



Safety and Security Tips

Sometimes whether or not we become a victim may be the result of a choice we have made.

The majority of the time when a criminal selects a victim, he/she looks for 3 things:

1. A person who appears weak or vulnerable
2. A person who is unaware of their surroundings
3. OPPORTUNITY!

You may simply be in the wrong place at the wrong time, but there are some things that you can do to reduce the likelihood that you will become a victim.

MAKE GOOD CHOICES

BE SITUATIONALLY AWARE

PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT'S GOING ON AROUND YOU

TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS

Personal Safety

- **Be alert! Walk with confidence.**
- Avoid overloading yourself with packages.
- If you are confronted by a robber, keep your hands in the robber's view at all times and don't volunteer more than the robber demands.
- **Stay calm.** Don't escalate the situation. Robbers want your money or your property. Don't delay a robbery or argue with the robber. Give the robber what he/she wants. It's not worth your life!
- Consider keeping your cash separate from your ID and credit cards. Don't carry your social security card or your passport.
- Never carry anything more valuable than you can afford to lose.
- There's safety in numbers. If at all possible, walk with someone else or a group.
- Never leave your purse on a store counter or in an unattended shopping cart.
- Observe the robber's characteristics, clothing description, actions, weapon, mode and direction of travel without being obvious.
- As soon as it is safe to do so, call 911.

If someone attacks you or grabs you

- **Scream, scream, scream!! Attract attention!**
- Fighting or passive resistance is a personal decision, especially if it is a potential sexual assault.
- If you fight, your assailant will fight also. Never "slap" an assailant unless you plan to launch a vigorous attack. If they feel humiliated, they may kill you or beat you severely.
- A good form of passive resistance is to go limp. Fall to the floor or ground and cover your head. This can also cause problems because you cannot flee quickly from the ground. Remember, this may NOT stop or protect you from the assault.
- Police officers recommend that you not fight an assailant that has a weapon.
- **The time to fight is when an assailant tries to take you away or kidnap your child.** Then, you should fight like your life depends on it because it probably does.

Domestic Violence

If you are a victim of domestic violence

- Tell someone you trust.
- Have a safety plan.
- File for a Protective Order.
- Seek counseling.
- Seek shelter.

If you know someone who is a victim of domestic violence

- Help them find available resources.
- Tell them you care.
- Don't judge or criticize.

Identity Theft Prevention

Individuals

- Protect your Social Security Number.
- Shred documents.
- Do not provide personal information on the phone, internet or by mail to an unknown party or when you have not initiated the contact.
- Ignore unsolicited e-mails.
- Secure personal information at home.
- Monitor consumer credit reports regularly.
- Review earnings posted on the Social Security Statement (Form SSA 7005).

Bank Card Protection

- Only carry cards that you use.
- Create, strong, secure PINs.
- Use caution at ATM machines.
- Always keep your card always in sight.
- Make copies of all cards and keep a list of company contact phone numbers.
- Only use private computers for online purchases.
- Properly dispose of old cards.
- Check your monthly statements and report discrepancies immediately.

Mail, Paper and Media Disposal

- Use a cross-cut type shredder for unwanted documents.
- Avoid using unsecured mailboxes at home or at work.
- Protect account numbers.
- Pick up mail every day or stop delivery. Call U.S. Postal Service at 1-800-275-8777.
- Have new checks delivered to your local bank branch.
- Minimize junk mail delivery by opting out of unsolicited credit offers sent by mail. Call 1-888-5-OPTOUT or 1-888-567-8688).

Computer and Internet Security

- Never respond to *Phishing*: Forward to spam@uce.gov.
- Use anti-virus, anti-spyware and firewall programs.
- Use caution opening files or downloading programs.
- Beware of hidden file extensions like ".exe" or ".zip."
- For online transactions, use websites with secure data transfer.
Secure sites have a lock icon in the on the web browser page and the URL changes from "http" to "https."
- Store personal and financial information on encrypted discs.

- Create complex passwords.
- Minimize information disclosure on social media websites.
- Turn off computer your when it is not in use.

