

Senior Citizen Crime Prevention Tips

from the
Duncanville Police Department's
Crime Prevention Division

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Take these tips and be a partner for a safe community.

Crime prevention is everyone's responsibility, not just a job for the police. Crime can be reduced by simple measures like remembering to lock a door, knowing about common con games, and watching out for your neighborhood.

Although surveys consistently show that persons over 65 are victims of crime far less frequently than young people, many senior citizens are so worried about crime that they shut themselves up in their homes and rarely go out. But, isolating ourselves behind locked doors and not getting together with our neighbors actually makes it easier for criminals to work in the neighborhood.

Seniors are more vulnerable to certain crimes - purse snatching, assaults, and frauds. You can reduce opportunities for criminals to strike by being careful, alert, and a good neighbor.

ON PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION or IN A BUILDING:

- *Beware of overheard conversations and don't tell others where you are going.**
- *Stay awake and alert, have exact change ready, sit as close to the driver as possible.**
- *If you sense someone is following you when you get off, walk toward other people or to an open business.**
- *Avoid isolated corridors or hallways; be extra careful in stairwells and isolated or poorly lit restrooms.**
- *Avoid entering an elevator that is occupied by only one other person who is a stranger; in an elevator, stand near the controls and locate the emergency buttons.**
- *If you are assaulted while in an elevator, hit the emergency or alarm button and press as many floor buttons as possible.**

CALM program:

(Call and Leave Message)

This Duncanville Police program has been operational since 1979. The program is designed to call elderly people that might be confined to their homes on a daily basis to make sure everything is okay. Some individuals involved in this program have no family members in the immediate area. Contact Crime Prevention if you are interested in signing up for this program (972) 780-5027.

BE ALERT WHEN OUT AND ABOUT:

- *Go with friends or family, not alone.**
- *Carry your purse close to your body, not dangling by the straps. Put a wallet in an inside coat or front pants pocket.**
- *Don't carry credit cards you don't need or large amounts of cash. If you must take a large sum, have a friend accompany you.**
- *Use direct deposit for social security and other regular checks.**

WHEN YOU'RE OUT (cont.):

- *Make sure someone knows where you're going and when you expect to return.
- *Avoid dark, deserted routes, even if they're the shortest.
- *Carry change for emergency telephone and transportation use.
- *Whenever possible, travel with friends to stores, the bank, or the doctor. Check with your police or sheriff, or senior citizen center about escort services.
- *Don't overburden yourself with packages and groceries that obstruct your view and make it hard to react.
- *Have your car or house key in hand as you approach your vehicle or home.
- *When you drive, keep doors locked and windows up.
- *Park in well-lighted and busy areas.
- *If you have car trouble, be wary of strangers who offer help. Stay in your car and ask them to call a service truck or the police.
- *If a friend or a taxi takes you home, ask the driver to wait until you are safely inside.
- *Communicate the message that you are calm, confident, and know where you are going.

WATCH OUT FOR CON ARTISTS:

- *Don't fall for anything that sounds too good to be true – a free vacation, sweepstakes prizes, cures for cancer and arthritis, cheap home repairs and/or gardening.
- *Never give your credit card, phone card, Social Security, or bank account numbers to anyone over the phone. It's illegal for telemarketers to ask for these numbers to verify a prize or gift.
- *Don't let anyone rush you into signing anything – an insurance policy, a sales agreement, a contract. Read it carefully and have someone you trust check it over.

**GET INVOLVED IN THE COMMUNITY
JOIN NEIGHBORHOOD CRIME WATCH**

WHEN YOU ARE AT HOME:

- *Use deadbolt locks on all exterior doors. Keep your doors locked at all times, even when you're inside.
- *Protect windows and sliding glass doors with good locks or other security devices.
- *Make your home appear occupied when you go out by using a timer to turn on lights and a radio.
- *Never let strangers in your home without checking their identification. Call their company if you're not sure. Install a peephole in your door and use it.
- *If you live alone, don't advertise it. Use only your first initial in phone books, directories, and apartment mailboxes.
- *Get to know your neighbors and keep their phone numbers handy for emergencies.
- *Work out a "buddy" system with a friend to check on each other daily.
- *Engrave your valuables with a unique identification number recommended by the police. Local youth groups may provide this service free to seniors. Keep bonds, stock certificates, seldom worn jewelry, and stamp and coin collections in a safe deposit box.
- *Don't hide extra house keys under a doormat or in other obvious spots.

PROTECT YOUR MONEY:

- *Don't display large amounts of cash in stores or other public places.
- *Don't sign a check or contract until you're sure it's for a legitimate reason and know the details. Check with a friend, lawyer, or police officer if in doubt.
- *Never put your purse or wallet on a counter or in a shopping cart while you examine merchandise in a store.
- *Beware of individuals claiming to represent companies, consumer organizations, or government agencies that offer to recover lost money from fraudulent telemarketers for a fee.
- *If you're suspicious, check it out with the police, the **Better Business Bureau**, or your local consumer protection office. Do not pay for handy work in advance.
- ***NEVER GIVE OUT YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION ON THE INTERNET OR OVER THE PHONE.**
- *Do not use ATM machines that are isolated and don't let yourself be distracted when using them.

Always be aware of your surroundings and what is going on around you.