

## Personal Safety Tips

Incidents of violence can occur anywhere at anytime. Trust your gut feeling that something may be wrong. These are some guidelines that may help reduce potential vulnerability. Remember though, whether you choose to use the options or not, no one has the right to harm you.

### At Home

- Be aware of your surroundings. Be familiar with who is coming and going - who belongs and who doesn't.
- Know your neighbors and learn who can be called for assistance when needed.
- Women may be safer using only first initials and last names on mailboxes and in phone directories.
- Change locks when you move into a new residence. Make sure your doors have deadbolt locks, security chains and peepholes. Use them!
- Don't hide spare keys outdoors.
- Check identification of repair people, salespeople, meter readers, etc., come to the door. Don't hesitate to call and check them out or refuse them admittance if something feels wrong.
- If you let someone in and have second thoughts, be assertive. Tell them to leave or leave yourself. Pretend you are not alone by mentioning a friend or family member asleep in the next room.
- Make sure entrances, garages, grounds and hallways are well-lighted.
- Leave porch lights on at night or when you expect to return after dark. Consider using dusk to dawn lighting. Leave an interior light on in a room or two with the shades drawn. Leave a radio or TV on.
- Instruct children and baby-sitters not to give out information about who is home, who is out or for how long.
- Don't leave notes on your door for others or allow solicitor's material to remain on your doorsteps since they advertise your absence.
- If you suspect your home has been broken into, don't go in – use your cell phone, go to a neighbors or someplace else and call the police.
- Always lock doors when doing yard work or otherwise spending time in the yard. If you have a cell phone, take it outside with you.
- Be careful when using computer internet or online services. Use caution in providing personal information. Being flooded with e-mail can be annoying; having a chat room participant show up at your door uninvited can be terrifying.

## In Your Car

- Keep car doors locked at all times, and windows rolled up all the way.
- If you have car trouble, raise the hood and stay in your vehicle. If someone offers assistance, roll the window down just enough to talk to them. Ask them to call the police for you if you do not have a cell phone with you.
- Keep your cell phone charged at all times and keep a charger in your vehicle.
- Even cell phones that have no service can be used to call 911 providing they are charged. When calling 911 from a cell phone, be prepared to give your location.
- Do not stop to help a stranger in a stalled vehicle - go to a safe place and report the stalled vehicle to the police.
- Don't pick up hitchhikers.
- If someone tries to break into your car while you are in it, honk the horn in short, repeated blasts and try to drive away.
- If you are being followed, don't go home. Drive to the nearest police or fire station or an open gas station - anyplace with people around.
- Keep your car maintained, and your gas tank at least half full.
- Park as close to your destination as possible, and in well-lighted areas whenever feasible.
- If security staffs are available to walk you to your car, don't be embarrassed to use this service.
- Check inside your car before getting in.
- If you leave keys with a parking attendant or at a service station, leave only the car (not your house) key.
- Always have your keys ready to unlock the car door and enter without delay. You will appear vulnerable if you are looking for your keys as you approach your car. Once inside your car, lock the doors immediately – even before turning the ignition on.

## On the Street

- Stay on populated, well-lit streets. Avoid shrubbery, dark areas near buildings and other places an attacker might hide. Avoid shortcuts through alleys, vacant lots and other deserted places. When possible, avoid walking or jogging alone - even during the day.
- Look around as you walk and be aware of you or surroundings. Make it difficult for anyone to take you by surprise. Walk confidently at a steady pace.
- Avoid secluded or deserted areas and businesses.

- Carry something that can make a loud noise such as whistles, personal screechers, etc. that can scare off possible attackers.
- If using public transportation, sit near the driver.
- When using a taxi, ask the driver to wait and watch until you are safely inside your destination.
- Be cautious about revealing cash or credit cards.
- Try to limit the number of items you carry.
- If you carry a handbag, hold it close to your body with fastener closed and turned toward your body so a thief can't grab it and cause injury or knock you down. "Fanny-packs" keep your personal items close to you while keeping your hands free.
- Don't wear headphones. They block your ability to hear someone approach you. If you must wear one, use only one ear bud.
- Again, trust your instincts. Don't hesitate to remove yourself from the situation. Forget the rules of etiquette and social norms. Be willing to make a scene if necessary. Most sexual assaults are not committed by strangers, but by people who know their victims. Your safety may depend on a quick and decisive reaction.

Above all, be observant and aware of your surroundings at all times.