



Crime Prevention Information



Adult and Senior Citizen Safety

HOW CAN ADULTS AND SENIOR CITIZENS PROTECT THEMSELVES?

You can start by learning some basic crime prevention information. It helps to know how criminals operate – that they look for the easiest opportunities. If you appear to be a harder target, you are less likely to be singled out. You don't necessarily need physical strength, agility, speed, or expensive devices. You need to be alert, cautious, and self-confident.

AT HOME

- Keep doors locked.
- Install easy-to-use deadbolt locks.
- Don't attach an ID tag to your key ring.
- Install new locks if you move to a new home or lose your key.
- Keep garage and basement doors locked, too.

LOCK WINDOWS

- Draw the curtains and blinds at night. You can also, put fire department-approved grates on the ground floor and fire escape windows, but keep a key handy.

INSTALL AND USE A PEEPHOLE.

- Never open the door to strangers or let them know you're alone. Ask service people for an ID before you open the door. Remember that chain locks can be forced open.

CONSIDER A PET

- Even a small dog can provide some protection.

BEWARE OF PHONE or E-MAIL SCAMS

- Don't give personal or financial information over the phone.
- Hang up on nuisance callers and report them.

CONSULT LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS

- Find out about crime in your local area.
- Ask about specific problems- what law enforcement officials are doing and what you can do.

PROTECT VALUABLES

- Keep your money and securities in a bank.
- Have your Social Security or pension check deposited directly into your account.
- Mark all valuables with an ID number (for example, your Driver's License number (ex. SCDL 1234567), NEVER use Social Security Number.

FIND OUT ABOUT ALARM SYSTEMS

- If you're away a lot or have many valuables, an alarm may be worth the cost.
- Get at least three quotes, prices vary widely
- Alarms can qualify for reduced insurance home insurance rates

ORGANIZE A BUDDY SYSTEM

- Have neighbors watch each other's homes.
- Do laundry, shopping or errands in groups.

WHEN YOU GO OUT

SECURE YOUR HOME

- Leave outside lights ON
- Don't leave notes about your return.
- Leave a radio or TV and a light on.
- Make sure all entries are locked.

PLAN YOUR ROUTE

- Choose a safe, familiar and well-lit route.
- Let someone know where you're going and when you should arrive.

SECURE YOUR WALLET

- Don't carry large amounts of cash.
- Carry your wallet in a safe inside pocket or on a chain attached to your belt.

TAKE CARE WITH YOUR PURSE

- Leave your purse at home, if possible
- Don't use a purse with a shoulder strap- you could be thrown to the ground and injured if it's snatched.

GO WITH A FRIEND

- You're safer if you have company
- Leashed dogs of any size will deter most muggers.

TRAVEL SAFELY on PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

ON BUSES:

- Sit in the front, near the driver (but not too near the door).
- Hold on to your packages.
- Ask the driver- not other passengers- for directions.

STAY SAFE WHEN YOU RETURN HOME

- Have your key out and ready.
 - Have the driver watch until you're inside, if possible.
 - Don't enter an elevator along with a stranger.
 - Be alert for anyone hiding nearby. Get help at the first sign of trouble.
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STAY SAFE IN YOUR CAR

WHEN DRIVING:

- Keep the doors locked and windows up.
- Keep your purse and valuables out of sight.
- If you're harassed at a stop, drive away as soon as possible.
- Never pick up hitchhikers.

WHEN RETURNING TO YOUR CAR:

- Keep keys in hand and be alert for anyone hiding behind nearby cars.
- Check the back seat and floor before you get in.

WHEN PARKING:

- Park close to your destination.
- Choose an area that will be well lit when you return.
- Lock valuables in the trunk.

IF YOUR CAR BREAKS DOWN:

- Stay inside- and keep the doors locked and the windows rolled up.
- If strangers stop to help, ask them to call police or a service station for you (Remember to speak through a closed window)

BEFORE GOING ON A TRIP

- Stop delivery of newspapers, mail, etc.
- Lock all entries- don't leave an extra key out.
- Ask neighbors and police to keep an eye on your home.
- Don't discuss your trip in public before you go.
- Give your house a "lived in" look.
- Set lights on timers.
- Pull shades down
- Turn down phone ringer volume
- Arrange lawn maintenance

ON YOUR TRIP, ACT SAFELY

USE CAUTION AT AIRPORTS

- Keep luggage locked and in sight.
- Put an ID tag inside luggage, too.
- Carry traveler's checks or credit cards instead of cash.

