

Seattle Police Email Community Alert/Newsletter

December 6, 2011



Dear Community Friends,

Increase in Robberies in South Precinct Area

Over the past several weeks, the South Precinct area has seen an increase in street robberies. Often, these robberies have involved 2-3 usually male suspects accosting single individuals and demanding/ taking cell phones, iPhones, iPods, wallets and jewelry, such as necklaces. In some of these instances, the suspects displayed a weapon (handgun or knife). In others, the suspects used body force, or the threat of force to rob the victims of their valuables.

The robbers targeted people who were looking down at or talking on their phones, or were distracted because of listening to their iPods. More often than not, criminals who commit snatch and grab robberies prey on people who are distracted or who are not paying attention to who or what is around them.

We've noted that many of these robberies centered around Light Rail stations and bus stops. Some of the hotspots for this activity have been near the Mount Baker Light Rail Station, the Columbia City Light Rail Station, the area of Martin Luther King Jr. Way S & S Othello Street, and the area of Rainier Ave S & S Henderson Street.

Personal Safety/Robbery Prevention & Response

In light of these incidents, we offer the following personal safety and robbery prevention measures. Please share these with family, friends and neighbors.

General

- Preparation is another key to personal safety. Before you leave home, decide what you actually need to take with you rather than automatically taking your entire handbag or wallet out of habit. For example, if you are going to the grocery store for a few items, you can carry cash, or a credit/debit card, I.D. and keys in a pocket.
- Follow your intuition. Pay close attention to the uncomfortable feelings that often warn us of potential danger. "Trust Your Gut." If you feel that a situation is not right, move out of the situation. Trusting your own instincts that a situation feels "wrong" can be the best personal safety tool you have. Don't be afraid to cross the street, change directions, return to a business, or ask for help based on that "funny feeling;" you may be right.
- Always dress so that your movements are not restricted. Wear clothing and shoes that allow you to move freely and quickly.
- Carry minimal items; overloading yourself can make you appear vulnerable.

Being Safe On The Street

- Develop a plan before you see trouble. Crossing a street, entering a store or changing direction may get you out of a potentially bad situation.
- Always plan your route and pay close attention to your surroundings. Avoid unknown shortcuts.
- Scan your surroundings and make eye contact with people, not to stare them down, but to let them know that you are aware of them and acknowledge their presence. This sends the message that you not only know they are there, but you can also identify them if necessary.
- Walk confidently. Project an assertive, business-like image.
- Avoid walking or jogging alone at night. As much as possible, walk or travel with a friend, even during the daytime. Stay on paths that are well lit where you can easily see and be seen.
- Avoid listening to music through earphones when out on the street. It can prevent you from paying the full attention needed and distracts you from what and who is around you.
- Carry a cell phone and keep it on whenever possible. However, be mindful that talking on the cell phone when you are walking may also distract you from your surroundings.
- Walk near the curb and away from buildings, trees, and shrubbery, which can hide potential threats.

- If you are being followed, or you see a person or group that makes you feel uncomfortable, give yourself permission to act; cross the street, walk in another direction, go in to a business, or ask other people walking if you may walk a short distance with them.
- If a car follows you or beckons you while you are walking, do not approach it. Instead, turn and quickly go to a safe location.
- When walking to your home or apartment, carry your house keys in your hand. Don't stand in a doorway and fumble in your purse or pocket for your keys. Have them ready to use.
- Carry your valuables safely. Don't display items (e.g., iPods, iPhones, cash), when walking to and from your destination.
- Learn street names, hundred blocks and directions (i.e. north, south, east, west). Chances are you'll be using a cellular phone to report something of significance, and anything you can do to help the first responders locate you or the incident you are reporting is extremely helpful.
- Practice getting good descriptions of others. Train yourself to be more observant. This is a skill that can be learned and honed.

Being Safe On The Bus Or Light Rail

- Use the transit schedules to minimize the length of time waiting for the bus or train.
- While waiting for public transportation, keep your back close to a wall (or pole) so that you cannot be surprised from behind.
- Don't use or flash valuables like laptops, iPods, iPads or iPhones on the bus or train.
- If there is a problem on the bus or train, notify the driver and/or call 911.
- If someone is bothering you on the bus or train, notify the driver.
- If few people are on the bus or train, sit near the driver.
- Keep your purse, shopping bag, backpack, packages, etc., in your lap, on your arm, or between your feet -- not by themselves on an empty seat.
- Don't let yourself doze off on the bus or train; doing so can make you an easy target.
- If you feel uneasy about getting off at your usual stop, stay on until the next stop.

If You Are Confronted

- Figure out the one thing you could do in a frightening situation. Could you scream? Could you kick? Can you run? Do you have an eye for details that would help identify the person/vehicle? Great, now practice, practice, practice.
- If someone demands your property and displays or implies in any way that they have a weapon, don't resist. Physical property isn't worth getting injured or killed over.
- If someone tries to grab you, make a scene. Scream, kick, fight . . . do what you can to get away and attract attention.
- If you are attacked, make as much noise as possible. Yell, scream, call for help, blow a whistle, etc. Get distance between you and the attacker. Do not pursue your attacker. *Call 911 and report the crime as soon as possible.*

Thank you for all you do for your neighborhoods. Until next time, Take Care and Stay Safe!

Captain Michael Nolan, Commander, South Precinct
Mark Solomon, Crime Prevention Coordinator