

Common Sense Crime Prevention for the Elderly

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Crime and the fear of crime create special problems for the elderly. Understanding the nature of the problem and knowing what to do to avoid being a victim of crime can help you. The following commonsense advice can be effective when you follow these tips.

Walking

In Stores

In Your Car

Banking

At Your Door/Home

WALKING

Always plan your route and stay alert to your surroundings. Walk confidently.

Have a companion accompany you.

Stay away from buildings and doorways; walk in well-lighted areas.

Have your key ready when approaching your front door.

Don't dangle your purse away from your body. (Twelve percent of all crimes against the elderly are purse snatchings and street robberies.)

Don't carry large, bulky shoulder bags; carry only what you need. Better yet, sew a small pocket inside your jacket or coat. If you don't have a purse, no one will try to snatch it.

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IN STORES

Don't display large sums of cash.

Never leave your purse unattended.

Use checks where possible.

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IN YOUR CAR

Always keep your car doors locked, whether you are in or out of your car.

At stop signs and traffic lights, keep the car in gear.

Travel well-lit and busy streets. Plan your route.

Don't leave your purse on the seat beside you; put it on the floor, where it is more difficult for someone to grab it.

Lock bundles or bags in the trunk. If interesting packages are out of sight, a thief will be less tempted to break in to steal them.

When returning to your car, check the front seat, back seat, and floor before entering.

Never pick up hitchhikers.

If your car should break down, get far enough off the road, turn on your emergency flashers, raise the hood, get back into the car, lock the door, and wait for help.

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BANKING

Many criminals know exactly when government checks arrive each month, and may pick that day to attack. Avoid this by using Direct Deposit, which sends your money directly from the government to the bank of your choice. And, at many banks, free checking accounts are available to senior citizens. Your bank has all the information.

You should store valuables in a Safe Deposit Box.

Never give your money to someone who calls on you, identifying himself as a bank official. A bank will never ask you to remove your money. Banks need the use of your money, and they don't want one of their customers to invite crime by having large amounts of cash around.

When someone approaches you with a get-rich-quick-scheme involving some or all of YOUR savings, it is HIS get-rich-quick-scheme. If it is a legitimate investment, the opportunity to contribute your funds will still be there tomorrow-after you have had time to consider it.

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AT YOUR DOOR/HOME

Never open your door automatically. Use an optical viewer. At night, draw your blinds or draperies.

Lock your doors and windows. (Three quarters of the burglaries involving older persons involved unlocked doors and

windows; and, less than one half of these robberies are reported.) Keep your garage doors locked.

Vary your daily routine.

Use "Neighbor Watch" to keep an eye on your neighborhood. A concerned neighbor is often the best protection against crime because suspicious persons and activities are noticed and reported to police promptly.

Don't leave notes on the door when going out.

Leave lights on when going out at night; use a timer to turn lights on and off when you are away for an extended period.

Don't place keys under mats, in mail boxes, or other receptacles outside your door.

Notify neighbors and the police when going away on a trip. Cancel deliveries such as newspapers and arrange for someone - a neighbor's child, perhaps - to mow the lawn if need be. Arrange for your mail to be held by the Post Office, or ask a neighbor to collect it for you.

Be wary of unsolicited offers to make repairs to your home. Deal only with reputable businesses.

Keep an inventory with serial numbers and photographs of resaleable appliances, antiques and furniture. Leave copies in a safe place.

Don't hesitate to report crime or suspicious activities.

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This crime prevention information is brought to you by:

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