



Shopping Safety Tips

The following simple tips, when put into practice, can reduce the opportunity for you becoming a crime victim.

Criminals are constantly surveying the environment for an opportunity to commit crimes. Thieves will look for a running vehicle, an unsuspecting shopper who leaves their purse in the shopping cart, or an individual who leaves their packages in the backseat of their vehicle.

Criminal opportunity is accomplished by a lack of witnesses, or distracting the victim. The probability of being detected influences a criminal's decision to commit a crime. Increasing witness potential is one way to reduce criminal opportunity, but being more observant and aware of surroundings is another proactive method of ensuring a safe and secure shopping season.



An unsuspecting customer has just lost her purse. Closely guard your personal effects!

Methods of reducing criminal opportunity:

- **Be alert and aware!** Knowing who is near is the first step to being secure. If someone makes you feel uncomfortable, move in the direction of witnesses. Slow down! Hurrying causes a narrow focus and a reduction in alertness to our surroundings.
- **Display confidence.** Walk with purpose, scan the area around you and make casual eye contact with others to display confidence. This reduces your chances of being targeted by criminals.
- **Trust your instincts.** If you have an intuitive feeling something is wrong, trust your instincts. React immediately and take action to reduce your risk. Many individuals suppress these feelings, because they fear their response will offend someone. React to your instincts and don't worry about someone else's feelings. If someone approaches you and you feel uncomfortable, move or ask for assistance.
- **Ask for help.** If you feel vulnerable, ask security or store personnel to escort you to your car. This is often another fear individuals have, that they may inconvenience someone for something that did not exist.
- **Closely Guard Your Personal Effects:** Shoppers should always closely guard their personal effects. Note the shopper in the photo has her purse over her shoulder, close to her body. Contrast that with a shopper leaving her purse unattended in the cart. Thefts of personal items such as purses can result in more criminal opportunities such as:

- Stolen Auto: Remote entry key rings allow thieves easy means to identify your car and steal it.
- Residential Burglary: Your driver's license, vehicle registration and other information will most likely have your home address. If you're at the shopping center, the criminal will know you're not at home!

Other Helpful Hints:

- Travel on populated, well-lit streets. If possible, travel with a friend. Traveling in groups of two or more significantly reduces your chances of becoming a victim of crime.
- Plan purchases in advance and carry only the amount of cash necessary to make the purchases. If you must carry a large sum of money, divide the cash between your purse, wallet, pockets and other areas.
- Carry your purse close to your body. Place one end of the purse in the palm of your hand and the other in the bend of the elbow. Never carry a purse by the handle or wrap the strap around your body.
- If you are carrying a wallet, carry it in the breast pocket of your jacket or in your side pants pocket. The rear pants pocket is one of the easiest to pick.
- Be suspicious of individuals requesting help to read labels, ask for directions or any other distraction methods to divert your attention.

Especially during the holiday shopping season, residents are reminded of the importance of personal safety and security. Seasonal crime trends rise due to increased numbers of shoppers and increase opportunities for criminals. The colder weather and longer hours of darkness also are factors.

If you have questions, contact the Crime Prevention Officer Scott Vash, at 678-297-6309 ext 2 or e-mail svash@alpharetta.ga.us.