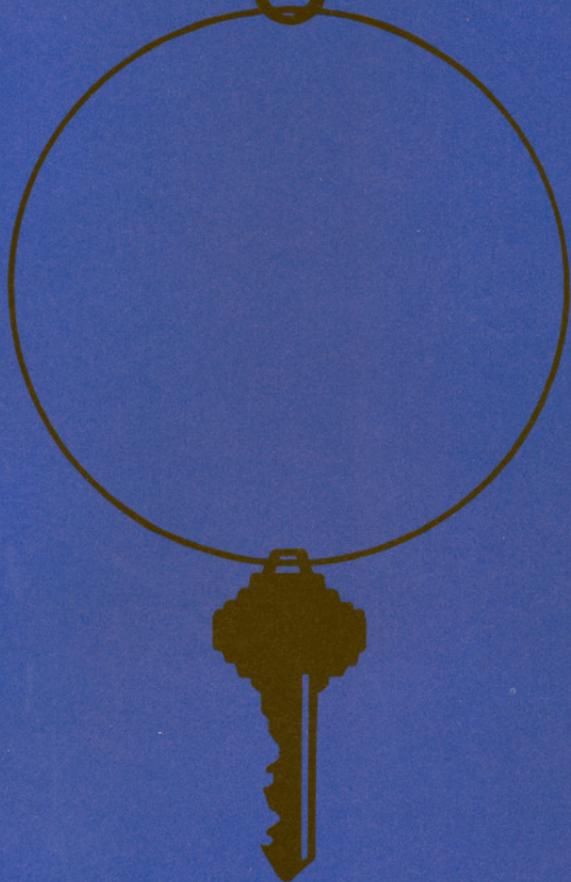




OUTSMARTING CRIME:



A Guide to Safer Living

FACTS AND MYTHS ABOUT CRIME

Opinion polls show that fear of crime is one of the greatest causes of worry for older people.

Concern can be healthy when it leads to reducing the chances of being victimized. On the other hand, living in constant fear takes the enjoyment out of life.

Attention to crime by newspapers and television may lead to the impression that crime is everywhere and that senior citizens are prime victims.

Here are some facts about crime:

- ★ Generally, older persons are not victimized by crime to a greater extent than the rest of the population, except in crimes such as purse snatching.
- ★ Crimes of violence, although feared the most, happen the least.
- ★ Most murders and assaults are committed by relatives or acquaintances as the result of a dispute. Very few are committed by strangers.
- ★ Despite widespread fear, the crime of rape rarely happens to women over 65. In fact, only about one percent of all known rape victims are women over 50.
- ★ The most frequent crimes are property crimes, such as burglary and theft from yards, and are most likely to happen when residents are away.

As an older person, you need not be paralyzed by fear of crime, especially if you take a few simple steps to reduce your chances of becoming a victim. You can even make your neighborhood a safer place to live.

IT'S A CRIME IF YOU'RE NOT PREPARED

Burglary

Burglary is the crime most likely to affect people of any age.

Burglars look for easy targets because most are amateurs, not accomplished professionals.

The amateur looks for opportunities to get valuables in the **easiest possible way** without being seen or heard. The easier you make it for the burglar, the more likely you are of being burglarized.

Discourage the thief by removing opportunity ...by being prepared.

By making it harder for the thief—by increasing the time it takes to forcibly enter a house and by increasing the chances of being seen or heard—crime can be discouraged.

Here are a few steps you can take to reduce the chances of your home or apartment being burglarized.

Operation Identification

Property marking is one of the oldest and best methods of crime prevention. Today, the most effective method of property marking is known as Operation Identification. There are three good reasons why you should join Operation Identification.

1. In the first place the Operation Identification sticker on your property discourages forced entry.
 2. If your things are stolen (or even lost and later recovered) your permanent I.D. number provides instant identification of the rightful owner. This is true even if the property is recovered in another county or state, thanks to the law enforcement computer network.
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3. Your permanent I.D. number will positively identify stolen property as yours when found in the possession of a thief. This is helpful in prosecuting those who have stolen property in their possession.

