

Shopping Safety Tips

One of the most common crimes that occur in Lawrence Township is the theft of wallets, purses, credit cards and debit cards. The majority of these thefts occur in the stores, parking lots and restaurants along the Route 1 corridor. Many of these thefts could have been prevented by citizens properly securing their valuables. Examples of leaving valuables unsecured are: an open purse left unattended in a shopping cart while its owner walks away to check an item, or a wallet forgotten at a cash register while a purchase was made. Many times the thief who steals the wallet quickly uses the credit cards to make purchases at nearby stores before its owner has time to realize that the wallet is missing.

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. The Lawrence Township Police Department is requesting that citizens practice the following tips:

- When shopping, hold on to your purse; do not leave it in the cart, on a chair or booth in a restaurant or in a dressing room.
- Always check your surroundings when shopping or in a parking lot. If something looks suspicious call the police.
- When loading your purchases into your vehicle, place your purse in the vehicle first, so it is not in the cart while your back is turned.
- Do not leave your purse or other items of value in plain sight inside your vehicle. Lock your vehicle, and place items out of sight or take items with you, even if you are only leaving your car for a few minutes.
- Take extra time at a cash register or checkout area to make sure you don't leave your wallet or a credit card on the counter or with a sales clerk.
- Men and women should consider not carrying a wallet with them. Place essentials such as cash, identification, credit cards and keys in a pocket.

If your wallet has been stolen you should take the following actions:

- Contact the local police.
- Call your Credit Card Company and cancel your cards. Also check for unauthorized use on the cards. The police will want to know times, dates, stores and amounts. Keep a record of all your credit card numbers and customer service numbers and store them in a safe place at home.
- Contact your bank and advise them of any ATM cards or checks that were stolen.

- Contact the Social Security Administration to report a stolen card. (1 800-772-1213) or http://www.socialsecurity.gov/replace_sscard.html
- Contact all 3 major credit bureaus fraud department to check for unauthorized new accounts.

Equifax: 1-800-525-6285; or <http://www.equifax.com>
Trans Union: 1-800-680-7289; or <http://www.transunion.com/>
Experian: 1-888-397-3742; or <http://www.experian.com>

Everyone should check their own credit reports at least annually to check for suspicious or unauthorized accounts. This can easily be done for free due to a recent amendment to the federal Fair Credit Practices Act. Consumers nationwide are now able to obtain free copies of their credit histories from the three national credit bureaus (Equifax, Experian and TransUnion), once every 12 months, by making a single request.

The address for obtaining your annual credit report by making a single request is:

Annual Credit Report Request Service

P.O. Box 105281
Atlanta, GA 30348-5281
www.annualcreditreport.com
877-322-8228

This article was brought to you by the Lawrence Township Public Safety Advisory Committee in conjunction with the Lawrence Township Police Department. Meetings of the Public Safety Advisory committee are held quarterly on the second Tuesday of January, April, July and October at 6:30 p.m. Meetings are held in the Manager's Conference Room located in Town Hall and are open to the public.