



Seniors' Guidebook to Safety and Security



Royal Canadian Mounted Police Gendarmerie royale du Canada

Canada

INTRODUCTION

Working together we can develop safer communities.

Education and awareness of preventive techniques can help you recognize a potential crime situation and allow positive action to be taken that will reduce or remove the risk.

Becoming involved in your community along with your local police can increase your sense of security and enhance programs and services available to your community.

THINKING SAFETY

SAFETY IN YOUR HOME

For the majority of people, a feeling of security is found in the safety of their homes. However, many Canadians fail to take even fundamental precautions to secure their homes against robbery.

There are a number of precautions you can take that will reduce the opportunities that a burglar is looking for.

PREVENTION TIPS

1. Conduct a security check of your home to determine possible entry points and any weaknesses they may have.
2. Keep all entrances and garages well-lit at night.
3. Do not leave tell-tale signs that you are away.
4. Install good locks and always use them.
5. Install a wide-angle door viewer which permits you to see callers before you open the door.
6. Never open a door to strangers without credentials.

7. Change your routine often. Burglars can operate on your routine!
8. Do not keep large amounts of money in your home.
9. Mark valuable items for identification. The Operation Identification program has been developed by police to assist people in marking their property.
10. Keep valuables in a safety deposit box at your bank. If this is not possible, keep them locked up in a reasonable hiding place in your home.

Note: A few inexpensive but rich-looking pieces kept in the jewellery box as a decoy may deter unnecessary ransacking of your home in search of valuables.

WHAT IF.....

A burglar assumes you are not home and enters without checking.

- Do not attack the burglar who is as likely to be as frightened as you are.
- Try to memorize a description of the person, particularly facial characteristics.
- When the burglar leaves, call the police immediately.

FACTS AND FICTION

The portrayal of a burglar as a sinister thief operating at night, a handkerchief over his face, coat collar turned up and peaked cap on his head is misleading and inaccurate.

Statistics indicate that the thief will most probably be one of the male youths in the neighbourhood, usually under 30 and most likely a teenager.

He may be well dressed, wearing a recognizable uniform or a suit jacket.

It will more than likely be broad daylight.

The typical burglar does not want to harm you, just get into your home, steal what is available and valuable, and get out as quickly as possible, unobserved.

AWAY FROM HOME

It is important to take extra care in securing your home when you are going to be away for any length of time. Not only should your home be secure but it should also appear lived in.

PREVENTION TIPS

1. Secure all windows, doors and garage before you leave.
2. Leave a radio playing to indicate that someone is home.
3. Leave one or two lights on, preferably timers that turn on according to how dark it is outside.
4. Discontinue mail, milk and newspaper deliveries.
5. Arrange to have someone pick up any newspapers or mail that are left on your step.

6. Leave a key with someone you trust.
7. Let your neighbours know your going to be away, for how long and where you can be contacted if necessary.

SAFETY ON THE STREET

If street crimes (purse snatching, robberies, assaults, etc.) are a problem in your neighbourhood and you have a fear of being victimized, there are ways in which you can reduce the risk of victimization and increase your sense of personal security.

PREVENTION TIPS

1. Walk only in well-lit areas.
2. Do not burden yourself with packages and a bulky purse.
3. Never display large sums of money in public.
4. Go shopping in pairs or in a group.
5. Walk in the centre of the sidewalk, away from alleys and doorways.
6. If you suspect you are being followed, cross the street, go to the nearest home, service station or business and call the police.
7. Be aware of your surroundings and avoid areas that increase your chances of being assaulted.
8. Report problem areas to police. The police welcome the information and can also advise you of prevention methods.

SAFETY IN YOUR VEHICLE

There are some common-sense rules that motorists should follow under certain conditions. Rely on your judgement and assessment of the situation to tell you what you should do.

PREVENTION TIPS

1. Remember to keep your vehicle locked at all times, whether moving or parked.
2. If you are driving at night, use well-lit streets and parking lots that are open for easy observation.
3. Be cautious of any stranger approaching your vehicle. If you feel you are in danger, press the horn repeatedly in short blasts; this will attract attention.
4. If you think you are being followed, pull into the nearest gas station or safe place. Do not drive home.
5. Plan and know your route before you leave, whether it is for a short drive in the city or a long trip in the country.
6. Do not pick up hitchhikers.

7. View the interior of your car before getting in to make sure no one is hiding inside, even if the doors are locked.
8. Have keys in hand so you do not have to linger before entering your car.

WHAT IF....

Your vehicle breaks down in an isolated area.

1. Pull your vehicle off the road so you will be out of the traffic;
2. Turn on the emergency (four-way) flasher;
3. Raise the hood of your vehicle;
4. Then stay in your car with all doors locked and windows rolled up;
5. Wait for help to come to you - a patrolling police car or another motorist;
6. Should a passing motorist stop, stay in your car and ask him/her to send help back to you. (You must use your judgement in this situation.)