This is how Operation Identification works:

- ★ Obtain an electric engraving tool at no charge from the crime prevention officer of your local police department or buy one for \$5-\$10 at a hardware or department store.

Invisible ink markers are available from some agencies and stores. They can be used to mark items not easily engraved, such as fur coats, paintings, crystal, antiques, etc. It is also a good idea to take a photo of any such items.

- ★ Mark those items which are most commonly stolen—televisions, stereos, cameras—with your Permanent Identification Number (PIN). This number is assigned to you by your local police or sheriff's department when you enroll in Operation Identification.
- ★ Keep your valuables listed on a log such as the one that appears on page 22. In the event of a theft this will help you determine what is missing so you can describe your loss to police and insurance adjusters.
- ★ Finally, advertise your efforts. Place a large Crime Watch sticker in a prominent place on or near exterior doors of your residence so everyone knows you've joined Operation Identification. You might also place smaller Crime Watch stickers on larger items, such as your television. These stickers are available from your local law enforcement agencies.

For further information on the Operation Identification program in your community call your police department.

Securing Your Home

A second fundamental of burglary prevention is having good security features on your windows and doors. This section of the booklet highlights some security features you should consider. The crime prevention unit of your local police or sheriff's department can provide you with more details and, in many areas, will send someone to do a "premise survey" which will pinpoint the security strengths and weaknesses of your home. The service is free and the changes recommended can usually be made at modest cost.

Locks

Amazingly, 30 to 50 percent of home and apartment burglaries happen because someone didn't lock a door or window. In the case of windows, often they were even left open.

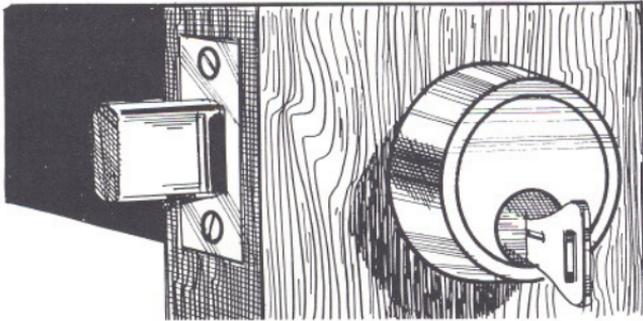
The practical advice which follows doesn't do any good if you don't learn to close and lock doors and windows as a matter of habit, even if you're going to be gone only for a few minutes.

Remember: a lock is not a lock unless you lock it.

Many homes and apartments, particularly modern ones, have locks burglars can open with relative ease. Make sure all exterior doors are equipped with **good** locks. Though there are many types of locks, most law enforcement experts suggest that residential doors should be equipped with one-inch deadbolt locks such as the one pictured on page 7.

This lock can be purchased from a local locksmith or hardware store where any questions regarding its installation can also be answered.

An inside chain guard is no substitute for a proper lock. If you have difficulty identifying visitors without opening the door, a wide-angle peephole can be installed in the door. It is far better than a chain guard.



Doors and Casings

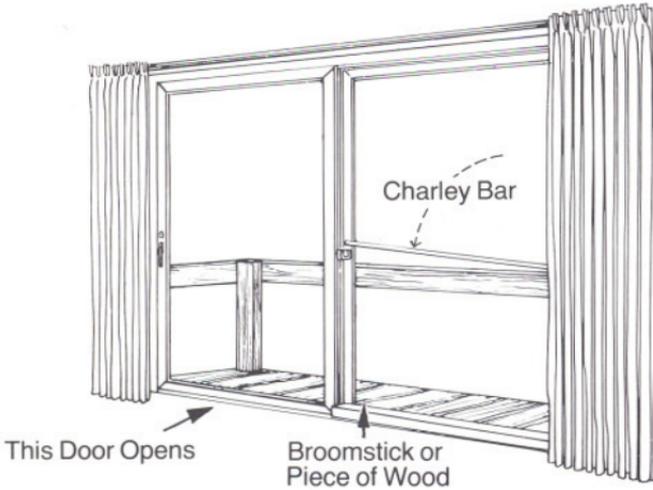
The best exterior door for a home or apartment is solid wood. Hollow-core doors are too fragile and should never be used for the exterior of a home or apartment.

