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Today's weather
Warm with clouds,
high 80, low 61
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PASSING A STATEWIDE POLICY



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION/JOHN D. RUSSELL

To deter what law enforcement call a "note job" criminal, some banks in South Carolina have begun a new policy asking customers not to wear hats, hoods or dark glasses while inside the bank. The measure is being recommended by the S.C. Bankers Association and law enforcement agencies across the state.

Some S.C. banks begin ban on hats, hoods, sunglasses

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FLORENCE — Looking to make it easier to identify robbers, several banks in South Carolina began a statewide policy of not allowing customers to wear hats, hoods or sunglasses in their lobbies Wednesday.

Banks and credit unions across the state will be putting up posters to inform customers of the new policy and explain why it is being instituted.

The ban on hats, hoods and sunglasses acts as a deterrent to what law enforcement officers call a “note job” criminal, a robber who is typically unarmed and tries to enter and leave a bank without being noticed or identified.

While the measure is being recommended by the S.C. Bankers Association and by law enforcement agencies, it is not required. Some banks are taking a wait-and-see approach toward the policy.

“We won’t initiate this ourselves,” said Rick Saunders, pres-

“There have been a lot of robberies across the state, and if you get them on camera but they have a hood or hat on, it makes it hard to identify them.”

— John Bankson, president of Wachovia

ident of First Reliance Bank in Florence. “Of course, we may look at it later if it proves to be effective.”

Saunders said his bank has had two robberies in its history, and the culprits did not wear a hat in either one. However, Saunders said, First Reliance has taken measures to reduce the risk of robberies. He would not elaborate on what those measures are.

“While we have had robberies, we’re a local community bank and we pretty much know our customers,” he said. “I think it is a good policy, and it’s a good recommendation, but it’s really not a hot button issue for us.”

But the policy could catch on if it helps to reduce the number of

robberies or to identify robbers.

“This program is very simple,” Lloyd Hendricks of the S.C. Bankers Association said. “We have signs and posters in the banks and credit unions that politely ask people to remove hats, hoods and sunglasses.”

With bank robberies on the rise in recent years, many bankers are anxious to help law enforcement agencies in any way they can.

“There have been a lot of robberies across the state, and if you get them on camera but they have a hood or hat on, it makes it hard to identify them,” said John Bankson, president of Wachovia.

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POLICY

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At a press conference in Columbia on Wednesday, officials from the U.S. Attorney’s Office, the FBI and the S.C. Sheriff’s Association encouraged bankers

across the state to institute the new policy, saying it has been successful in other states.

Hendricks said no hat, no hood, no sunglasses policies at banks in Massachusetts, Missouri and Oklahoma have been in place for some time, and they work.

“We want to do everything we

can to make our banks and credit unions safe for customers and employees,” he said. “We also want to do everything we can to ensure that if someone enters a South Carolina bank or credit union and commits a crime, that person will be caught and will go to jail for a very long time.”