

## **PERSONAL SAFETY TIPS**

Each one of us must clearly understand that we are personally responsible for our own self protection and safety. There are many people who feel that the local law enforcement agency is responsible for their personal safety however, each one of us must strive to prevent and deter crime and allow the police to serve and protect the community. Personal safety is defined as taking steps to protect yourself by avoiding crime and not giving criminals the opportunity to perpetrate their crimes against you. We have a responsibility to not make ourselves an easy target. Each one of us should develop a positive attitude to deter and avoid crime by trusting our instincts, avoid dangerous situations, work with the police and courts and know what to do if confronted by a criminal. The criminal comes in all shapes, sizes, races, ages, backgrounds and physical appearance. A criminal also thinks, acts, and behaves differently from normal people and each one of us must use common sense so that we do not become a statistic of the millions of crimes committed each year. The old adage "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" is true and appropriate.

The following precautions will help to minimize criminal opportunities:

### **AT HOME**

- Have lights at all entrances.
- Have a wide-angle door viewer on all exterior doors.
- Have good locks on all doors and windows --- and use them!
- 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 repair persons. 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.

### **ON THE STREET**

- Never hitchhike! It's not worth the risk!
- Be very careful using outside ATMs at night or in unfamiliar surroundings.

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 carry a purse, carry it close to your body, preferably in front. Carry no more money or credit cards than you absolutely need.
- Try not to walk alone, there is strength in numbers.
- Avoid poorly lit streets, short cuts or alleys.
- Carry a flashlight at night and avoid public restrooms.
- Give the appearance of self-confidence.
- Avoid crime-ridden areas.
- Plan ahead and know your route. Ensure you have a cellphone charger for sufficient battery to make calls when needed.
- Carry pepper spray, a whistle or some type of alarm device.

### **IN A CAR**

- Keep your car in good working order and the gas tank at least half full.
- When you approach your parked vehicle, visually check 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. They can be

easy to hide behind.

- Have your keys ready when approaching your vehicle to reduce the time needed to enter.
- Check the back seat and the immediate area to see if anyone is hiding.
- 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.
- Always lock your car and take the keys.
- 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, call the police for assistance.
- If you have a flat tire, drive on it until you reach a safe, well-lighted and well-traveled area.
- If your vehicle becomes disabled and help is not immediately available, raise the hood of the vehicle (if you can safely do so), 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 them through the closed window to call the police.
- If you are being followed, don't drive home. Go to the nearest police or fire station. Or drive to an open gas station or other business where you can safely call the police. Don't leave your car unless you are certain you can get inside the building safely.
- Carry in your car: a flashlight, fix-a-flat, maps, comfortable warm clothing, a portable fire extinguisher, first aid kit, empty gas can, and a cellular phone.
- If you are driving somewhere you are not familiar with, plan your route and check a map before you start out. Tell a friend or family member about your plans.

### **IN A BUILDING**

- Avoid isolated corridors or hallways.
- Be extra careful in stairwells and isolated or poorly-lighted restrooms.

- Avoid entering an elevator which 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.
- Avoid exposing your money in public. Pay with a credit card.
- Never leave your purse, keys, wallet or other valuables in plain view of the would- be criminal.