CON ARTISTS AND THEIR GAMES

NOT ME!

Generally, people believe it cannot happen to them. But one has to remember that con artists are clever actors appearing friendly and trustworthy. We all have a particular image of what a CON ARTIST is or looks like, however, when faced with the real thing we can be fooled.

The con artist is usually a stranger to you and can be male or female. Usually they will approach you when you are alone, so that no one else can overhear the conversation, however, in some instances, two or more people will work as a team. A con artist may approach you on the street, by telephone or at your home.

Remember con artists want only one thing from you, your money.

By arming yourself with knowledge of how the con artist operates, you will reduce your chances of becoming a victim of a con game.

CON GAMES

PIGEON DROP: An individual claims to have found a large sum of money and offers to share it with you. You are asked to withdraw "good faith" money from your bank. The con artist may either request that you simply show the money by placing it in a particular wallet, later switching the wallet with one that does not have any money in it or the con artist takes your "good faith" money and gives you a phoney address where you are to collect your share of the found money. Either way the end result is you lose your "good faith" money.

- Refuse to participate in any deal requiring you to demonstrate your financial ability to a stranger.

BANK EXAMINER: An individual claiming to be a bank examiner contacts you and requests your assistance and co-operation in helping them uncover a suspected dishonest bank employee. You are asked to withdraw a specified amount of cash from your account. The bank examiner takes your money, supposedly to check the serial numbers. You never see the phoney bank examiner or your money again.

- Contact the police immediately if you are asked to participate in such a scheme.
- Contact your bank, particularly someone you deal with regularly.

DIVERSION: Two or more individuals knock on your door. One person claims to need your help, which requires you to leave the entrance way. While you are away helping this person, the other enters your home and takes what he/she can before you return. It may be days before you realize you have been robbed.

- Never leave strangers unattended in your home.

Note: Many of the diversion tactics are referred to as "Gypsy Scams".

HOME IMPROVEMENT: A travelling repair person knocks on your door and states while driving by he or she noticed that the brick work on your home is deteriorating, your house needs some painting or the porch needs repairs. This person just happens to have left-over material from another job and can do your repair work at a considerable saving.

- Be extremely cautious of the "just passing by" home repairman. The left-over material offered may be stolen or defective.
- Resist the impulse to grab this "bargain". When in doubt, check the offer with your local Better Business Bureau or with a reputable company that supplies a similar service and materials.

UTILITY INSPECTOR: An individual claiming to be an inspector from your local utility company knocks on your door. He or she claims to be conducting a routine inspection and requests to take a look at your meter, furnace or fuse box. This inspector informs you that you are breaking a number of regulations and if you do not have this fixed within 24 hours, your water, gas or electricity will be cut off. The inspector then informs you that he/she happens to have a friend that can do the job on short notice at a reasonable price. In actual fact, there is nothing wrong with your utilities.

- Check the credentials of any public official or salesperson.
- Call the utility company directly to verify the credentials of the "inspector" and the inspection notice.
- Use your telephone directory when calling the utility company, rather than the number given to you by the "inspector".

MEDICAL FRAUD: An ad, usually found in magazines, offers a miracle cure for cancer, arthritis or some other disease. The advertisement states that for \$29.99 they will send you a bracelet or some other device that will cure your ailment. You are asked to send a certified cheque or money order to some mail order clinic. Four to six weeks later you receive the so-called miracle cure, or cure-all. Unfortunately there is no such thing as a cure-all or miracle cure.

- If you suffer from a particular ailment, seek the advice and services of qualified medical practitioners.
- Phoney medical treatment purchased through the mail should be reported to your physician, local medical authorities or police.

WORK-AT-HOME: A newspaper/magazine ad states that you can earn extra money at home by sewing or by doing some other task. It states that a sample of your work plus a small "registration fee" are required. Unfortunately your work may not be returned and you may never hear from the alleged promoter(s).

- Do not enter into any business transaction you have not thoroughly examined.
- It would be to your financial and personal benefit to consult with the Better Business Bureau.

CONTRACTS: In an attempt to have you to sign a contract, a salesperson may tell you: "It is just a formality"; "There is nothing to be concerned about"; or "It is for your protection". However, there may be clauses in the contract that go beyond what you have been verbally led to believe. Once you have signed, the contract is binding and you are obligated to meet the terms of the agreement. Even if the contract is questionable, for you to break the contract may require expensive legal services.

- Never sign a contract that you have not read and fully understand. If you have any doubts, seek advice from your lawyer, banker or someone who has some expertise with contracts.

CAUTION: Common Expressions Used By Con Artists

- Cash only
- Last chance!
- Today only!
- Limited offer!
- Too good to pass up!
- Something for nothing
- Free with...
- Just between you and me
- Easy buck
- Double your money
- You have won!

CONSUMER BEWARE

WHO? HOW? WHERE? WHEN? WHY?

