

CRIME PREVENTION

TIPS FOR

SENIOR CITIZENS



Police alone cannot prevent crime; we must all do our part.
The more you know what to look for, what to do, and where to go, the safer you will be.
Our best defense is education.

Avoid Con Artists and Scams

Con artists prey on older people who worry about insurance, investments, and maintaining their homes. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

Be wary of:

- Schemes that require you to put up “good faith” money;
- Investments that promise unusually high returns;
- Home repairs costs well below the norm;
- Services requiring cash only payments or payment before work begins;
- At home business opportunities that require money down;
- Unsolicited phone calls asking for personal information;
- Businesses that cannot be contacted or found in the phone directory;
- Secret or miracle cures to health problems.

What should you do?

- Always ask to see a solicitor’s permit issued by the city.
- Hang up on any demanding or suspicious callers.
- Do not use phone numbers given to you by unsolicited callers.
- Check out all persons or companies before doing business with them.
- Seek second opinions from family members or trusted friends.
- Read any written material very carefully before signing.
- Check for local scams at www.sanantonio.gov/sapd/SCAMS.asp.
- Report business concerns to Better Business Bureau (210-828-9441).
- Victims should call National Fraud Information Center (800-876-7060).



CRIMINALS LOOK FOR EASY TARGETS



The helpful hints and common-sense actions below will help you become less of a target and build confidence in your ability to protect yourself.

At home

- Exterior doors should be solid wood or metal with deadbolt locks. Keep them locked, even when you are at home. Lock all windows and use extra security devices on sliding doors.
- Don't put an address tag on your key ring, and don't hide an extra key under a door-mat or flower pot. If necessary, leave an extra key with a neighbor.
- Make sure your porches, entrances, garages and yard are well-lighted. Keep all window curtains closed at night. Keep shrubs around windows trimmed.
- Use timers on lights and radios when you are away from home, to make it appear the home is occupied. Consider installing a monitored alarm system.
- Install a wide-angle peephole to identify people who come to the front door.
- Ensure your street address number is clearly visible from the street, especially at night. This can significantly reduce response time for emergency personnel.
- Let neighbors know when you go on a trip so they can watch out for your house or apartment. Return the favor when they go away.
- Know your neighbors and keep their phone numbers readily available.
- If you live alone, do not advertise it. Use only your first initial in phone books and directories.
- Don't keep large amounts of cash at home. Use Direct Deposit for Social Security and pension checks. Consider paying all your bills electronically.
- Do not place mail with personal information in your mail box. Drop it off in the post office. Shred all documents containing personal information before discarding.
- Mark valuable property like televisions with an Operation IDentification number. Keep a list of these numbers property descriptions in a safe place. Make a photographic inventory of jewelry and antiques.

**If you suspect a burglar has broken into your home, do not go in.
Go quietly to a neighbor and call 911.**

On the town

- Go out with a friend whenever possible.
- Let someone know where you are going and when you expect to return.
- Stay alert and tuned into your surroundings. Walk in a confident, relaxed manner, but don't daydream. If you feel uncomfortable in a place or situation, leave.
- Try carrying a small change purse with only the money or credit cards that you need. Keep your wallet in an inside jacket or front pants pocket.
- If you must carry a purse, hold it close to your body. Don't dangle it. Never leave your purse in the shopping cart.
- Don't display large amounts of cash in stores or public places. Don't put your wallet or purse on the counter while you examine the merchandise.
- Don't burden yourself with packages. Don't wear shoes and clothing that restricts your movements.
- Walk on well-lighted, busy streets. Stay away from vacant lots, alleys, and deserted streets, even if they are the shortest route.
- If someone grabs your purse or packages, try to keep your balance, get away, and shout for help. Use your shriek alarm if you have one.

On the Road

- Always know how to get where you are going before you leave.
- Keep your gas tank at least half full at all times.
- When you drive, keep the doors locked windows up and buckle up.
- Never pick up hitchhikers.
- Park in well-lighted, busy areas. Always lock your car doors. Never leave keys in the ignition when you leave the car, even for a few minutes.
- Don't leave packages or other tempting articles in view in a locked car. Lock them in the trunk.
- Have your car key in hand as you approach your vehicle. Look in the front and back seat before entering the car. If there are suspicious persons near your vehicle, return to the store or public place.
- If you have car problems, be especially wary of strangers offering help. Stay in the car, turn on your flashers and ask them to call a service truck and the police.

**If the attacker is only after your valuables, don't resist.
Make a conscious effort to get a description of the attacker and immediately call police.**

Problem

Individuals over the age of 65 are less likely to become victims of most types of crimes. Seniors are more vulnerable to certain crimes such as purse snatching, mugging and fraud. However, shutting yourself up in your home actually makes it easier for criminals to work in your neighborhood.

Solution

Become a less likely target of criminals by being careful, alert and a good neighbor. Work out a buddy system with a neighbor to check on each other every day. Become an active member of your community and join or start a Neighborhood Watch program in your area.

Do not trust anything on face value. Thoroughly investigate any business deals before signing a contract or making a verbal agreement. Do not be afraid to say no. Report any questionable transactions to the appropriate authorities. Report any criminal activity to the police.

Assistance

Emergencies or crime in progress:	911
Police Non-emergencies , e.g. Suspicious person, vehicle or activity:	658-5353, Ext 1
Fire Department	659-0333, Ext. 249
Universal City (U.C.) Administration:	659-0333
U.C. Neighborhood Watch Coordinator	<u>nwc@uccpaaa.org</u>
Texas Adult Protective Services	800-252-5400



www.uccpaaa.org

National Crime Prevention Council
www.npc.org