Vehicle Safety

- Do not leave valuables out in plain view. Numerous break-ins to vehicles occur as crimes of opportunity.
- Lock your car doors, whether driving or parked.
- Do not hide a key in or on your vehicle.
- Do not leave your car running while it's unattended. This is an invitation to car thieves, but is also a violation of a city ordinance and you may be cited or fined.
- At night, try to park in a well-lit area.
- Observe your surroundings prior to exiting your vehicle.
- Look for strangers or danger signs as you approach your car. If it doesn't look right, walk past your car and call the police.
- Look in your car before you get in.
- If possible, walk to your car with someone else.
- Know how to use the panic alarm on your car keys. Keep it in your hand while walking to your car.
- BE AWARE of your surroundings at all times. **STAY OFF YOUR CELL PHONE** while you walk. Remember, *holding a smart phone is the same as holding several hundred dollars in cash.*

Car Jacking

- First rule – **NEVER go with a carjacker.** Your survival chances decrease dramatically if you are kidnapped. Give them the car, but you GET OUT.
- If someone attempts to get in your car, drive away. Run the light, make a U-turn or do whatever is necessary to get away from them.
- When you stop at a traffic light or stop sign, **leave enough distance to pull out of the line of traffic and drive away.** DO NOT pull within 2-3 feet of the car in front of you, because you may be trapped.
- Don't speed away if the carjacker has a gun pointed at you. The sudden movement may cause him/her to shoot. Get out and give him/her the car.
- Be familiar with a panic alarm if you have one. Know exactly how to push the button.
- NEVER leave your car running when you get out at a gas station, etc.
- If a stranger flags you down, **DON'T STOP**, regardless of how desperate they look. Call the police and give them the stranger's location.
- Beware of "bump and rob." If you get hit in a minor collision and suspect something is wrong, drive to a safe location and call the police. If you stop, don't get out or roll your window down. Call the police immediately.
- Be aware of individuals impersonating police officers. Look for **BLUE** lights and ask to see their badge and ID card. Unmarked/plainclothes officers should be more than willing to call a marked car to the scene before you exit the car.
- **NEVER** let someone take your car with a child in it. Never let them force you into a car. Scream, kick, fight, gouge eyes and do whatever it takes to stop them.
- **NEVER, NEVER, NEVER** leave your child unattended in your car—not even for a moment. Many cars have been stolen with children in them.

Panhandlers

- **ALWAYS** say no. Anytime you open your purse, reach for your wallet or pull cash from your pockets, you place yourself in a possible "snatch and grab" situation.

Neighborhood Safety

- Know your neighbors. Speak to them. Greet them as they pass you. The more you know about your neighbors (good or bad), the safer all of you are.
- Look into forming or joining a **Neighborhood Watch**. It is an excellent opportunity to meet with neighbors and share information about what is happening in the neighborhood.
- Try to resolve small issues with neighbors in a friendly, non-confrontational way. Let the small things go.
- Respect other's property rights, even if their complaints seem petty.
- If a neighbor becomes dangerously hostile, don't "stand your ground." Instead, withdraw and call the police.

Shopping Safety

- If you are shopping, plan how you will get your packages or groceries into the car safely. **NEVER** leave a child in the shopping cart while you put groceries in the car. Secure the child first and put the car keys in your pocket. A stranger can grab your child from the cart much faster than they can take the child from your car.
- Never put your purse or wallet down. Consider using a purse with a shoulder strap. Restroom floors are a ripe target for purse thefts.
- On a multi-store shopping trip, secure your packages in the trunk. Never leave packages visible in the car.

Safety at School Events

- When attending school events, especially "away" games, be cautious about where you park. Walking around in a strange area looking for your car is dangerous.
- If trouble happens in the parking area, return to the school building and call for help.
- Teach your kids to **stay out of crowds** after the event. Have a plan for how they will get home. If a fight or shooting is going to occur, it will probably be in the "after crowd." Teach them how to get to a safe place in the event of trouble.

