



## Harford County SHERIFF'S OFFICE

*With courage, honor and integrity, we protect the rights of all citizens*

### Personal Security and Safety

While there are countless possible personal safety practices that may be applicable in different contexts and for specific crimes, certain basic crime prevention techniques are generally applicable. Some general rules; (1) Wherever you are, stay alert and tuned into your surroundings. Don't daydream or become preoccupied. (2) Communicate the message that you're calm, confident, and know where you're going. Stand tall, walk purposefully, and make quick eye contact with people around you.

#### Safety in Living Units

1. Living alone should not be advertised
  - a. Initials should be used on mailbox, address labels, and in the telephone directory instead of full name.
  - b. If alone and you are not expecting visitors, when the doorbell rings, call out, "I'll get it, John", as though someone is with you.
  - c. Draw the shades and drapes at night.
2. House should always look and sound occupied
  - a. Timers should be used to turn on lights at night. Timers can be set to coincide with personal habits.
  - b. Use porch light with photoelectric cell.
  - c. Play the radio on a talk station.
  - d. Don't leave the telephone off the hook if leaving home for a considerable period during the day. Consider call forwarding.
  - e. Notify neighbor if going away; ask them to collect mail, newspapers, etc.
  - f. Do not pin notes on door.
  - g. Keep a bathroom light on at night.

### 3. Security Hardware and Practices

- a. Keep doors and windows locked.
- b. Use peephole/door viewer -- 190 degree minimum.
- c. Change locks from former occupant, if possible.
- d. Never hide keys; leave with a trusted neighbor.
- e. If key is lost; change cylinder.
- f. Never put your address on key ring.

### 4. Use of Telephone

- a. A telephone should be kept near the bed.
  - b. Have emergency numbers near the telephone in big letters so you can read them without glasses.
  - c. Never reveal personal information over the telephone: plans, that you live alone, your schedule, name or address, or any personal information.
  - d. Report a series of obscene calls to the police.
1. Do not blow a whistle into the receiver. Caller may know your address.
  2. Tap the mouthpiece and say "Operator, this is the call I wanted you to trace."
  3. Have a friend check on you at specific time intervals; verbal code to indicate if something is wrong.

### 5. Valuables

- a. Keep purse, radios, stereos, and televisions out of window reach and visible view.
- b. Engrave valuables with your driver's license number or owner applied security number traceable to you.
- c. If possible, install a small safe in the house.
- d. Do not keep large amounts of cash in the house.

### 6. Never Open Door to a Stranger

- a. Do not rely on door chain for your protection when getting identification of a visitor.
- b. Require identification from everyone: utility men, maintenance men, police, repairmen, and salesmen. Ask them to pass I.D. under the door. When in doubt, check with the company by telephone.
- c. If a stranger requests use of the telephone, regardless of reason for "emergency", offer to make the call for him while he or she waits outside of locked door.

#### 7. If an Intruder is Suspected

- a. If awakened, call the police if possible, otherwise pretend to be asleep and stay in room. Avoid confrontation.
- b. If possible, leave the house.
- c. If confronted, do not antagonize; observe for description.
- d. Self-defense measures are appropriate only if you are certain of your advantage and skill or if loss of life appears imminent.

#### Know Your Neighbors

Work out a procedure for alerting each other in case of emergency.

### Safety in Buildings

1. Always have key in hand before you reach entrance.
2. Avoid deserted areas within the building when alone: i.e., stairways, laundry room, trash room, and storage areas. Try to go with a friend.
3. Avoid or use caution when getting into an elevator with a stranger. In the elevator, stand near the control button and push to Main Floor or Emergency if concerned.
4. Do not overload yourself with bundles. Be prepared to drop them quickly if being followed.
5. If you think you are being watched when leaving your apartment, shout to a mythical companion "Take the cake out in ten minutes, George!"
6. Elevator Sense;
  - a. Familiarize yourself with emergency buttons of elevators you ride frequently.

- b. Look in the elevator before getting in to be sure no one is hiding.
- c. Stand near the controls.
- d. Get off if someone suspicious enters. If you're worried about someone who is waiting for the elevator with you, pretend that you forgot something and don't get on.
- e. If you're attacked, hit the alarm and as many floor buttons as possible.

## Safety on the Street

1. Whenever possible, do not walk alone
  - a. Use buddy system or walk in groups.
  - b. Do not take shortcuts through vacant or parking lots.
  - c. Stay away from doorways and shrubbery.
  - d. Walk near curb, facing traffic.
  - e. If car pulls next to you going the same way you are, reverse direction.
  - f. Avoid streets in unfamiliar neighborhoods. Know where you are going.
  - g. Vary route going to the store and coming home.
2. Talking to Strangers
  - a. Be very cautious when strangers ask directions or time or offers to carry your packages home.
  - b. Beware of individual who claims to have found money and wants to share with you or who offers goods at low prices. Call the police.
  - c. You do not have to tell street interviewers where you live or if you live alone.
3. Always look and be alert to surroundings
  - a. Do not walk through a group, cross street or walk around them.
  - b. If approached, look for lighted windows, wave and shout upward as though someone at window is watching you.