Your local crime prevention staff can evaluate your doors and make recommendations.

There are ways of strengthening less-than-adequate doors at modest expense. For example, if a door has a large piece of glass in it, you can install a metal grill, or substitute unbreakable plastic.

A chain is only as good as its weakest link, so consider strengthening the casings around your exterior doors and the hinges that attach the door to the casing. Otherwise, a swift shove could open your door by breaking the hinges or the casing.

Remember that a side or back door, being less visible, may be subjected to a stronger attack than your front door. Good security is important for all exterior doors on every home and apartment.



Sliding glass doors in homes and apartments are a particular security problem because they can be forced open easily. To prevent forced sliding, have special locks installed; or place a broomstick or piece of wood in the track and simply slip it out when you want to open the door from the inside; or mount a Charley bar which folds down from the side for the same purpose. (See sketch above.)

It's not difficult to pry these doors from their tracks. To prevent that, insert a couple of sheet metal screws through the upper track into the frame with their heads protruding far enough so that the door just clears. (See sketch below.)

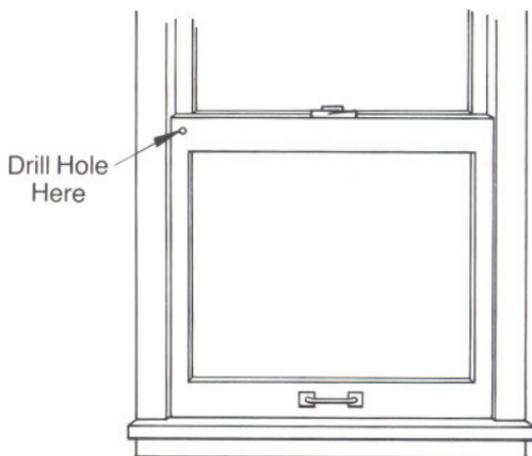


Windows

Most windows come equipped with locks. Remember to lock windows, especially when leaving, even if only for a short time.

Because many window locks do not provide ideal security, it's a good idea to supplement them. Special locks are available to provide extra security for various types of windows. In addition, here are some inexpensive techniques:

- ★ For windows that slide sideways, use the same broomstick method described for sliding doors.
- ★ Install a wood block in the track of the window frame to prevent the window from being opened more than the few inches required for ventilation.
- ★ For traditional, double-hung windows, drill a small hole at a slight downward angle through the first sash and into but not through the second (back) sash, as illustrated below. Then slip a large nail into the hole.



Outside Your Home

Good visibility will discourage any potential burglar. Standard exterior lighting is important, and in some cases additional lighting may be required to ensure security, particularly at back or side doors.

Even landscaping may require some attention. Heavy landscaping can provide a welcome screen for an intruder. If entrances and the windows are hidden from view, additional pruning or transplanting may be necessary.

Don't leave "hidden" house keys nearby. Most hiding spots are well-known to burglars.

Make sure the mail box is large enough to totally conceal mail, or better yet, install a slot in the door. Uncollected mail suggests no one is home.

Ladders should be kept inside to prevent use in reaching high windows.

Garages

In an attached garage, make sure the connecting entrance is secured as tightly as the front door. A door from the garage into the house is often the easiest point of entry for a burglar. A solid door with a one-inch deadbolt lock should be used.

Apartments

Persons living in apartments or retirement facilities may not be able to implement some of these suggestions themselves. However, talk to the manager about a specific plan to upgrade security in your building. It probably will be more effective to approach the manager with other tenants together with a representative from the police department. Official security standards have been adopted in some areas and should be of assistance.

When You're Away

During extended vacations, overnight trips or short walks, make sure your home looks lived-in.

