

Personal Security

This handout is full of tips that can help you avoid becoming a victim of a crime when you are out and about or at work.

By taking a few simple precautions, you can reduce the risk to yourself, and also discourage those who commit crime.

Be prepared

- Always be alert and aware of the people around you.
- Educate yourself concerning prevention tactics.
- Be aware of locations and situations, which would make you vulnerable to crime, such as alleys and dark parking lots.

Street Precautions

- Be alert to your surroundings and the people around you, especially if you are alone or it is dark.
- Whenever possible, travel with a friend.
- Stay in well-lighted areas as much as possible.
- Walk close to the curb. Avoid doorways, bushes, and alleys where someone could hide.
- Walk confidently, and at a steady pace.
- Make eye contact with people when talking.
- Do not respond to conversation or ride offers from strangers on the street, continue walking.
- If you carry a purse, hold it securely between your arm and your body.

Car Safety

- Always lock car doors after entering or leaving your car.
- Park in well-lighted areas.
- Have your car keys in your hand so you don't have to linger before entering your car.
- Check the back seat before entering your car.
- If you think you are being followed, drive to a public place or a police, sheriff, or fire station.
- If your car breaks down, open the hood and attach a white cloth to the car antenna. If someone stops to help, stay in the locked car, roll down the window a little, and ask them to call the police or a sheriff or a tow trucking service.
- Don't stop to aid motorists stopped on the side of the road. Go to a phone and request help for them.

Waiting for a bus

- Avoid isolated bus stops.
- Stand away from the curb until the bus arrives.
- Don't open your purse or wallet while boarding the bus. Have your pass or money already in your hand.

- Don't invite trouble - keep gold chains out of sight; don't flash your jewelry; and turn your rings around so the stones don't show.

On the buses

- During off-hours, sit as close to the bus driver as possible.
- Stay alert - and be aware of the people around you.
- If someone bothers you, change seats and/or tell the driver.
- Carry your wallet inside your coat, or in a front pocket. A comb, placed horizontally in the fold of your wallet, will alert you if someone tries to remove it from your pocket.
- Keep your handbag in front of you and hold it close to your body with both hands.
- Check your purse or wallet if someone is jostling, crowding, or pushing you.
- If you see any suspicious activity, tell the driver.

Office security

- Never leave your purse or billfold in plain view or in the pocket of a jacket hanging on a door.
- Personal property should be marked with your driver's license number.
- Don't leave cash or valuables at the office.
- If you work alone or before/after normal business hours, keep the office door locked.
- If you work late, try to find another worker or a security guard to walk out with you.
- If you are in the elevator with another person, stand near the control panel. If you are attacked, press the alarm and as many of the control buttons as possible.
- Be alert for pickpockets on crowded elevators.
- Report all suspicious people and activities to the proper authorities: office manager, building security, law enforcement.
- Be aware of escape routes for emergencies and post the phone numbers of the police and fire department near telephones. Call 911 if the situation is life-threatening.

If a crime occurs --- report it!

Everyone should consider it his/her responsibility to report crime. Many criminals target favorite areas and have predictable methods or operation. When you report all the facts about a crime, it helps the police assign officers in the places where crimes are occurring or where they are most likely to occur. At least one out of two crimes in the United States goes unreported, either because people don't think the police can do anything about it, or because people don't want to get involved. If you don't report crime, this allows the criminal to continue to operate without interference.

In many cases, it is the information provided by victims and witnesses that leads to the arrest of a criminal. So, tell the police as much as you can; no fact is too trivial. The police need the eyes and ears of all citizens.