4. Carry purse, papers, umbrella under arm or keep purse between body and bun
  - a. Carry purse handles on side away from the street. Use the hand and elbow technique or clutch technique. If at all possible, do not carry a purse at all.
  - b. Carry a minimum of cash.
  - c. Carry money in two places - shoe, bra or hidden pocket.
  - d. Do not overload yourself with packages, keep hands free.
  - e. Do not hang bag on hook or leave on floor in public bathroom. Keep it on your lap.
  - f. Keep bag tightly in grip in stores and market.
  - g. If you think someone might take your purse, drop it in the nearest mailbox, it will be returned to you.
  - h. Never wind purse strap around wrists ( if grabbed, you can be pulled down and injured).
  - i. If someone tries for your purse, thrown it in the street or turn it upside down and let the contents fall out.
  - j. Insert comb in wallet with teeth up to prevent removal.
  - k. If purse is snatched, beware of phone call giving information where to retrieve it. Call police for advice.
5. Carry Whistle
  - a. Put whistle on key chain, not around neck.
  - b. Have it available to use when you feel threatened.
6. Know location of police stations, all night stores, and other sources of help along your route.
7. When going to visit, call ahead to tell how you are going and when to be expected.
8. If accosted, yell "FIRE", not "RAPE" or "HELP".
9. When brought home, have a friend or taxi wait until you are inside and safe.

## Safety While Traveling

1. Travel with a companion, whenever possible.
2. When awaiting or riding in transportation conveyances, stand with feet apart in a balanced position.
3. At bus and subway stops, keep your back to the wall to avoid being approached from behind.
  - a. Sit in front, near driver or conductor.
  - b. Always have token or exact change ready.
  - c. In subway, sit in populated or lighted car; avoid last car.
  - d. Use busy stop; avoid deserted ones.
  - e. If you suspect you are being followed, don't get off at normal stop; get off at busy stop, tell attendant in change booth.
  - f. Don't fall asleep. Stay alert!
  - g. If you are verbally harassed, say loudly and firmly "Leave me alone." Attract help by talking loudly or screaming.

## Safety While Banking

1. Bank by mail or use direct deposit.
2. Deposit checks soon after receipt.
3. If you must walk, do not go alone and vary route and time of deposit.
4. Put your cash away before leaving window.
5. Ask for direct deposit of checks by public assistance or other agencies involved.

## Safety In Your Automobile

1. Key in hand when approaching car.
  - a. Keep car key on separate chain; separate from house keys.
  - b. If possible, leave only ignition key with attendants.
  - c. Do not put name or address on keys.
2. Drive with doors locked and windows rolled at least three-quarters up.

3. Put packages out of view or in trunk.
4. Do not pick up hitchhikers.
5. Always have at least one-fourth tank of gas in your car.
6. Disabled car - raise hood; tie white cloth to aerial or door handle.
  - a. Stay in car; do not get out.
  - b. Ask interested motorist to call police for you.
7. At night always park in well lit area.
  - a. Have friend escort you to your car in the dark.
  - b. Always check back seat and floor before entering.
8. If you notice a vehicle with person in distress, do not stop. Note location and stop at first safe phone to call police.
9. Do not leave credentials or personal property in car.
10. Keep your car in good running condition.
11. If you think someone is following you, don't head home. Keep your hand near the horn and drive to the nearest police station, open gas station, or other business where you can safely get help.

## Safety While Biking and Jogging

1. Go with a friend if possible. There's safety in numbers.
2. Vary your route and schedule so there is not a distinct pattern. Be familiar with your routes and know places along the way where you could go for help.
3. Avoid isolated areas. Look for routes that are near populated areas or roadways.
4. If you must bike or jog at night, try to do it with a friend and wear reflective clothing.
5. Consider buying a whistle or shriek alarm.
6. Leave the headphones at home. You need to be alert to what's ahead and behind you.

## Final Notes

1. Make your neighborhood and workplace safer by reporting broken street lights, cleaning up parks and vacant lots and lobbying local government for better lighting in public places.
2. Volunteer to escort a friend or neighbor who must go to work at night.
3. Join a Neighborhood Watch group to look out for your neighbors and your neighborhood.
4. If you see a crime being committed, call the police immediately and stay with the victim until help arrives. Be supportive and offer to accompany the victim to the hospital or police station.
5. If a co-worker or friend has been a victim of crime, offer to help with things like babysitting, locating victim services, and moral support in court.