BE ALERT AT YOUR HOTEL

- Carry your room key at all times.
- Keep the room locked with your luggage inside.
- Leave valuables in the hotel safe.

AT YOUR DOOR, AT THE STORE, OR ON THE PHONE, protect yourself against these common types of consumer crimes:

1. FRAUD

- Medical fraud- Ask your health-care provider for advice before buying into “miracle cures” or special deals.
- Sweepstake scams-Don’t pay anything or give your credit card number in order to claim a “free prize”.
- Land-in-the-sun deals- Never buy sight unseen. Check out the property and seller.
- Insurance fraud- carefully read offers that claim large benefits at low rates. They may be exaggerated.
- Business schemes- Beware of work-at-home job offers with “registration” fees.
- Home repairs- Avoid “free inspections”. Deal only with firms you trust to avoid unnecessary repairs. Ask to see licenses.

BUYERS BEWARE. Before you agree to anything:

- Check out offers with the Better Business Bureau
- Get advice from people you trust.

2. SALES GIMMICKS

- The “ bait and switch”- Stores lure you in for a “bargain,” then try to sell you a more expensive model.
- Fear-sell tactics- Beware of sales claims that play on your fears of misfortune.
- “ Harmless” contacts- Fine-print clauses can cost you plenty! Read contracts carefully and ignore verbal promises.
- Referral selling- You may get the “ discount” only if you get friends to buy, too.
- Pressure tactics- Beware of salespeople who rush your decision.
- Debt consolidation- Watch out for sky-high interest rates in these plans.

STOP CROOKED SALESPEOPLE

- Don’t sign anything you don’t understand. See a lawyer, if needed.
- If you aren’t getting straight answers, end the conversation.

3. “CON GAMES”

- Bank scams- A person claiming to be a “bank official” or “ detective” asks you to help “ catch a crooked teller.” You withdraw your savings, and then the “ bank examiner” takes it to be “counted.”
- Phony bills- A surviving spouse is sent bills for phony debt purchases. Check out unfamiliar bills before you pay them.
- Found money- A stranger strikes up a conversation and is joined by a friend who has just “ found” an envelope full of money. They offer you a share if you put up “ good faith” money. Then, they agree to let you hold the envelope. But they switch envelopes and take off with your money.

HOW TO FOIL CON ARTISTS:

- Ask to see proper identification- get their names.
- Always check out “officials” by calling their offices.
- Before you hand anybody any cash, stop and think!
- Call law enforcement officials if you’re suspicious.

IF YOUR HOME IS BURGLARIZED WHILE YOU'RE OUT:

- Don't go in.
- Call police at once from a neighbor's phone.
- Don't touch anything.

IF YOU ARE HELD UP or your purse is snatched:

- Don't resist- give things up rather than risk injury.
- Hand things over quickly.
- Note as many details as possible.
- Notify law enforcement officials immediately.
- Remember- your life is more important than your money.

IF YOU'VE BEEN SWINDLED, report the incident. Call the:

- Local police or sheriff
- Charleston Police -----(843) 577-7434
- Charleston County Sheriff----(843) 554-4700
- Federal Trade Commission---(877) ID-THEFT
- Better Business Bureau
- FAST ACTION MAY SAVE YOU MONEY.

IF SOMEONE BREAKS IN WHILE YOU ARE HOME:

- Don't confront the burglar unless absolutely necessary!
- Lock the door to the room you are in.
- If you can get to a phone, quietly call police

IF YOU ARE ATTACKED, remember that each situation is different. Only you can decide which course of action is appropriate. In general:

- GET LOW to avoid being knocked down and injured.
- BE REALISTIC about your ability to protect yourself. Yelling, hitting, or biting may give you a chance to escape, but it may also lead to further harm.
- IF YOUR LIFE IS IN DANGER, passive resistance like vomiting or urinating may be your best defense.

For more information on this and other topics contact:

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