

BASIC SAFETY TIPS

*For residential security, children,
vehicles and personal safety*

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Residential

Your home is your palace. Securing your home and the environment surrounding it may not be as common sense as one would think. Below are some tips on how to mitigate or prevent your-self from becoming a victim. Some of these tips may seem a bit paranoid and some may be general. It is your responsibility to determine which ones fit your lifestyle.

- Install a reputable Audible alarm system. You may also choose to hire a service that monitors your home audibly when the alarm is activated. Be sure to have it maintained properly. Many Police and Sheriff's Departments will fine business and homeowners who have too many false alarms calls.
- Understand all the components of your alarm so you can set your zones according to your lifestyle.
- Do not leave your doors or windows unlocked when not at home or after dark. If you desire to leave them unlocked while at home, set the alarm zones to activate when an unlocked door is opened.
- Get to know your neighbors. Would you trust them in your home while you were away? Would you give them your alarm code?
- Do not allow trees or shrubs to provide concealment in front of windows. Burglars use them to conceal their entry points. If you like plants or shrubs in those locations, use the type that have thorns to make them uncomfortable to hide in.
- Cut back trees so they can not be utilized to gain access to upper stories.
- Place locks on gates.
- Utilize timers for lights to go on just before dark. If you are going to be gone for an extended period, have a trusted family member or friend turn on the lights so there doesn't appear to be a set pattern for which lights go on every day.
- Change batteries in your smoke and carbon monitors twice a year.
- Have evacuation plans for different scenarios and practice them. Make sure you always evacuate away from the threat when possible.
- Utilize trigger locks if you have weapons in the house. Keep them in a safe

place but accessible by adults if needed. All people who have access to the weapons should be trained in their use.

- Do not cancel the mail or newspaper when going on vacation. Have a trusted family member or friend collect them daily. Your paper person or mail carrier may not be as honest and reputable as you might think. They can easily relay your departure information to a friend or take advantage of your departure themselves. No one needs to know you are gone.
- Solicitors should carry identification and a business card. Make sure you have a peephole in your door. Do not open the door, day or night, for anyone you do not know or trust. The person at your door may not be who they claim to be. Ask for their identification and purpose for their visit. If you feel uncomfortable about their response, don't open the door. If they are persistent, ask them to leave and if they do not, tell them you will call the police. If you are alone, you can also pretend that you have checked with another person in the home and both of you are not interested. Never tell a solicitor any personal information. If they give you a phone number to verify who they are, keep in mind the person on the other end of the line may be a co-conspirator. Listen closely as to how they greet you. Do they answer in a business like manner and identify a business name or merely say hello?
- Form a Neighborhood Watch Group with your trusted neighbors.
- Develop hand signals or key words that identify a danger, to be utilized by members of the household. This type of communication can also be used outside the home when confronted by, or in proximity of, a suspicious person or uncomfortable situation.
- Be sure to shred all unwanted loan, credit card and other applications you receive in the mail. Identity thieves will search your garbage for these documents and apply under your name with another address.
- You should shred all documents that contain any personal information, prior to putting them in the garbage.
- Do not give any identifying or personal information to anyone over the phone unless you generated the call to a known and reputable organization. Criminals masquerade themselves as representatives of reputable organizations then ask for personal information to verify an account. Do not give out any information to phone solicitors. Gather the appropriate information from the caller and check them out. Notify your local law enforcement agency if you suspect a fraud.

- If you receive lewd, threatening or unwanted phone calls you have a number of options. First, make sure you advise the calling party you want the calls to cease. If they continue, notify your local law enforcement and report it. Ask the law enforcement officials for permission to tape record future calls for evidentiary purposes. You can also blow a whistle into the phone while the perpetrator is on the line. This can be very annoying to them. You can also change your number as a last resort.
- If you observe someone suspicious or someone who appears to look out of place in your neighborhood, there are a few things you could do;
 - 1) Ask them if they need assistance. If they are up to no good, the last thing they want is for someone to be able to identify them.
 - 2) Make it well known and obvious you are writing down something. You should write down the description of any vehicle involved, along with the description of the individual(s)
 - 3) Alert your neighbors and determine if they know the subjects. Your neighbors should also be very obvious in their observations.
 - 4) If you are leaving home in your vehicle and observe a suspicious vehicle or person nearby, don't be afraid to drive by and make eye contact. You can also continue driving and then return within minutes to see what has transpired. This will show the subject you know he/she is there and you are watching.

Child Safety

The following recommendations may or may not fit all ages. These tips are intended to be generic and simple to offer strategies in coping with different scenarios your child may encounter. There are basic concerns for child safety within the home as well.

