

## Tips for Travelers

No one ever expects to have their vacation or business trip interrupted by a criminal act, but there are additional precautions that you can take to help ensure a safe, enjoyable trip:

- » Pack a photocopy of your airline tickets, passport, credit cards and any other documents that would be impossible or inconvenient to replace if stolen. Consider scanning this information and e-mailing it to yourself.
- » Keep a list, separate from your wallet, of contact numbers to report lost credit cards.
- » Don't wander into risky areas alone or at night, and try to avoid buses that are "standing room only."
- » It's always a good idea to carry your valuables in a money belt and leave your expensive jewelry at home.
- » Don't advertise that you have high-value personal electronics such as PDAs, smart phones, or GPS devices. Use them discreetly, especially when traveling on public transit as they are easily snatched. On buses and train cars, stand away from exit doors to reduce the likelihood of being a victim.
- » Plan your walking route in advance and become familiar with your location before leaving. Ask for directions from someone you trust rather than consulting a map or GPS to avoid being distracted in areas unfamiliar to you.
- » Always be aware of your surroundings and keep your eyes on your belongings, especially in busy transit areas, such as bus depots and train stations.

### Get More Safety Tips

For tips on other ways to stay safe from crime in your daily life, see the other brochures in this series, available from our Website at [www.mpdc.dc.gov/safety](http://www.mpdc.dc.gov/safety). Or visit your local police district. To find the one nearest you, visit [www.mpdc.dc.gov/districts](http://www.mpdc.dc.gov/districts).

## Get Involved!

No one individual or agency working alone can prevent crime. It takes police and citizens working in partnership. The District of Columbia's community policing strategy provides many ways for police and communities to work together to prevent crime and build safer neighborhoods. These include regular Police Service Area meetings in your community, citizen patrols and more. To learn more about community policing activities in your neighborhood, call your local police district:

1st District	Main:.....(202) 698-0555..... TTY: 727-8506
	Substation:.....(202) 698-0068..... TTY: 543-2352
2nd District	Main:.....(202) 715-7300..... TTY: 364-3961
3rd District	Main:.....(202) 673-6815..... TTY: 518-0008
4th District	Main:.....(202) 715-7400..... TTY: 722-1791
	Substation:.....(202) 576-8222..... TTY: 576-9640
5th District	Main:.....(202) 698-0150..... TTY: 727-5437
6th District	Main:.....(202) 698-0880..... TTY: 398-5397
	Substation:.....(202) 698-2088..... TTY: 281-3945
7th District	Main:.....(202) 698-1500..... TTY: 889-3574

## Know Something About a Crime? Don't Keep It a Secret

If you have important information to share with the police, the Anonymous Crime Tip Line and Text Tip Line enables you to give MPD vital information anonymously. Just dial (202) 727-9099 or text to 50411 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Your name will not be used, only the information you provide. Your information could lead to a cash reward. For more details, see [www.mpdc.dc.gov/tipline](http://www.mpdc.dc.gov/tipline).



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
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March 2011

## FOR YOUR SAFETY



# Theft and Pickpocket Prevention

*Tips for protecting yourself and your property  
from thieves and pickpockets*



# Don't make it easy to steal your money, your wallet, or your time.

While most of your fellow pedestrians are just like you — busy trying to get to where they're going — there are some who are looking for an easy target in search of a quick payoff.

Protecting yourself from a pickpocket or other thief is not as difficult as you would think ... just a few thoughtful precautions can be enough to give you peace of mind and confidence in going about your day.

## Common Misconceptions about Pickpockets

- » An experienced pickpocket is not necessarily the sleazy person lurking in dark doorways we expect to see. He (or she!) appears as an average person in both appearance and manner. Because of their chosen "line of work," they spend a great deal of time studying how to blend into a crowd, therefore eliminating the possibility of detection before they can get away.
- » Pickpockets don't have a regular schedule...they operate just as well at night as they do during the day. They operate in crowds just as easily as "accidentally" bumping into an unsuspecting victim alone on a sidewalk. In fact, about the only "known" fact about pickpockets is that they generally focus on the public during times when they may be carrying more money than usual, such as during the holidays, at store sales, at fairs or carnivals, at casinos, or near bank entrances, etc.
- » Many times, pickpockets work alone; however, there are also teams of two or three, which sometimes will involve a female accomplice. The first team member removes the valuables from the unsuspecting victim's pockets. He then passes them on to the next member who disappears quickly from the area. When a female member is used in this "team effort," her role is generally to engage the victim in conversation to distract his or her attention.
- » Contrary to what most of us believe, experienced pickpockets do not put their hands all

the way into your pocket to steal your belongings. The expert pickpocket reaches into the top of the pocket, takes up a pleat in the lining, and continually folds the lining up until the bottom of the pocket (holding your valuables!) reaches the top of the pocket. This entire act only takes a second or two.

What can you do to protect yourself? The best protection is to eliminate the opportunity of becoming a victim in the first place.

## Tips for Men

- » The target areas are back trouser pockets, and suitcoat and sports jacket pockets, located both inside and out. A pickpocket generally avoids front trouser pockets, and especially buttoned or zippered pockets.
- » If you have to carry your wallet in an unbuttoned jacket, coat or pants pocket, be sure it holds only what you can afford to lose. Keep large sums of money, credit

cards, IDs, etc., in your front pocket or any buttoned or zippered pocket. Some people even place a rubber band around their wallet, because the rubber band creates friction and rubs against the fabric of your pocket if someone is attempting to remove it without your knowledge. The best place for keys is on a chain attached to your clothing.

- » Never pat your pocket to see if your wallet is there — this lets a criminal know the exact location of your valuables.
- » Larger-size "pocket secretaries" are particularly inviting to pickpockets, and relatively easy to steal.
- » Don't advertise that you have high-value personal electronics such as PDAs, smart phones, or GPS devices. Use them discreetly, especially when traveling on public transit as they are easily snatched. On buses and train cars, stand away from exit doors to reduce the likelihood of being a victim.

## Tips for Women

- » Do **NOT** carry your wallet in your purse. Conceal it in a buttoned or zippered pocket where it doesn't show a bulge.
- » Use a purse that is difficult to open. A purse with a zipper or snaps is best.
- » If you are carrying a shoulder bag, place the strap(s) diagonally across your body, as opposed to carrying it on one shoulder. This keeps the purse in front of you, instead of at your side or behind you, which sometimes happens with purses with long straps. If you are carrying a hand bag, then make sure to hold it close to the front of your body, instead of holding it on your wrist or loosely in your hand.
- » Never leave your purse unattended on a store counter or in a grocery shopping cart.
- » Don't advertise that you have high-value personal electronics such as PDAs, smart phones, or GPS devices. Use them discreetly, especially when traveling on public transit as they are easily snatched. On buses and train cars, stand away from exit doors to reduce the likelihood of being a victim.