Home Safety

- Your house or residence number should be visible from the street.
- Install deadbolt locks on good quality doors/door frames.
- All windows should have operational locks.
- All windows should be covered and there should be no views inside your house.
- Do not hide keys outside your home. Instead, give a key to a trusted neighbor.
- You should have sufficient exterior lighting around your home with no broken or damaged fixtures.
- Shrubs and bushes should be no higher than 32 inches in height and set back 1 yard from walkways so that they do not obstruct windows, doors or walkways.
- Tree canopies should be trimmed up to 8 feet and should not obstruct exterior lighting.
- Ensure that no landscaping materials, such as loose gravel and stones can be used as weapons.
- Earth berms should not create a visual obstruction and should be no higher than 2 ½ feet.
- Make sure landscape features do not provide a means of access onto the property or into your house.
- Graffiti or other signs of vandalism should be removed/repared as soon as possible.
- Ensure your property is well maintained—the grass mowed and no trash or debris.
- If you have concerns, request for a police officer to perform a security survey of your home.
- If you decide to buy a weapon, consider Pepper Mace instead of a gun.
- If you do purchase a gun, get proper training and keep the gun under lock and key—especially if you have children. More children are killed by a weapon in the home than burglars.
- Have a "rally point," such as a trusted neighbor's house that is designated ahead of time if you must flee your house. Have your children practice going there and make sure the neighbor knows about it.

What to do if home when someone is breaking in

- Have a front and back escape route from your house. Ensure that no doors are blocked.
- Decide if you will fight or flee. Most police officers recommend fleeing and if you do flee, make sure everyone is out. Take your cell phone if possible, and meet at your rally point.
- If you have no escape route, consider going out a window. If you can't get out a door or a window, lock yourself in a room and barricade the door with furniture, if possible. Call the police.

What to do if you return home and suspect your house has been broken in to

- **DO NOT ENTER!!** An armed, violent criminal may be inside. They may kill you if you confront them!
- Call the police and have them check the house.

Weapons in the home

- If you are untrained, the weapon most police officers recommend for personal defense inside and outside of the home is **PEPPER MACE**. It can disable or temporarily blind someone, but if it is used against you or your child finds it, no one will seriously injured or killed.
- The biggest danger of having a gun in the home is that a child will play with the weapon and accidentally shoot someone or they will use it for an impulsive act, such as suicide.
- Another serious concern is that an assailant will disarm you and use the weapon against you.
- Stun guns are expensive, require maintenance and don't always work properly. They also require that you to be in close contact with your assailant.

Safety When Dealing With a Police Officer

- Many police officers are killed each year by people they have never met. Police officers are trained to be suspicious and rigid when they first encounter anyone. Obey the officer's instructions, even if you don't feel as though you have done anything wrong.
- Keep your hands out of your pockets and in sight. Do not get into the officer's personal space. Police officers are trained to stay about 5-7 feet away from people.
- Don't make sudden movements, particularly while in your car, such as reaching under the seat or in the console. If you do, the officer will probably draw his/her weapon.
- Don't argue with a police officer. Be civil when you do speak.
- Don't run away from a police officer. Even if you have not committed a crime, you may be chased and possibly tackled and then arrested.
- If police are conducting an investigation and you have information that you are afraid to give in person, call the police department 574-LMPD (5673). You can give the information anonymously or arrange to talk to officers away from your neighborhood.
- If you are cited or arrested and you believe you are innocent, **FIGHT THE CHARGES IN COURT, NOT ON THE STREET.**
- The law allows police officers to **DETAIN** people while conducting an investigation, even for a minor offense. Continuously saying "Am I under arrest?" is not going improve the situation.
- If you believe a police officer is being disrespectful to you, say so but do it properly.

What To Do If You Know of Neighborhood Drug or Gang Activities or Any Other Crime

- You can always call **574-LMPD** with information and keep it anonymous.
- Develop a good relationship with your neighborhood officer.
- Start a Neighborhood Watch. Your Division Resource Officer can help you get started.