

HIGHWOOD POLICE DEPARTMENT



CRIME PREVENTION



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CRIME PREVENTION RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

- **SAFETY AT THE DOOR**

1. When someone knocks at your door, don't open it unless you know your visitor
2. Have a door viewer installed on each exterior door.
3. If the person is a salesman or representative of a company i.e. ComEd, ask for identification. If you are still not sure call the company from your phone to verify who the person is
4. If someone asks to use your phone in an emergency, never open the door, and offer to make the call for him or her. Dial 911

- **TELEPHONE SAFETY**

1. If you get obscene or threatening calls, contact the police department
2. Do not get drawn into a conversation with a stranger because they will want you to reveal information regarding your finances, marital status, address, or other information that they can use to cheat you.
Never give out bank account, credit card numbers, or social security numbers over the phone unless you know whom you are talking to.

- **MINIMIZE THE RISK**

1. Use direct deposit for your social security or pension checks
2. Do not keep large amounts of cash in the home
3. Put valuable jewelry, papers, etc. in safe deposit boxes
Have your valuables appraised and photographed for insurance purposes

- **WHILE YOU ARE OUT**

1. Carry as little cash as possible and carry credit cards in a concealed coat or chest pocket
2. If you carry a purse, carry it close to the body in front of you. Make sure it is closed by snap or clasp, and never leave it unattended.
3. If a robber confronts you, don't resist. Give them what they want, sit down to avoid injury, concentrate on his description, and don't follow them after they leave.
4. Plan your route when walking, and stay alert to your surroundings
5. Do not flash large sums of cash in public
6. If you must walk at night, choose a busy street that is well lit.
7. Try to walk with someone
8. Don't take shortcuts

- **IN STORES**

1. Don't leave belongings unattended in a shopping cart or dressing room
2. Don't allow yourself to become distracted when your purse is open in the payment line. Close it as quickly as possible.
3. Always make sure you get your credit card back from the sales people after using it.

- **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

1. Don't wait alone at a transit stop longer than necessary
2. Carry exact change in your hand
3. Stand in view of other passengers
4. Sit near the driver or conductor

- **SAFETY IN YOUR CAR**

1. Keep your gas tank full and your car well serviced to avoid breakdowns
2. Keep your doors locked even while you're inside
3. Lock packages and valuables in the trunk. Do not leave them on the back seat or on the floor of the car where they can be seen
4. Never pick up hitchhikers
5. If you break down, pull over to the far right of the road, stay inside and wait for help.
6. Women, do not leave your purse on the seat next to you while driving. Put it on the floor.

7. Try to obtain a cellular phone, they have come down in cost, and offer special packages to keep costs low.
8. If you purchase gas, and go inside to pay for it or other items, take your keys with you.

- **FRAUD**

1. The first thing to remember is, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
2. Beware of telephone calls that say you've won something and ask you to pay an administrative or processing fee.
3. Beware of high-pressure sales pitches, and if a caller refuses to send you written confirmation before you commit to anything, it's probably a scam.
4. No reputable charities or companies ask you wire them money or send cash.

- **HOME IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES**

1. They may demand large down payments or deposits for home repairs and then disappear with the money.
2. They may distract the homeowner and subsequently burglarize the home.
3. They may quote a low price for home repairs and then inflate it after the work has begun.
4. They may try to trick senior citizens into signing home improvement loan contracts, using their homes as collateral.
5. Some of the more popular schemes include roofing, driveway repair, and plumbing repairs.
6. Be skeptical of contractors who solicit business door to door
7. Obtain several written estimates for a proposed repair job.
8. Insist on seeing licenses, references, and proof of bonding.
9. Make sure the contract is as detailed as possible so there will be no hidden surprises.
10. Pay as little money as possible up front.

- **HEALTH FRAUD**

1. Instant cures and miracle gadgets that relieve pain are usually frauds.
2. Fake lab tests are offered
3. Free medical diagnosis is offered by mail order that results in expensive and unnecessary treatments

IN CONCLUSION

There are a great many things out there that seniors need to look out for. Statistics show that seniors are the least victimized age group, but you are vulnerable due to the natural consequences of aging.

These are tips to help make you less likely to become a crime victim. The last thing I want to say is regarding elder abuse. No one has the right to treat you poorly, whether it's by physical or emotional abuse. If your caregiver is treating you badly, or even a family member, report it to your senior center, a social service agency, or the police. Unfortunately, even family members may try to take advantage of seniors, in an effort to control your finances. Remember, no one has the right to take advantage of you.