



Crime Prevention Tips & Agency Referrals

Crime Prevention Tips for Seniors, 2001,
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Solicitor General

Seniors Fraud Awareness Campaign 2001

Recognizing the Risks

In Alberta and across Canada, seniors are less likely to report themselves as victims of crime than younger age groups. A 2000 Environics Poll in Alberta showed that only 7% of respondents aged 65 or older reported being victims of crime in the past year, while among those aged 18-24, 43% reported being victimized during the same period.

However, fear of crime or fear of being victimized is a concern of many seniors. Only 24% of seniors in Alberta reported feeling very comfortable or somewhat comfortable walking alone at night in their neighborhoods, compared to 47% of all other respondents¹

Crime Prevention Tips For Seniors

Personal safety and crime prevention tips apply to all regardless of age. However, there are some things seniors can do to further reduce their likelihood of being victimized.²

In your community:

- Walk only in well-lit areas.
- Do not burden yourself with packages or a bulky purse.
- Never display large sums of money in public.
- Go shopping in pairs or in a group.
- Walk in the centre of the sidewalk, away from alleys and doorways.
- If you suspect you are being followed, cross the street, go to the nearest home, service station, or business and call the police.

In your home:

- Keep valuables in a safety deposit box at your bank. If this is not possible, keep them locked in a hiding place in your home.
- Mark valuable items for identification.
- Don't keep large amounts of cash at home.
- Get to know your neighbours.

Protect yourself from fraud:

- Always inspect the credentials of anyone who contacts you or comes to your door.
- Contact the police and your bank if anyone claiming to be a bank examiner contacts you and asks for your assistance.
- Never leave strangers unattended in your home.
- Be cautious of "just passing by" home repairmen offering repair work at a savings. Check the offer first with the Better Business Bureau, Alberta Government Services Consumer Information Centre, or a reputable repair company.
- Never sign a contract that you have not read or do not fully understand.

- Before investing money get a second opinion from a spouse, friend, financial advisor or lawyer.
- Avoid suspicious contests, travel club offers, retirement estates offered “site unseen” and telephone solicitation.

Some habits, such as carrying large amounts of cash, or cashing cheques at month end are no longer considered safe. It would be wise to explore options for “direct deposit” or “direct payment” with your financial institution. Carrying a credit card or a cheque is safer than carrying cash in case of emergency.³ Contact the crime prevention section of your local police service to further explore safety options.

Ideas For Crime Prevention Activities For Seniors

- Educate seniors about fraud and how to avoid becoming a victim.
- Identify protective measures in senior’s homes.
- Help seniors arrange any needed modifications to lighting, locks, and home security.
- Pair seniors and students in researching mutual concerns such as crime prevention or drug use.
- Create drama productions about seniors’ issues.

For More Information

- **Alberta Seniors** at www.seniors.gov.ab.ca or through the Alberta Seniors Information Line: 1-800-642-3853
- **The Senior Friendly Challenge**, Alberta Council on Aging at www.compumart.ab.ca/acaging or (780) 423-7781
- **Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation** booklet “Safe at Home” and “How to Lock Out Crime” at www.-schl.gc.ca or 1-800-668-2642
- **Wise Owls – “Heads Up” Fraud Prevention Program for Seniors**, Edmonton Police Service www.heads-up.ca or (780) 421-3562
- **ABCs of FRAUD, Calgary Seniors’ Resource Society** (403) 266-6200
- **Edmonton Elder Abuse Intervention Team**, (780) 451-9243
- **Office for the Prevention of Family Violence**, (780) 422-5916
- **The Kerby Centre**, Calgary (403) 265-0661
- **Protection for Persons in Care Act reporting line** to report abuse in a care facility toll free: 1-888-357-9339
- **Alberta Government Services Consumer Information Centre** at www.gov.ab.ca/gs or toll free: 1-877-427-4088
- **Better Business Bureau Central and Northern Alberta** at www.edmontonbbb.org or toll free: 1-800-232-7298

¹ *Alberta Justice Public Survey*. 2000

² *Seniors Guidebook to Safety and Security*, RCMP. 1994 and *Theft Prevention for Seniors*. Edmonton Police Service

³ *Theft Prevention for Seniors*. Edmonton Police Service