



Counterfeit Bank Notes and Documents

Overview

Counterfeiting is a crime as old as currency itself. Just about any document can be counterfeited. Aside from currency, this can include forged credit cards, debit cards, passports, birth certificates, social insurance number cards, traveller's cheques, marriage and driver's licences, bus and airline tickets, and money orders. Historically, counterfeiting of currency has not been a major problem for law enforcement in Canada. However, developments in the field of graphic arts attracted the attention of the criminal element in the early 1960s.

As a result, counterfeit currency rates increased substantially in 1962 and this trend has continued ever since. Although statistics for 2005 show that counterfeiting rates are dropping, easier access to affordable, improved personal computer and image reproduction technology has dramatically changed the nature of counterfeiting. It is an international problem.

The 2005 statistics compiled by the RCMP's Bureau for Counterfeit and Document Examinations (BCDE) show a decrease in counterfeit notes passed and seized to 422,447 from 648,323 in 2004. The value of counterfeit notes passed and seized in 2005 also decreased to \$10.1 million from \$15.7 million in 2004.

RCMP Responsibilities

Counterfeit offences fall under the *Criminal Code*. The RCMP investigates counterfeit offences mainly in areas where it has primary jurisdiction. On occasion, it will assume responsibility for investigations that transcend national boundaries. The RCMP maintains liaison with the U.S. Secret Service and with Interpol on international counterfeit investigations. It has worked to increase the expertise of municipal and provincial police active in counterfeit currency and document enforcement by:

- Initiating training;
- Promoting the exchange of criminal intelligence;
- Distributing counterfeit-detection manuals to police forces, banks and businesses.

The Bureau for Counterfeit and Document Examinations (BCDE) is located at the RCMP Forensic Laboratory in Ottawa. For details, please see the [BCDE Fact Sheet](#).

Counterfeit Bank Note Detection

Prevention and detection are key to weeding counterfeit bank notes out of circulation. The RCMP encourages the public, especially cash handlers, retailers and consumers, to become more familiar with the security features of old and new series bank notes to

Quick Facts

- Possession, use or creation of counterfeit currency is an indictable offence punishable by up to 14 years in prison.
- Counterfeiting of credit cards is predominant in larger Canadian cities such as Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver.
- In 2005, approximately 45 per cent of all credit card fraud activity can be attributed to counterfeiting.
- In 2005, fraudulent counterfeit credit card activity resulted in losses of \$280 million to financial institutions.
- In 2005, fraudulent debit card activity resulted in losses of \$74 million to financial institutions.

RCMP



ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

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help maintain the integrity of Canadian currency.

Security features on bank notes are reliable and quick and easy to use. See the Bank of Canada's [Bank Notes](#) page for tips on distinguishing a fake from a real bill.