



Purse & Wallet Theft Prevention

For most of us, “purse snatch” or “mugging” brings an image of a frail senior walking home from the store at night, struggling with her heavy groceries. While searching for the house key, a young man rushes by, grabs her purse, and knocks her down. While this scenario does happen, strong-arm robberies also happen to young people, males and females, in the daylight as well as the darkness, and in every neighborhood.



We also have an image of what a thief looks like. But often times they look just like us! Some are young, some are not. Most are male, but an increasing number are female. Some look and act like a “bad guy”, some don't. Some thieves avoid confrontation, others are unafraid to confront and are willing to hurt someone to get what they want.

Step up Prevention:

Unfortunately, there is no style of purse or wallet that cannot be taken. There is no foolproof way to carry possessions. If the robber or thief wants your valuables, chances are he/she will get them. However, there are good strategies to reduce your risk of becoming a victim.

- Spot and Avoid Potential Trouble
- Be aware of your surroundings and know who is nearby.
- Pay attention to the uncomfortable feelings that often warn us of potential danger.
- Don't be afraid to cross the street, return to a business, or ask for help based on a “funny feeling”.

You may be right!

- Minimize the Opportunity for Loss
- Learn to carry only what is actually needed.
- Carry only small amounts of cash.
- Take only the credit cards you actually plan to use.
- Leave expensive jewelry at home.

- Don't carry anything that is irreplaceable unless you absolutely must, even if it has no cash value.
- Minimize the Opportunity for Injury
- Your safety should be the number one priority.
- Make a plan for how you would respond if someone tried to steal your purse or wallet.
- Don't resist or try to fool the robber/thief.
- "Instinctive" behaviors or responses can be overcome with practice and planning.

Carrying Valuables Safely:

Handbags should be closed, carried in front of the body with an arm held loosely across it. A bag dangling by your side is much easier for a thief to grab on the run. If wearing a handbag with a strap over the head, choose a thin strap, and wear it under your coat. This makes it harder for the robber to grab the strap. A hard yank on a strap may cause a fall and an injury.

Many women find they don't need to carry a handbag all the time. Place essentials (keys, small amounts of cash, credit cards, identification) in a pocket instead. Avoid carrying house keys in your handbag. Instead, carry keys in a pocket. Chances are your address is on a document in the bag. If your purse is stolen or lost, the thief has your keys and address he/she is able to easily gain entry to your home.

Consider reducing the items of personal or sentimental value that you routinely carry. Losing family photos, address books, and important papers is usually more traumatic to victims than financial loss. If you must carry a large amount of cash or valuables, do not carry them in your handbag or wallet. Carry valuables in an inside pocket.

Theft and Pickpocket:

Don't make it easy for thieves. They are on the lookout for items left in cars, grocery carts, dressing rooms or desks. It takes only seconds to grab your property and get away. When in public be sure your handbag clasp or zipper is closed. Wallets and checkbooks should not protrude from pockets.

Be especially cautious in busy store, shopping malls, at public events, on public transportation, and at bus stops. Thieves are attracted to crowds. Noise and confusion help conceal their crimes.

Pickpockets often work in teams; one creates a distraction by bumping or shoving, dropping something, or asking a question while others lift wallets from pockets or purses.

Responding to a Confrontation:

If a robber grabs your bag or wallet, resist the impulse to play tug of war. If you hang on, chances are you will be knocked down, hit, or kicked and the robber will get your bag anyway.



Victims sometimes tell a robber they have no money. This technique may backfire. It is safer to give up a few dollars. Carry a little money in an accessible place for just this purpose. Keep it separate from other funds.

If someone demands your property and displays or implies in any way they have a weapon, hand the purse or wallet to them.

Remember-

Property Can Be Replaced...But There Is Only One You!