



THEFT AND PICKPOCKET PREVENTION



Common Misconceptions about Pickpockets

An experienced pickpocket is not necessarily the sleazy person lurking in dark doorways we expect to see. The thief 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.

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 must 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, 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.

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.