves were eventually captured and charged with felony robbery.

You might imagine that the employees were given praise or a raise or at least a complimentary pair of yoga pants by the retail company, but they received pretty much the opposite: their walking papers.

Lulumelon confirmed the firings to Fox Business and said that the employee handbook has “a zero-tolerance policy for chasing or physically engaging with suspected robbers.”

In an interview with 11alive, Ferguson said: “We are not supposed to get in the way. You kind of clear path for whatever they’re going to do. And then, after it’s over, you scan a QR code. And that’s that. We’ve been told not to put it in any notes, because that might scare other people. We’re not supposed to call the police, not really supposed to talk about it.”

Related: The Founder of Lululemon Breaks Down His Rule of 3

Both Ferguson and Rogers say they were fired without severance, and find themselves in difficult financial situations as a result. “That was my sole income,” Rogers told

11alive, “So, I did have to file for unemployment and use all of my savings to pay for my car payments, car insurance payments, my dog’s food, my food.”

After news of the firing broke, Lululemon released a statement saying that the employees “were not terminated for calling the police” but for “knowingly violating our zero-tolerance policy related to physically engaging with the perpetrators which put their lives and the safety of our guests and other employees at risk.”

The company added that employee safety is paramount and the company is standing by its “absolute zero-tolerance policy for our employees engaging with guests in a way that could put themselves, or others, in harm’s way.”

It’s not a policy that is unique to Lululemon, Helen Rella, Head of Employment Law at Wilk Auslander, told *Entrepreneur,* “Given the state of affairs in many cities, where shoplifting is rampant, many retail employers have prohibited their employees from interacting with thieves with the premise of protecting both employees and customers from potential violence and resulting harm, for which the retailer could be held liable.” As to whether it is the “right” thing to do, Rella says that isn’t the point. “While an employee may disagree with a particular policy, and find it to be unfair, that is completely irrelevant to an employee’s obligation to comply with lawful policies established by the employer.”

Related: Lululemon Hits Peloton With a Lawsuit for Its ‘Knockoff’ Designs

https://www.entrepreneur.com/business-news/lululemon-employees-stop-shoplifters-get-fired/453135