

Personal Safety – Out of your home

One of the key parts of self protection is learning how to avoid you becoming a victim of crime, to remove the opportunity for the offender.

Personal safety information is common sense, and takes little effort to put into common practice.

Think about the following safety plans - they are important steps towards protecting yourself and your family.

Out and About

- **Do not look like a victim** - be streetwise. Some areas are best avoided. Almost 50% of assaults happen in daylight. Walk briskly with a sense of purpose. Be aware that thugs often operate in teams, one distracting in front whilst another attacks from behind - striking or snatching a bag. If you do encounter an attacker or intruder, never try to block their exit.
- On a busy street, carry your handbag on the side furthest from the road and keep the contents to a minimum, keep valuables in your pocket. The less there is in a handbag the less likely you are to fight for it, and the less likely you are to get hurt. If it is snatched let it go and get a good description of the thief and remember his/her direction of travel. On an escalator, keep your handbag nearest to the wall, away from people on the opposite side
- Keep your wallet in a deep pocket or a pocket that can button up.
- Do not put address labels on keys. If you lose your keys, change your locks immediately.
- Do not keep cheque cards and chequebooks together and do not write your personal identification number (PIN) on the chequebook or on any other piece of paper in your bag, purse or wallet. Neither the police nor the bank will contact you to ask for these details, so do not give details over the telephone to anyone. If there is a problem, the bank will issue you with a new card and a new PIN.
- If your debit or credit card is lost or stolen, let the bank/card company know immediately.
- Never walk down the street too close to buildings. An attacker could pull you into a doorway.
- If you live alone, never put your title or first name in the phone book or on a doorplate.
- Most muggings take place between 4pm and 6pm, when people are finishing work tired and not particularly alert.
- When approaching your parked car or your front door, always have your keys ready in your hand.
- When walking, be confident, walk with purpose, and always walk towards oncoming traffic. Carry a stout walking stick or an umbrella.
- Do not leave keys in hiding places - for example under the door mat, on a string through the letterbox, or under a flowerpot. Thieves know all of the hiding places.
- Always come home to a light, which has been activated either by a time or light-sensitive switch.

Remember: Fighting back is not always a good thing - you could get hurt.

Taxis

- Avoid mini-cabs or private hire cars that tout for business. Always prebook a taxi.
- Check the taxi that arrives is the one you ordered.
- Always sit behind the driver.
- When you arrive home, ask the driver to wait until you are inside.

- If you feel uneasy ask to be let out in a well-lit area with plenty of people around.
- **If in doubt - don't get in the taxi.**

Public Transport

- Try to avoid isolated bus stops, especially after dark. Return to the bus stop rather than waiting there for a long period of time.
- Sit near the driver on an empty bus.
- On a train, sit in a compartment with other people - sit near the exit. Check where the emergency chain is. If the carriage becomes empty or your feelings cause you to worry, trust in those feelings and move to another carriage with other people.
- When on the train, sit in a carriage with other people.
- Listening to ipods or reading a book are distractions, which may cause you to miss someone approaching, or a situation developing.
- Avoid confrontation with drunken, aggressive, or persistent people and move away from them. Do not get cornered by these undesirables.

When driving in your car

- Lock the doors when you are on your own, especially after dark.
- Keep valuables out of sight. Where valuables are on view there is an increased chance for the opportunist thief to quickly open the door and grab them at road junctions or traffic lights. Do not leave handbags, wallets on seats.
- Never leave any property in unattended motor vehicles.
- Look after your car - keep it in good mechanical condition.
- Plan your route and let someone know your whereabouts.
- Join a breakdown service.
- If you can, use a secured car park and check your car before getting in.
- Take particular care when parking/reversing - have you sufficient space to manoeuvre if you are in a hurry?
- After dark, park in a well lit busy area - remember to consider whilst parking in the day how things will look if you return to your car after dark. Avoid parking near bushes - it could hide an attacker
- If you think you are being followed in your car, never go home - drive to a police station if possible or any area where there are other people.
- Carry a torch and make sure it is in working order. Carry a spare petrol can.
- Don't leave your car unlocked whilst paying for petrol

Motorway Driving – If you break down

- Try to get to an emergency telephone and pull over to hard shoulder - do not wander around hard shoulder.
- Once you have used the emergency phone to report your breakdown, if you have a mobile phone, contact your family to let them know you will be late.
- Check your car when returning to it but wait away from it, standing on the grass embankment.
- If alone, leave passenger door open and stand on verge.
- Do not accept help or lift from other drivers - wait for breakdown service or the police.