

# **Personal Safety for Senior Citizens**

## **Why Should We Be Concerned?**

- As we age, we become less able to defend ourselves or project a confident image.
- Because they can have significant financial resources, seniors are often the targets of theft, robbery, fraud, identity theft, etc.
- You've got it, and they think they can take it

## **In General**

- Be alert to your surroundings. Don't become focused on one thing and forget to look around.
- Make safety, not your errand, your priority
- Cell phones are a great tool to use for personal safety
- Carry in your pocket- even around your home
  - Crimes in progress
  - Car trouble
  - No phone or phone lines cut
  - ICE
  - Location ON, not just E911 only

## **Personal Safety At Home**

### **Safety at the Door**

- Have your house number conspicuously posted outside your home
- When someone knocks at your door, don't open it unless you know your visitor.
- Have a through-the-door viewer installed on each exterior door.
- If the person is a representative, salesman, etc., ask that identification and credentials be slipped under the door or through the mail slot. Call the employer to verify the name and business. Refuse to deal with anyone who won't comply with this request
- Someone may knock at your door and ask to use your telephone to make an emergency call. Never open the door Take the message and make the call for them.
- If someone comes to your door that you do not trust or who you believe might be dangerous, call your local police or sheriff's department immediately.

### **Returning Home**

- If you find your door ajar or if you hear unusual sounds inside, DON'T GO IN!
  - Go to the nearest telephone and call your local police or sheriff's department.
  - If your home has been burglarized, DON'T TOUCH ANYTHING UNTIL THE LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER ARRIVES!
- If you enter your home and find a burglar there, leave if you can.
  - If the intruder is armed, sit down quietly and obey instructions.
  - DO NOT resist or fight
  - Observe the intruder closely

### **Telephone**

- If you receive frequent "wrong number" calls,
- Never allow yourself to be drawn into a conversation with an unknown caller in which you reveal your name, address, marital status or anything to indicate you are alone.
- Answering machine greetings

# **Detering the Burglar**

## **Your Keys**

- Never carry identification tags on your key ring or holder.
- Don't hide a spare key outside your door— under the door mat, in the mail box, the flower box, over the door — the burglar knows where to look.

## **Door Locks**

- Always lock your exterior doors, both when you are at home and away.
- Avoid chain locks — they are too easily broken.
- For sliding doors, place a broomstick or an aluminum bar in the door track

## **Lighting**

- All exterior entrances or doorways, garages and even alleys should be well lighted.

## **Outdoor Trees and Shrubbery**

- Bushes and plant growth, particularly near doors and windows should be trimmed at a height of no more than two feet (24") from the ground.
- Trees should be trimmed at a height no less than six feet from the lowest hanging branch to the ground.
- Trees should not be allowed to be so dense as to block exterior pole lighting.

## **Alarm Systems**

- If you have one, use it- even during the day

## **Minimize the Risk**

- Direct deposit Social Security, pension or other regular incoming checks.
- Avoid keeping large amounts of cash in the home.
- Place valuable jewelry and important papers in a safe deposit box.
- Appraise and photograph jewelry, precious antiques and artwork.
- Become acquainted with your neighbors.

## **When You Are Away**

- When you leave your home or apartment for a prolonged period of time, discontinue your newspaper, mail, and other deliveries by phone or in person ahead of time. Do not leave notes.
- Have your lawn mowed.
- Put lights both inside and outside the house on timers. Also, place one or more radios or TV's on timers so they will periodically come on.
- Turn the volume on the telephone down so it cannot be used as a cue that no one is home.

## **While You Are Out**

### **Recommendations**

- Be especially alert at banks
- Carry as little cash as possible and carry credit cards in a concealed coat or chest pocket.
- For a woman with a purse, carry it close to the body, preferably in front. If the purse has a clasp, cover it with your hand. Don't wrap the strap of the purse around your wrist.
- Never leave a purse unattended.

- Avoid carrying a wallet in a back or side pocket.
- If a robber attempts to snatch your purse:
  - Don't resist
  - Give the robber what he wants
  - Set down to avoid injury
  - Observe the robber as closely as possible to get a description for the police
  - Never pursue the attacker
  - After sitting down, make noise by calling for help
  - Carry a whistle and blow it repeatedly

### **When Walking**

- Stay alert to your surroundings.
- Never exhibit or flash large sums of cash or other valuables.
- If you must walk at night, choose the busiest and best-lit streets. Avoid dark places, short cuts, alleys, thick trees and shrubs and sparsely traveled areas.
- Walk with a companion, whenever possible.
- Stay away from buildings and walk next to the street.
- Be wary of strangers who attempt to start meaningless or odd conversations.

### **Safety in Your Car**

- When approaching your car in a parking lot, have your keys in your hand with your finger on the alarm button
- Keep your gas tank full and your vehicle's engine well maintained to avoid breakdowns.
- Always lock your car doors, even when you're inside, and keep your windows rolled up.
- Lock packages and other valuables in the trunk. Do not leave them on the back seat or on the floor of the vehicle where potential thieves can see them.
- When you return to your car, always check the front and back seat before you get in.
- Don't keep your car keys on the same ring as your house keys. If your car is stolen with the keys in it, you don't want the thief to also have the keys to your home.