As a consumer, you must recognize both the risk and responsibility involved with each transaction you make. Whether you are dealing with a door-to-door salesperson, telephone solicitor or through the mail, you are taking a risk.

It is your responsibility to be alert, to be familiar with common consumer frauds and well informed on tips that may prevent you from becoming a victim of consumer fraud.

COMMON CONSUMER FRAUDS

Suspicious "Contests" - You are notified, usually by mail, that your name has been selected in a draw and are eligible to win a large sum of money. You are requested to sign the form as well as select two or three gift purchases for \$29.95 and return the order form and money. This is a come-on to involve you in a transaction to purchase goods under the premise you may win the large sum of money.

Misleading Ads - For \$19.95 you can purchase this 9 x 12 rug. Order early as supplies are limited. You forward your money order or certified cheque. If you do receive your rug, it is 9 x 12 inches, not feet as you thought. Read your advertisements carefully.

Retirement Estates/Property - Be suspicious of advertisements found in papers, magazines or brochures promoting real estate sales of retirement lots, villas, condominiums, etc., in other countries, SITE UNSEEN.

Travel Club Offers - Join our club and win a free vacation to a foreign paradise. The impression created by the solicitor is that a valuable prize has been won. Instead, the cost of the "free" vacation is often paid through inflated credit card charges. The actual vacation seldom complies with the representations made and frequently contains additional, hidden costs which must be paid during the vacation.

Tele-marketing/Telephone Solicitation - Telephone solicitation is a recognized legitimate business practice for the sale of goods and services, canvassing for charitable donations or conducting surveys. However, as a marketing technique, telephone solicitation can be susceptible to misuse. Telephone solicitation is not something to fear but is a technique the consumer must understand and be cautious of. As you are the consumer receiving the telephone call - YOU are in control - if YOU do NOT wish to buy, politely hang up the telephone.

PREVENTION TIPS

1. Watch out for products that are promoted with prizes or free trips;
2. Be suspicious of "no-risk" claims or promises of huge financial gain;
3. Beware of individuals or firms that operate outside of Canada. If they are fraudulent they cannot be prosecuted, ie. travel scams to Florida;
4. Resist pressure to act immediately; act on reason not impulse;
5. Before investing your money, get a second opinion from a spouse, friend, financial adviser or attorney;
6. Consult with the Better Business Bureau or your lawyer regarding large investments. This may save you financial grief;
7. Find out the percentage of money the charity receives before making a donation to charitable organizations over the phone;
8. Do not give your credit card number over the phone unless you are absolutely certain that the caller is legitimate;
9. Avoid giving out personal information over the telephone (your name, address, marital status or

personal history);

10. Be careful when someone offers to deliver a product to your home. By telling them when it would be convenient, you may be providing them with the times when your house will be vacant.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

A secure environment takes more than locks and lights. It involves working with your neighbours and the local police in identifying community problems and implementing programs and services to create a safer and more secure environment.

CRIME PREVENTION PROGRAMS

- Home security
- Street safety
- Auto theft
- Consumer fraud
- Confidence schemes

VICTIM SERVICES

Provide information on:

- Status of police investigation
- Court procedures
- Support services available in your area

Provide referrals for:

- Legal information
- Financial help
- Counselling services

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

- "Watch" programs
- Volunteer programs

- Consultative groups
- Crime prevention committees
- Education & awareness programs

CONTACT YOUR POLICE DEPARTMENT IN ORDER TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ON PROGRAMS AVAILABLE IN YOUR AREA AND TO PROVIDE SUGGESTIONS FOR NEW INITIATIVES.

CONCLUSION

This booklet deals with crimes that are most likely to happen to YOU. The fear of violent crimes, however, can greatly affect you, even though as a senior adult you are less likely to be a victim of a violent crime.

Isolation, media sensationalism, physical and social changes in one's life can lead to a heightened sense of vulnerability. By becoming involved in your community and participating in crime prevention programs, you can reduce your sense of vulnerability.

There is evidence that some people who have been victimized are too embarrassed to report the incident to the authorities. For your own well-being and to help others from becoming victims, if you have been victimized (or think you have been) **REPORT THE CIRCUMSTANCES IMMEDIATELY TO YOUR LOCAL POLICE DEPARTMENT.**

For more information, please contact:

RCMP Headquarters
Community, Contract and Aboriginal Policing Directorate
1200 Vanier Parkway
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0R2

or your local RCMP Detachment

HOME SECURITY INFORMATION FORM

POLICE #: _____

AMBULANCE#: _____

FIRE #: _____

My home address is: _____

The nearest major intersection is: _____

A neighbour to contact is _____ at _____

Phone # _____ or _____

My family doctor is Dr. _____ at _____

Phone #: _____ or _____

The Better Business Bureau phone # is _____

The electricity company emergency phone # is _____

The gas/oil company emergency phone # is _____

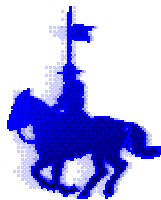
The water company emergency phone # is _____

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