



CRIME PREVENTION HANDOUT

Personal Safety Precautions

Virtually all activities in life entail some level of risk, and we all have different attitudes toward risk. At one end of the scale is refusing to engage in an activity by exaggerating the level of risk involved. At the other end is engaging in very risky activities while refusing to take any precautions. Neither of these attitudes are useful for living an empowered life. What is useful is to accurately assess the risks, take those precautions that make sense, and live as fully as possible. The following precautions should be adopted within a cultural/gender context. They will not guarantee safety, but they *will* minimize criminal opportunities.

In Your Home Or Apartment

- Have lights at all entrances.
- Have good locks on all doors and windows.
- Do not use your full name on your mailbox, in the telephone directory, or on your answering machine.
- Do not leave a schedule of your times away from home on your answering machine.
- Know which of your neighbors you can trust and depend upon in an emergency.
- Check who is at the door before opening it, and do not open the door to an unexpected visitor.
- Don't hide extra keys in easily accessible places. Criminals will find them.
- Ask for photo identification of all repairpersons. If you are suspicious, call to verify employment.
- Never give personal information to telephone solicitors.
- Consider creating a "safe room" with a separate telephone line or cellular phone, and strong locks. If someone breaks in, you can retreat there and call for help.
- Do not let strangers into your home or apartment to use the telephone. Offer to make the call for them.
- Use security bars for added security on sliding exterior doors.

On The Street

- Never hitchhike! It's not worth the risk!
- Be very careful using outside ATMs at night or in unfamiliar surroundings.
- When walking, walk in the middle of the sidewalk and walk facing oncoming traffic.
- Try not to overload yourself with packages or other items. Keep your hands as free as possible.
- Do not wear music headphones while walking or jogging.
- Do not read while walking or standing on a sidewalk.
- If you wear a purse with a shoulder strap, be prepared to let it go if snatched. Otherwise you could be knocked down and hurt.
- A good suggestion for men is to carry a second wallet containing a few dollar bills and old expired credit cards, which are normally destroyed or discarded. If confronted at knife or gunpoint, give the suspect the second wallet and concentrate on a good physical description to help the police in making the arrest.
- Avoid being on the street alone if you are upset or under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- If you carry a purse, carry it close to your body, preferably in front. Carry no more money or credit cards than you absolutely need.

In A Car

- When you approach your parked vehicle, visually check the area around the vehicle for any suspicious persons or activity. If you observe anything suspicious walk to where there are other people and call the police.
- Always park in visible, well-lighted areas.
- If you drive a car, attempt to avoid parking next to a larger pickup truck or van. The can be easy to hide behind.
- Have your keys ready when approaching your vehicle to reduce the time needed to enter.
- When operating your vehicle, keep the doors locked and the windows rolled up.
- Any valuables in your car should be placed in the trunk or otherwise kept out of sight.

- When stopped at traffic lights or in traffic, allow space between you and the vehicle in front of you so you can drive away if necessary. If someone approaches your vehicle and attempts to enter, blow your horn to attract attention and drive away.
- Many people consider a cellular telephone to be a good investment in safety.
- **Do not** pick up hitchhikers!
- Do not open your window if someone approaches your vehicle to ask for directions, the time, etc.
- Keep the door locked.
- Never leave house keys attached to car keys at service stations or parking facilities.
- Do not stop for a stranded motorist. Instead, go to the nearest telephone booth and call the police for assistance.
- If your vehicle becomes disabled and help is not immediately available, raise the hood of the vehicle (if you can safely do so), attach a handkerchief to the door handle, and then stay in the vehicle with the doors locked and the windows up. Activate your hazard or parking lights. If someone stops to assist you, ask him or her through the closed window to call the police.
- Criminals sometimes stage a motor vehicle accident known as a “bump and rob.” The motorist is robbed when they exit their vehicle. If you are involved in a minor accident under suspicious circumstances, stay in your vehicle with the doors locked and the windows up and await the police. If you believe you are in possible danger, write down the license plate of the other vehicle involved in the accident and drive to a safe location to report the accident to the police.
- Never let your gas indicator fall below 1/4 full.
- Carry in your car:
 - A flashlight
 - Fix-a-flat
 - Maps
 - Comfortable warm clothing
 - A portable fire extinguisher
 - First aid kit
 - Empty gas can
 - White cloth to tie to door handle or antenna to signal distress
 - A cellular phone.
- If you are driving somewhere you are not familiar with, plan your route and check a map before you start out.

On Public Transportation

- Beware of overheard conversations. Don't tell anyone on a bus or subway where you are going.
- Stay awake and alert.
- Have exact change ready.
- Sit as close to the driver as possible.
- If you sense someone is following you when you get off, walk toward other people or to an open business.

In A Building

- Avoid isolated corridors or hallways.
- Be extra careful in stairwells and isolated or poorly lighted restrooms.
- Avoid entering an elevator that is occupied by only one other person who is a stranger.
- In an elevator, stand near the controls and locate the emergency button.
- If you are assaulted while in an elevator, hit the emergency or alarm button and press as many floor buttons as possible.

Reference "The Complete Campus Crime Prevention Manual" by The AEGIS Protection Group.