

Senior Citizen Safety Recommendations

1) PERSONAL SAFETY AT HOME

Safety at the Door

When someone knocks at your door, don't open it unless you know your visitor. Have a through-the-door viewer installed on each exterior door. If the person is a representative, salesman, etc., ask that identification and credentials be slipped under the door or through the mail slot. Call the employer to verify the name and business. Refuse to deal with anyone who won't comply with this request. Someone may knock at your door and ask to use your telephone to make an emergency call. Never open the door. Take the message and make the call for them. If someone comes to your door who you do not trust or who you believe might be dangerous, call your local police or sheriff's department immediately.

Returning Home

If you find your door ajar or if you hear unusual sounds inside, DON'T GO IN! Go to the nearest telephone and call your local police or sheriff's department. If your home has been burglarized, DON'T TOUCH ANYTHING UNTIL THE LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER ARRIVES! If you enter your home and find a burglar there, leave if you can. If the intruder is armed, sit down quietly and obey instructions. DO NOT resist or fight. Observe the intruder closely to obtain a description for the responding law enforcement officer. When the intruder leaves, call your local police or sheriff's department immediately.

Telephone Safety

If you receive frequent "wrong number" calls, hang up calls, late night calls from strangers, or other nuisance calls, call the security representative at your local telephone company. If a telephone call is obscene, hang up the telephone but don't slam the receiver down. If a telephone call is threatening, contact your local law enforcement agency immediately. Never allow yourself to be drawn into a conversation with an unknown caller in which you reveal your name, address, marital status or anything to indicate you are alone. Don't let a caller know you are angry or upset. This is the reaction they want and will often encourage them. Don't play detective and extend the call attempting to find out who is calling. This may be the reaction the caller wants or needs. Don't try to be a counselor. The annoying or malicious caller probably needs professional help, but he/she may only be encouraged by your concern and will continue calling.

Minimize The Risk Of Your Finances

- Direct deposit Social Security, pension or other regular incoming checks.
- Avoid keeping large amounts of cash in the home.
- Place valuable jewelry, convertible securities and other important papers in a safe deposit box.
- Participate in Operation Identification and mark valuables.

- Appraise and photograph jewelry, precious antiques and artwork.

Special Tips For Apartment Dwellers

- Become acquainted with your neighbors.
- Never buzz visitors into the building via the automatic door opening intercom without first confirming their identity.
- Don't enter an elevator with a stranger if you are suspicious or uncomfortable.

When You Are Away

- When you leave your home or apartment for a prolonged period of time, discontinue your newspaper and other deliveries by phone or in person ahead of time. Do not leave notes.
- Have your lawn mowed.
- Notify the post office to hold or forward your mail or have a trusted person pick it up daily.
- Put lights both inside and outside the house on timers. Also, place one or more radios or TV's on timers so they will periodically come on.
- Turn the volume on the telephone down so it cannot be used as a cue that no one is home.

WHILE YOU ARE OUT

Recommendations

- Carry as little cash as possible and carry credit cards in a concealed coat or chest pocket.
- For a woman with a purse, carry it close to the body, preferably in front. If the purse has a clasp, cover it with your hand. Don't wrap the strap of the purse around your wrist. Never leave a purse unattended.
- If you carry both packages and a purse, put the purse between your body and the packages.
- Avoid carrying a wallet in a back or side pocket.
- If a robber attempts to snatch your purse:
 - Don't resist
 - Give the robber what he wants
 - Set down to avoid injury
 - Observe the robber as closely as possible to get a description for the police
 - Never pursue the attacker

- After sitting down, make noise by calling for help
- Carry a whistle and blow it repeatedly

When Walking

- Plan your route and stay alert to your surroundings.
- Never exhibit or flash large sums of cash or other valuables.
- If you must walk at night, choose the busiest and best-lit streets.
- Walk with a companion, whenever possible.
- Greet familiar people, merchants and vendors.
- Stay away from buildings and walk next to the street.
- Avoid dark places, short cuts, alleys, thick trees and shrubs and sparsely traveled areas.
- Be wary of strangers who attempt to start meaningless or odd conversations.

In Stores

- Don't display cash except in small amounts.
- Don't leave a purse unattended, in a shopping cart or on a counter while examining an item. Don't get separated from a purse in a crowded restroom.
- If you are purchasing something and opening your purse, don't allow yourself to be distracted. Close it as quickly as possible.
- Always make sure you retrieve a credit card from a clerk after using it.

When Using Public Transportation

- Don't wait alone at a transit stop any longer than necessary.
- Carry exact change in your hand.
- Stand in view of other passengers.
- Sit in the front of the vehicle near the driver or in the middle of the car away from doors.
- When arriving by taxi, ask the driver to wait until you are inside before driving away.

Safety In Your Car

- Keep your gas tank full and your vehicle's engine well maintained to avoid breakdowns.

- Always lock your car doors, even when you're inside, and keep your windows rolled up.
- Lock packages and other valuables in the trunk. Do not leave them on the back seat or on the floor of the vehicle where potential thieves can see them.
- When you return to your car, always check the front and back seat before you get in.
- Never pick up hitchhikers.
- If your car breaks down, pull over to the right as far as possible, raise the hood, and wait inside for help. Do not get out of the car or roll down the window until the police arrive.
- Don't leave your purse on the seat beside you when driving. Place it on the floor.
- When you arrive at home, keep the headlights on until you have the car in the garage and the house door unloaded.
- Although they are an expense, it is recommended you have a portable cellular telephone in your motor vehicle. They can be invaluable if you have mechanical problems, are involved in or witness an accident, feel threatened, etc.
- If you purchase gas and go inside to pay for it, take your vehicle keys with you.
- Don't keep your car keys on the same ring as your house keys. If your car is stolen with the keys in it, you don't want the thief to also have the keys to your home.
- When stopped at traffic lights, be aware of diversions. A criminal may try to sell a vehicle driver something or perhaps beg money, while a second criminal reaches in a window or enters the vehicle from the passenger side.
- Do not rent vehicles that are clearly marked as rental vehicles. Thieves often target rentals because they believe tourists who carry a lot of money drive them.