



## HOAX TEXT MESSAGE WARNS OF ASSAULT AT RETAIL STORE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**March 20, 2009**

**EAST LANSING.** The Michigan State Police (MSP) is aware there is a text message circulating that warns about a possible gang initiation involving the physical assault of women at a Wal-Mart store. The MSP is confirming there is no information to indicate this is a credible threat.

This message has spread rapidly across several states within the last few days. Police departments in other states have also deemed these messages not credible.

Similar text and e-mail messages purporting various gang initiation threats circulate periodically. Documentation of those urban legends can be viewed at [www.snopes.com](http://www.snopes.com).

"Regardless of whether these threats are real, practicing appropriate personal safety is always encouraged," stated D/Lt. Jim Wolf of the MSP Special Operations Division. "Women, especially, should always be aware of their surroundings and take measures to avoid being an easy target."

Personal safety tips:

- When in public, always be alert. Keep your mind on your surroundings, including who is in front of and behind you. Avoid distractions such as talking on a cell phone.
- Walk purposefully, stand tall and make eye contact with persons around you.
- Trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable in a situation, leave.

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