

Purse Snatch and Pickpocket Prevention

There are people who will try to take your money, sometimes by grabbing a purse off your shoulder, pulling it out of your hands, taking it off a chair while you are not watching or by quietly taking your wallet while you are being distracted by something else.

Remember that most crimes are "crimes of opportunity." Therefore, the best way to prevent them is to remove the easy opportunities from would-be thieves. The following are some simple steps you can take to reduce the likelihood of being a victim of a purse snatcher or pickpocket.

Purse Snatch

- Get rid of what the thieves are after, in other words, do not carry a purse. Take only what you need. For example, a credit card and a small amount of cash, and your ID put in a coat or jacket pocket (an inside pocket, if possible).
- An alternative to putting your cash and credit cards in a pocket is to purchase a small lightweight travel pouch and wear it around your neck under your blouse or shirt. These pouches are available for a minimal cost and can be found in luggage departments of department stores.
- If you need more room to carry larger items, such as a checkbook, another alternative to wearing the pouch is to wear a fanny pack, to the front. Be sure all openings are fastened and that the belt fastener is worn to the side so someone can't come up behind you and unsnap it, without you knowing it.
- If you must carry a purse, use one with a shoulder strap or cross body strap. Hold your purse firmly in front of your body.
- Carry your house keys in a separate location, such as your coat or jacket pocket, or wear them around your wrist or neck. The reason for this is if your purse is taken, the thief won't get the keys to your house since he will know your address from your identification.
- Never leave your purse unattended in a grocery cart, on a department store counter or in a fitting room.
- When you are riding the bus or sitting in a restaurant, never leave your purse on the seat beside or behind you. Either place it in your lap or behind your feet on the floor.

What should you do if someone does take your purse? If you can, be vocal. Yell, "He's got my purse!" Try to remember as much as you can about what the suspect looked like, in particular race, height and clothing. **Call 911** and report it to the police immediately. The quicker the police know what happened and the description of the suspect, the greater the chances the suspect and your purse can be located.

Pickpockets

Pickpocket incidents happen just about everywhere: on buses, in the skyways, near elevators, anywhere there are crowds. What usually happens is someone will attempt to distract you by asking about bus schedules, directions, or the time, while their partner is busy helping themselves to your wallet. Here are some tips to prevent from becoming a victim of this crime:

- Again, if possible don't carry a purse. If you do carry one, make sure all compartments are closed. Don't leave valuables like credit cards or cash in open or outside pockets.
- Put your wallet in your front pants pocket or an inside coat pocket.
- If you are carrying a backpack, make sure all the zippers and compartments are closed.

- If someone bumps or jostles you or attempts to engage you in a conversation, keep in mind someone may be trying to take something from you.

In general, don't carry a large amount of cash on you. Stay alert to your surroundings. Stand tall and walk confidently.

If you discover that your wallet has been taken, call the police immediately and make a report. Victims often don't realize a theft has occurred until long after the thief has removed your wallet. Suspects use the identification and credit cards found in wallets to make as many purchases as they can before the credit card companies are notified. Replacing these items and straightening out what happened can take days, weeks, even months. In the meantime, these people can wreak havoc with your good name and credit rating.