- ★ Try to keep your garage door closed at all times so no one can see when your car is away or what items you have in the garage.
- ★ Either purchase an automatic timer or recruit a trusted neighbor to turn lights on at dusk and off at your usual bedtime. Vary the lights to be turned on and occasionally have the radio turned on.
- ★ Ask a neighbor to close your drapes at night and pick up your newspaper and mail. Never tell your newsboy that you will be gone. Cancel your paper rather than entering a "vacation stop".
- ★ For longer absences, ask your local law enforcement agency to keep an eye on your place. This is another free police service.
- ★ If you are associated with a group tour, see that your travel plans are not announced by the news media.

Get Help

Several counties have funds available to help older persons upgrade their security. Check the Resources Section of this booklet for further information on obtaining assistance.

Neighborhood Action/ Block Watch

A third fundamental of burglary prevention is neighborhood action. The crime prevention steps you and your neighbors take as a group are just as important as the things you do individually. In fact, widespread participation will make your individual efforts even more effective in deterring burglary, theft, vandalism and robbery. These programs, often called Block Watch or Neighborhood Watch, can work equally well in an apartment building or complex as in an area of single-family homes.

To begin a neighborhood action program, contact a crime prevention specialist with the law enforcement agency serving your community. Set a time when he/she can meet with a group of your neighbors to discuss the particular crime problems in your area and to develop a plan of action.

The plan should include an effort to get everyone to mark his/her property and to inform everyone of good home security practices. In addition, it should include watching out for suspicious or unusual activities in general and, specifically, keeping an eye on each other's homes during those times when no one is at home.

You will find it helpful to use a map similar to the one on page 23. Writing in the addresses and telephone numbers of your neighbors in advance is a good idea in case you need to call in with a specific report or for any kind of emergency.

A concerned and watchful neighborhood is important in preventing crime because most burglars are amateurs and they will be discouraged if they think they might be observed. Information you or your neighbors give the police about suspicious activities often will result in quicker and more successful efforts to solve crimes which might occur.

The law enforcement agency serving your community can provide information on the activity you should report and may be able to assist you with block organizing.

Fraud and Bunco

Fraud and bunco cost individuals thousands of dollars. Often the "victim" is not certain a crime has been committed, or is too embarrassed to take action. The con men/women who practice fraud and bunco often seek out older persons as victims although anyone can be a victim, no matter how intelligent, educated or knowledgeable.

Con artists and swindlers do not look like criminals. They are generally well-dressed, talkative and intelligent. Rather than dealing in force, they try to win your confidence with their expertise in applied psychology. They will often play on your natural inclination to be helpful or to get something for nothing.

Bunco

Two of the most obvious, yet frequent, bunco schemes are:

The Bank Examiner

This con game plays on the victim's good faith. Generally, a phony bank examiner will call and ask your assistance in a "secret plan" to catch a dishonest bank employee. He will ask that you withdraw a certain amount of cash from your account to be turned over to him so that the serial numbers can be checked. After turning your money over to the "examiner" you never see it again. Banks **never** use this procedure, only con men do.

★ **The Pigeon Drop**

The swindlers arrange for you to "share" a large sum of money which is "found". They only ask that you temporarily withdraw a large sum of "good faith" money from the bank. They then take your good faith money and make phony arrangements for you to collect your share of the found money.

Consumer Fraud

Citizens of all ages have problems with misleading and deceptive business practices. Many older persons, however, have common problems which make them particularly attractive to promoters of fraudulent schemes.

★ **Investment Schemes**

Older people are frequent targets for a range of investment possibilities involving retirement living or retirement incomes. There is no magic way to get rich so you should enter any investment program only after carefully checking all relevant factors.

Talk to people at your bank, other business advisors and the Better Business Bureau. The main thing to remember is: don't act impulsively. If you take time to carefully plan your investments, chances are that you won't fall into swindles or other problem deals.

★ **Home Repairs Schemes**

Beware of door-to-door sales of home improvements at special prices. Take time to check out the reputation of the people with whom you are dealing. In most cases, it is advisable to get estimates from several companies before making a decision. Be particularly cautious of sales people who try to pressure you to decide immediately.

