**Protective Services’ Crime Prevention Tips**

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**Protecting Valuables at Work**

In this age of rigid security, Washington University School of Medicine remains a uniquely open and inclusive environment. That deeply-rooted philosophy is immediately evident to visitors through such features as unlocked building entry doors throughout campus and public computer terminals in the Farrell Learning and Teaching Center. Each business day, thousands of community members and welcome visitors come to the campus and enjoy acceptance here.

However, as you know, life is a series of compromises. In order for us to enjoy this openness, the university has chosen not to adopt some security measures now common in many workplaces, such as perpetually locked buildings, security checkpoints, metal detectors, and x-ray scanners. As a result, unwelcome visitors sometimes come to campus and exploit our good faith and trust. Fortunately, those offenders visit the university relatively infrequently and typically limit their bad acts to the commission of petty crimes, including breaking into vehicles, appropriating bicycles, and stealing small valuables.

Thieves who ply their craft in workplaces are sometimes referred to as “office creepers.” Office creepers discreetly move about workplaces while seeking opportunities to steal vulnerable valuables. Office creepers generally operate during normal business hours by attempting to “blend in” as community members or welcome visitors. Some office creepers are quite sophisticated and don business attire to look the part of a respected professional.

Reducing your risk of victimization by an office creeper is a simple task. All that is required is the application of a bit of vigilance and sound security practices on your behalf.

* Items most susceptible to theft by office creepers include cash, purses, wallets, portable electronics, laptop computers, keys, and outerwear. In some instances, sophisticated office creepers even steal proprietary technology and data.
* Do not leave valuable personal or university property unattended…not even for a minute.
* Secure valuables behind a locked office door or in a locked drawer or cabinet.
* If your personal work area cannot be locked and you have no locking receptacles, request secure storage options from your manager.
* When you see a visitor wandering around or nosing about your workspace, politely ask, “May I help you?” Office creepers will generally have a boilerplate answer ready, such as “I am here to apply for a job.” If the answer does not make sense, report the person right away to Protective Services at **314-362-4357**.
* Pay attention to individuals loitering around entrances to secure areas and do not permit them to “tailgate” behind you into those areas. You can ask, “Do you have your ID badge?” If the person does not, you can offer, “I’m sorry… We are not allowed to let anyone in without their badge.”
* Immediately report lost or stolen identification badges to Protective Services.
* Do not physically engage an office creeper. Call Protective Services and request an officer’s presence.

If you have any questions, please contact Steve Manley, Assistant Director, Protective Services, at 314-362-0381 (office), 314-620-9044 (mobile), or [stephenmanley@wustl.edu](mailto:stephenmanley@wustl.edu).