



## St. Joseph County Sheriff's Office



### Safe Shopping Crime Prevention Tips

Criminals look for the easiest opportunity when deciding to commit a crime. Shoppers, particularly women, can be vulnerable to such crimes as theft, robbery, and assault. The following crime prevention tips or recommendations are designed to make shopping as safe of an experience as possible.

- **Be alert and aware of your surroundings at all times.** Knowing who and what is around you can help you avoid being surprised. It also allows you time to react if something does appear suspicious.
- **Display confidence.** Criminals choose the victim who looks like the easiest target. That choice is partially based on their perception about your abilities to react to an attack. If you walk with purpose, scan the area around you, and make casual eye contact with others, you are displaying confidence.
- **Trust your instincts.** Your body will tell you when someone or something is suspicious. If you have an intuitive feeling something is wrong, do not second-guess yourself. React immediately and take action to reduce your risk.
- **Carry only what you need.** Extra cash, credit cards, checks, jewelry and other items should be left at home. If it is necessary to carry a purse, keep it in front and close to your body. Men should keep wallets out of back pockets where they are easily stolen. Carry wallets in front coat pockets or use a money clip as an alternative.
- **Don't be overburdened with packages.** Carrying several shopping bags makes you look vulnerable. Request a store to hold your merchandise until you are finished with your shopping. If the store does not offer that service, place your purchases in the trunk of your car before you buy additional items.
- **Shop with others.** The chance of being victimized drops dramatically when you are with a companion. If there are three or more people together, the chance of being targeted for crime is 90% less than when alone.
- **Ask for an escort.** Many retailers have security personnel. Ask for an escort to your vehicle if you are uneasy about venturing into the parking lot alone.
- **Be prepared.** Have your keys in hand when walking to your vehicle. The keys can be used as a defensive weapon and you will not waste time trying to find them when standing outside your vehicle. Carry a whistle or personal alarm. These devices will alert those around you something is wrong.
- **Plan ahead.** Choose areas to park where lighting is good and activity is high. Valuables in your vehicle should be kept out of view. Be sure to lock the car at all times. Most auto burglaries occur on cars that are left unlocked.