★ **Medical Quackery**

Seventy percent of all medical quackery victims are older persons. Avoid health products or services that claim quick cures, guaranteed cures or secret formulas. Be particularly cautious if the cure is for an otherwise untreatable disease or condition. Some of these schemes will not only make you poorer but can be harmful.

Simply being aware of the possibility of swindle is a step toward eliminating it. Here is a list of some consumer hints:

1. **Cash**

Be cautious whenever asked to turn over sizable amounts of cash. Ask if a check is sufficient.

2. **Secret Plans**

Stay away from secret deals. Why are you being asked not to tell anyone?

3. **Contracts**

Never sign a contract without reading and understanding all of the terms.

4. **Sales**

Beware of the pressure sale and salespersons without identification. Consult others when doubtful. Insist on time to think it over.

5. **Get Rich Quick**

Any scheme that promises rich rewards should be carefully investigated.

If you're suspicious or feel you may need help, promptly contact your local police or call the Consumer Protection Division, Attorney General's Office, 102 State Capitol, St. Paul, Minnesota 55155 (Telephone: 612/296-3353).

Personal Security

Though it's unlikely you'll be personally victimized, remember that your own personal security depends on your ability to develop and maintain good safety patterns.

If you live in an area where crime is a serious problem, try following some of these suggestions to reduce crime opportunities.

★ At Home

For maximum protection against strangers, install a wide-angle peephole in your door. If you're unable to identify your visitor, ask to see identification. If you are at all suspicious, use the telephone to verify the I.D. before opening the door. It's better if someone who wants to use your phone remains outside your locked door while you offer to make the call.

If you return home and suspect someone is inside don't go in. Go to a neighbor's place and call the police.

It's unlikely you will ever be confronted by an intruder in your home, but if it does happen, remain calm and quiet. If in bed, stay quiet until you can call the police.

Try to observe both the intruder and the type and color of the getaway vehicle. If you can, note the escape direction and the license number.

Avoid physical violence at all costs. The Crime Watch brochure on personal protection ("Be on the Safe Side") contains more specific information.

★ **Walking**

Try to plan your trips during morning hours and, if possible, go with at least one other person. Stay on busy, well-lighted streets and walk close to the street instead of next to buildings. Avoid night trips whenever possible. Rather than carrying weapons which can be turned against you, carry a whistle in a handy spot. If you are being bothered at all or feel you may be attacked, blow the whistle in repeated bursts and sit down on the ground (to reduce the chance of getting knocked down), unless you can get to a safer place nearby.

★ **The Telephone**

Unidentified callers have no right to invade your privacy. Your best defense is a police-type whistle kept near your phone. In the event of a persistent or obscene call, blow it as loudly as you can into the voice portion of the receiver. Single women should use initials instead of first names in the telephone book listings.

★ **Your Money**

If you get social security or certain other retirement payments, have them deposited directly into your bank account. This eliminates the chance they'll be taken from your mailbox or that you'll be observed taking a month's livelihood to or from the bank.

★ **When Traveling**

Whether you drive or use public transportation, travel with at least one other person.

Use a bus schedule to minimize the length of time you have to wait—perhaps alone—at the bus stop.

Keep your car locked at all times when it's parked and when you're driving it. Keep the windows rolled up high enough so that an intruder can't reach inside. Do this as a matter of habit.

If harassed by someone on foot, honk your horn in short blasts and drive off. If followed by another car, honk your horn in the same way and pull into a police or fire station, drive-in restaurant, gas station or some other well-lighted place where others can help you. Never go home while still being followed. If you do, you will be indicating your address to the person following you.

When returning to your parked car, have your key ready to unlock the door without a lengthy pause. However, look inside the car first to make sure someone isn't hiding inside.

If you have car trouble, raise your hood and turn on your emergency flasher, but wait inside with the doors locked. If people stop to help, don't get out. Rather, ask them to call the police. If they really want to help, they'll make the call.

If you see a car in trouble, don't stop to help. Go to the next available phone and notify the police.

As a habit, keep valuables out of sight. Lock bags and packages in the car trunk.

Don't pick up hitchhikers.

Purse Snatching

Older women are particularly vulnerable to this special category of personal crime. It is a crime which usually occurs during the daytime.

