

Crime Prevention Tips

Purse and Wallet Theft Prevention

One of the most reported property crimes are those involving the theft of a purse or wallet. Think of “Supply and Demand”. Since almost everyone carries either a purse or wallet, the “Supply” is ample. The “Demand”, or desire, for easy access to valuables, equals (or exceeds) the supply. Factor in the busy lives we all have, with all the distractions, and what you have is the perfect formula for a potential thief to follow to avow himself of your property.

Shift the Odds to Your Favor: Minimize Opportunity for Trouble

- **Being aware of your surroundings.** What is the landscape around you? Are you in a well traveled area, or on a sparsely populated street, hidden from view? Are those around you walking with purpose, or are they just “hanging around”, watching others? Trust your gut feelings. If you feel something’s not right, it probably isn’t right.
- **If you’re being followed, or see a person or group ahead you want to avoid, make changes in your path.** Cross the street (and walk on the other side), walk in another direction, or duck into a well populated place (a busy store, restaurant etc – someplace you may easily lose yourself in, and leave sight of the other person or group). Quickening your pace.
- **In social situations (in public), or when otherwise distracted (at the ATM, pumping gas into your vehicle, etc), work on keeping an eye on your surroundings.** Don’t become so immersed in your activity that you lose touch with your surroundings.
- **Keep your arms and hands free.** Don’t carry groceries in your arms, for example; use a cart. The more encumbered you are, the less you can move and escape.
- **When walking, stay away from hidden doorways, shrubs, and other areas that criminals may hide when stalking their prey.**
- **Beware of extremely crowded areas.** With people bumping into one another, it makes it easy for a thief to “bump” into you and take your property.

- Purse snatchers and pickpockets often work in teams, with one creating a distraction or asking a question while the other takes property.

Plan for “Just in Case”: Minimize the Potential for Loss

- Carry only small amounts of cash.
- Carry only credit cards you actually plan to use
- Consider where you’re going, and what you’ll be doing, when you decide upon what jewelry to wear that day. Necklaces, for example, are easy to “snatch and grab”, as the chains break easily.
- Leave social security cards at home. If this is stolen, it can be used as the “key” to your credit – and identity.
- Carry keys and ID in a pocket rather than in a purse or handbag. In the event of a theft, the thief then won’t have your home address and a set of house keys.

Carrying Securely: Make it Hard for a Thief

- Purse with a strap: Wear with the strap “across your body”. That is, the purse on one side (as an example, say the right side), with the strap crossing your body, and the top of the strap resting on the top of your left shoulder.
- Clutch handbag: Against your body, and under your arm, with you arm holding the bag. Be aware some thieves will come from behind and “punch” the bag forward. When it falls on the ground in front of you, they’ll rush forward, grab it & run. The same also holds true in reverse (approaching from the front, punching it behind you).
- Consider an alternative to a purse (or a wallet). “Fanny packs” are becoming more common, and even smaller “waist wallets” that strap around your waist are common for those who travel abroad.
- During cooler months, carry your purse under your coat
- Instead of carrying a wallet in your hip pocket, move it to a front pocket and walk with your hand in that pocket, or your thumb hooked over that pocket.

YOUR LIFE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING!!! If a suspect attempts to take your property by force, let it go. If you are threatened, or the suspect displays a weapon (or claims to have one), give him what he wants. Property can be replaced. Your life cannot.