- Do not leave any toxic or poisonous items within reach or accessible to children. Store them in locked cabinets.
- Adequately fence and/or lock out any areas around the home where a child could drown, fall, or disappear such as under a home, in an attic, pool, spa, pond, etc.
- Do not leave accessible any mechanical items such as saws, drills or other items that could harm a child if plugged in and accidentally started.
- Keep firearms and edged weapons, (knives, saws, etc.) out of reach or inaccessible to children.
- Never leave a child unattended in a vehicle, especially while it's running or in in-climate weather.
- Stranger Danger: Teach your child not to interact with strangers. If approached by a stranger, teach your child to find someone they know immediately. As they get older, have your child turn around and proceed in the opposite direction and find a location where there are many witnesses to assist if necessary. This can be as simple as running into a store or business.
- If you are separated from your child, do not wander frantically looking for them. Lost children are found much faster than lost parents. Go directly to a central location (if you're at a fair or shopping mall it will be the security office, if you are in a store it would be the manager's office, etc.) As long as there is no suspicious activity, lost children are normally found soon after they are separated from their parents and taken to a safe location. If they are old enough, identify a predetermined location to meet if separated for a set period of time.
- Always wear a safety helmet when riding a bicycle, skateboard, scooter, etc. Check your state laws.
- Bicycles must follow the same rules of the road as a vehicle. Ride in the same direction as traffic and stay in the bike lanes or as far right as

possible. Most people will not look right when making a right turn, so if you are biking in the opposite direction (against traffic), the turning vehicle may not see you and pullout in front of you.

- Pedestrians should walk against traffic whenever possible. This gives ample time for reaction to avoid errant vehicles.
- Teach your child about the 911 systems or emergency number in your area. But, also teach them the importance of when to use the system. The 911 system should only be used in life and death emergencies, great bodily injury, dangerous situations or criminal acts in progress.

Vehicle Driving Safety

Here are some basic tips for you while on the road.

- If someone attempts to engage you in road rage with hand signals, yelling etc. - ignore them. You have no idea what type of personality they have or whether they have the ability to inflict bodily harm. Check your ego at the door and let it go. The outcome, whatever, will not be good. If they continue to follow you, either call the police or drive to a well-lit populated area and request assistance.
- If you are being pulled over by an unmarked police car, (one that has no identifying marks other than a red light), you have some options. You can call the local police to verify a stop is being attempted. Police normally have policies to call in their stops to dispatch. Or you can pull into a well-lit populated area. You can also pull over as requested if you feel it is a legitimate official attempting the stop.
- When in line at a stoplight, leave enough space between you and the car in front of you for you to pull out if necessary. With sufficient space, you are able to pull out or pull forward to avoid being rear-ended. If the car in front of you has a mechanical failure, you have room to pull out and proceed without having to back-up.
- Do not leave any valuables in view in your car. Burglars look for crimes of opportunity. Don't invite them.
- Always lock your car and set the alarm when away from it.
- When out at night, park in well lit areas.
- Do a visual inspection of your car prior to getting in. You can see if any damage has been done and may be able to determine when, where and by whom it occurred.
- Your car can be a deadly weapon. Understand its capabilities as well as your driving capabilities. Do not drive in a manner where you do not have total control of your vehicle.
- Maintain your vehicle. Not only does an improperly maintained vehicle become unsafe, it invites police officers to legally pull you over. Some typical correctible violations include; cracked windshields, excessive smoke, cracked taillights emitting white lights to the rear, no rear view mirrors etc. Check your State and Local laws.

Personal

- The following tips may assist you in your everyday activities.
- Always be aware of your surroundings. Look up, around and behind you every so often when in public places, especially in parking structures. If you feel danger, don't proceed. You can retreat until other people arrive. It's not worth taking the chance just to save a few minutes.
- Carry a whistle on your key chain. Attracting attention will thwart most attacks whether the perpetrator is after you or your property.
- Have your keys in hand prior to walking into the parking lot. You lose concentration and awareness when searching for your keys.
- Carry your keys in the palm of your hand with one sticking out through your fingers while making a fist. Criminals with bad intentions may notice your preparedness and leave you alone.
- Do not walk alone at night.
- If you feel you are walking into an area that may be unsafe, show a sense of confidence. Criminals prey on the weak. Be confident but avoid conflict. Criminals hate challenges.
- If you are a target of aggressive panhandling, and you are offended, be firm in your position, keep walking and offer to call the police.
- Women should carry their purses tucked tightly under their arm so they are not easily taken.
- Avoid using bank ATM's after dark. Survey the area around the machine to see if someone is watching.
- Always stand close to the ATM keypad and cup your other hand over the keypad when entering your PIN. Just because someone isn't directly behind you attempting to watch doesn't mean they are not trying to capture your PIN from a distance using binoculars.
- Fighting back is your call. Just remember, if it is a property crime the article(s) can be replaced. If it is a person crime, (rape, assault, etc.) no resistance will show weakness and the crime will most likely be accomplished.

- If you observe criminal activity and you want the suspects to stop their actions immediately, yell at them to stop and tell them you are calling the police without placing yourself in harms way.
- Some situations warrant waiting so the suspect(s) can be apprehended. You should observe from a distance, document as much descriptive information as possible, and notify law enforcement without alerting the suspects. This allows law enforcement the element of surprise and a better chance for apprehension.
- If you observe someone being injured, immediately call or direct someone to call 911. It is your call whether to intervene. It is a judgment call you must live with. Take into consideration the risk you put yourself in and how it will affect you and your family.