

Travelers are prime targets for thieves

Travel is a growing factor in today's active lifestyle. Whether for fun and leisure or serious business, record numbers of individuals and their families are taking to the highways and byways. As preoccupied travelers, many are also making the job of the thief a very easy and profitable one.

In 1985, pickpocketing and purse-snatching losses alone accounted for \$34.5 million in lost valuables and cash just in the United States. According to the Michigan State Police, these types of thefts totaled approximately \$400,000 for that same period in Michigan. Statistics also show that losses to traveling sales people have increased at alarming rates. Last year, these thefts rose by 61 percent over the previous 12-month period.

Security experts warn that criminals are more sophisticated than

they used to be in that they now use a variety of tactics and well-planned maneuvers. A theft may happen as someone befriends you, bumps into you, or asks for change and before you realize it, you're without your wallet, purse, briefcase or luggage.

Although security personnel report that thefts at travel terminals are relatively low compared to the large numbers of valuables transported, to the traveler any loss of their possessions can be a traumatic and expensive experience. So, whether you are traveling for business or recreational pleasure, these helpful security tips are worth keeping in mind.

• Inventory your travel items. — Prior to leaving home, make an inventory list of what is in your luggage. Since travel carriers accept lost baggage claims and trace luggage, an inventory list may be critical



crime watch
Chris Cogar
crime prevention technician,
Farmington Hills Police Department

cal to locating missing luggage or collecting compensation on lost items. Include serial numbers on your inventory whenever possible since this would assist law enforcement agencies, or travel carriers in the return of recovered items.

• Travel light and protect your luggage. — Try to keep your bags to a minimum and don't take more than you can handle. Sturdy luggage is better than soft bags that can be

quickly slashed open. Always lock your bags. Combination locks are usually better than those with small keys. Not only are these locks more difficult to pick but also, since some of the same style, more popular brands use one key, there is a good possibility that many copies of the key that opens your luggage may be floating around as well. For the outside of your bag, use luggage tags that conceal your name and address or list your business address when-

ever possible — the fewer who know that you are gone from your residence, the safer your home will be.

• Don't take anything you can't afford to lose. — Carry a minimum amount of cash. Leave home any credit cards, personal checks and valuables that won't be needed. Use traveler's checks and a credit card whenever possible and always keep a record of their numbers in a separate, safe place. Since some hotels thieves steal only every third or fourth check in a book hoping that the victim won't discover the loss until many days later, scan the sequence of your checks from time to time. Don't lay your wallet down on a counter while using pay phones or 24-hour teller machines. Consider purchasing a small leather traveler's belt with a hidden compartment to use in place of a wallet. If you do carry a wallet, refrain from carrying it in a hip pocket. For added security, sew a velcro closure to a pant pocket or wrap a thick rubber band around your wallet which will make it more difficult to slip out and help you detect pickpocket attempts.

leave bags and possessions unattended at or near walkways while you are parking your car, getting a cab, looking for a porter, checking in or out of lodging establishments, or catching a quick bite to eat at a restaurant or snack bar. Keep your bags next to you and always in sight even when using a pay phone.

• Remain alert. — Any area where travelers and tourists gather in individual operating alone or working in a group of two or three. Be wary of any stranger who attempts to talk with you or tries to draw your attention away from what you are doing. If anyone tries to embarrass you or cause any kind of scene, that may be an automatic tip-off that a crime against you is being attempted. Should you suspect a suspicious activity or become a victim of a robbery or theft, always report the incident to security personnel and the local police.

Everyone needs to make a concerted effort to implement good security. Until individuals start to watch out for and protect their own personal possessions, thieves will continue to prey upon unsuspecting travelers. Whether you're at an airport, bus or train station, cruise ship port facility, hotel/motel lobby, or popular tourist attraction, it pays for you to use proper security practices which can reduce opportunities for theft.

• **Guard your travel tickets.** — Last year, the FBI reported that airline ticket fraud soared into the hundreds of millions so keep careful tabs on all travel tickets since they are easy to convert to cash. Record the serial numbers, issuing date and location, flight numbers and cost. Conceal your tickets so that they don't protrude from a purse or outside coat pocket. If the tickets are lost or stolen, report this information immediately to the respective travel carrier.

• Don't leave luggage and personal possessions unattended. — Your luggage is most vulnerable when you are on the move so don't

Test measures health of lungs

Patriela Hill, a 47-year-old mother of two from Farmington Hills, might be considered a smoking cessation veteran.

An "on and off" cigarette smoker since her college days, Hill has kicked the habit three times, but this time around, the task is more difficult.

Hill has quit for five, three and 2 1/2 years — each time going "cold turkey."

"For some reason, it's difficult this time," she said. "I know I can do it because I've done it on my own

before. This time, it's not as easy to walk away from it."

In an attempt to make the fourth time the final time, Hill took part in a free lung function (breathing) test at a Henry Ford Hospital as part of a nationwide health study. She was tested at the Detroit campus last month, and was the first person eligible to continue in the study.

Free public screenings will take place at the Henry Ford Medical Center, West Bloomfield, every Tuesday and Thursday 4-8 p.m. in December through the 17th. Cigarette smokers age 35-59 are needed to participate.

Two-thirds of those determined eligible to participate in the federally funded study will become involved in a treatment program, which includes a free smoking-cessation program. The West Bloomfield Center is at 6777 W. Maple, just west of Drake.

IF YOU are a smoker in the 35-59 age group and would like to participate, call 876-1900 to make an appointment. The breathing test takes about 15 minutes and simply involves blowing into a machine called a spirometer.

This study of smokers is aimed at preventing chronic obstructive lung disease, which includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis. Henry Ford Hospital, along with other institutions, including Johns Hopkins Medical Center, Mayo Clinic and the University of Pittsburgh, were chosen as sites for the National Institutes of Health study.

Chronic lung diseases are a major health problem in the United States. There are 10 million people with the diseases and 60,000 of them die each year. Cigarette smoking is the most

common cause. Death rates from these diseases have been steadily rising for more than a decade. Many have declining lung function for years before symptoms or becoming disabled.

Participants who continue with the study may also receive a medication that could reduce lung damage. The medication is a bronchodilator in the form of an inhaler. The study will follow participants for five years, with periodic monitoring.

Birmingham resident Dr. William Coway of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine at Henry Ford Hospital is the principal investigator of the hospital's portion of the study.

Travel adviser goes to seminar

Angel Bakos, of Botsford Inn in Farmington Hills recently attended the annual convention of the National Tour Association in Atlanta.

The NTA Convention is one of the major travel industry events in North America, and was attended by 2,800 delegates from the United States, Canada and Mexico.

The National Tour Association is the primary group travel industry organization in North America, with a membership of approximately 475 tour operator companies and more than 2,000 travel industry supplier companies such as hotels, restaurants, attractions, sightseeing companies and other similar businesses.

Almost 500 public sector tourism promotion agencies are also members of the National Tour Association.

The NTA Convention in Atlanta, held Nov. 8-14, in the Georgia World Congress Center, featured the Tour & Travel Exchange, a computerized forum for the buying and selling of travel services; nationally-known entertainment; four dozen professional development seminars and sightseeing tours throughout the state of Georgia.

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