The best way to avoid purse snatching is not to carry a purse. This is not really as impractical as it may seem since one of the biggest reasons for carrying a purse is force of habit. It might be well worth modifying the habit in order to reduce the opportunity for crime.

Try keeping a small amount of cash and/or a credit card in either a wallet or a compact cosmetic case to be carried in a concealed coat pocket. Women can have small hidden pockets sewn on the inside of their coats for the same purpose.

If you must carry a purse, carry house keys separately. That way, if your purse is lost or stolen, the keys won't be there along with your address. Try carrying the keys on a chain around your neck or on a rubber band around your wrist.

Carry your purse close to your body, preferably in front. Avoid wrapping the strap around your wrist; you're likely to get hurt if a robber yanks hard.

Never carry large amounts of cash. Use checks to pay for all bills, groceries and other purchases. Many banks provide checking accounts with no monthly service charge to persons over 65 (you pay only for the printing of the checks).

If you need to withdraw savings for a special purchase, get the amount as a check from the bank, not in cash.

Resources

You will find encouragement and support for almost anything you would like to do in the crime prevention field. Virtually everything you may need to get involved in crime prevention is available free.

Through the combined efforts of Minnesota Crime Watch, local law enforcement agencies and private organizations, you will find trained persons to provide guidance and a wide variety of informational booklets, film, slide shows and the like. Engraving markers usually may be borrowed at no charge.

Here is a listing of Crime Watch brochures available at your local law enforcement agency.

- "What to do Before the Burglar Comes" (residential security)
 - "Operation Identification"
 - "Be on the Safe Side" (personal security)
 - "Crime on Wheels" (auto and bike security)
 - "Rural Crime"
 - "Organized Crime"
 - "Commercial Security"
-

A packet of information entitled "Your Part in Crime Prevention" is also available for groups or organizations wishing to get involved in crime prevention activities. Contact Minnesota Crime Watch, Department of Public Safety.

Films and slide shows are available through local law enforcement crime prevention units. Of special interest to older persons is the excellent film, "Senior Power." Crime Watch slide shows on residential security, rural security, fraud and theft, and personal protection are also available. (A complete listing of crime prevention resource materials is available from police departments, sheriff's offices or the Minnesota Crime Watch office.)

There are two booklets covering much of the same information as this brochure, but in greater detail. One is "Your Retirement Anti-Crime Guide", published by NRTA-AARP (National Retired Teachers Association-American Association of Retired Persons). The other is "Crime Prevention Handbook for Senior Citizens", a more technical work published by the U.S. Department of Justice. Both are available from most public libraries.

The federal RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Programs) will provide reimbursement for mileage and other expenses of senior volunteers working in crime prevention programs in a number of communities. Perhaps you can help start a similar effort where you live. For openers, contact your police or sheriff's department.

BLOCK WATCH CHART



Fill in your own address and the name, address and phone number of your neighbors. If you see suspicious activity around your neighbor's house, call the police/sheriff emergency number.

POLICE/SHERIFF EMERGENCY NO. _____

Two simple line drawings of houses, each with a gabled roof and a chimney, positioned side-by-side within a rectangular frame.Two simple line drawings of houses, each with a gabled roof and a chimney, positioned side-by-side within a rectangular frame.

STREET

A vertical column of six simple line drawings of houses, each with a gabled roof and a chimney, arranged in two columns of three within a rectangular frame.A vertical column of six simple line drawings of houses, each with a gabled roof and a chimney, arranged in two columns of three within a rectangular frame.

STREET

EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Police/Sheriff Emergency _____

Police/Sheriff Information _____

Fire Emergency _____

Fire Information _____

Neighbor _____

Neighbor _____

Neighbor _____

Neighbor _____

Doctor _____

Doctor _____

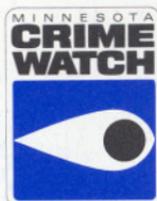
Dentist _____

Pharmacy _____

Apartment Manager _____

Crime Prevention Officer _____

Other _____



Minnesota Department of Public Safety