

Crime Prevention Tips

Be street wise and safe:

- Stand tall and walk confidently. Watch where you're going and what's happening around you.
- Stick to well-lit and busy streets. Walk with friends. Avoid shortcuts through a dark alley or a deserted street.
- If harassed by someone in a car, walk quickly or run in the opposite direction to safety. If you are really scared, scream.
- Never hitchhike. Accept rides only from people you know and trust.
- Don't flash your cash.
- Always have a well-charged cell phone immediately available.
- Know your neighborhood. What hours are stores and restaurants open? Where are the police and fire stations, libraries, and schools? You might need them in an emergency.
- If you go out for a late-night snack or a midnight movie, take a friend. Don't go alone. Most assaults happen to a lone victim.
- Let someone know where you are going and when you will come back. Call if you're going to be late.
- If you are driving, park your car in well-lit places and lock it when you leave. Check for uninvited passengers in the back seat or on the floor before you get in.
- Have your keys in hand when approaching your car. Don't wait until you get to the car to look for your keys.
- Alter your routine. Change daily patterns and, if possible, take different routes to work or to school. Park in different locations.
- While walking, use reflective surfaces (windows, signs, shadows, etc...) to see things and people around you.
- If someone ask you for spare change or the time, tell them you do not have money, a watch or a cell phone. This could be a ploy to divert your attention to rob you.

When jogging or bicycling:

- Go with a friend and take familiar and well-traveled routes.
- Don't jog or bike at night.
- Try it without your headphones. It's safer to remain alert to what's around and behind you.

If you are a victim of a crime:

- If someone attacks you, try not to panic. Fight back, or do what you can to get away and/or protect yourself. Look at the attacker carefully so you can give a good description to the police. Try to remember important things like age, race, complexion, body build, clothing, height and weight, hair and eye color, or unusual features.
- Report all crimes to your local police department (PD). The closest PD to each of our locations are as follows:

Main Campus – Columbus PD 614.645.4545

Delaware Location – Columbus State PD 614.287.2525

- For life-threatening emergencies call 911
- If the attacker has a weapon and only wants your money or possessions, don't fight. Your life and safety are more important.
- If you are harassed by a gang, go to an open store, gas station, fire house, or anywhere there are people.

Tips for Handling Panhandlers

Be aware, alert, confident, and prepared to act.

You are entitled to your space and do not have to be intimidated or harassed.

- Do not give money to panhandlers.
- Panhandling for drugs or alcohol is common.
- Acknowledge a panhandler with a nod, and answer the request for money by saying “no.” Then keep walking. Don’t be angry or feel guilty.

Some of the ploys panhandlers use...

- “My wife is sick or pregnant and I need money for...”
- “I’m out of gas, can you spare some change...”
- “I need money for an important phone call...”
- “I have not eaten and need money for food...”

Imagination is their only limitation. While it is not illegal to solicit people for money, anyone approached who feels threatened, annoyed, or intimidated should call the local police as soon as possible. Give a description of the panhandler, location panhandling occurred, time of occurrence, and panhandler’s direction of travel when he/she left. Be willing to assist the police with prosecution if necessary. *Note: If you wish to give money, have it out and ready to give. Do not go into wallets, pockets, or purses in front of panhandlers.*

Robbery

Is Your Money Worth More Than Your Life?

Some people take foolish risks...
...and some lose.

If a robber threatens you with a gun, your chance of safely disarming him/her is small. Your best protection lies in thinking ahead. What will you do if you become the victim of a hold-up?

- Try to stay calm. Don't make any sudden movements to upset the robber.
- Do exactly as you are told.
- If you have to move or reach, tell the robber what you are going to do and why.
- Try and get a good look at the robber so you can describe him/her later.
- Don't be a hero. It's better to lose your money than your life.
- Give the robber time to leave.
- Note the direction of travel when the robber leaves.
- Try and get a description of the robber's vehicle **ONLY** if you can do so safely.

Is it robbery or burglary?

Burglary is the breaking and entering of your home or business with the intention of stealing or committing a felony. It isn't necessary for the theft or felony to be consummated; the crime is committed at the moment of breaking and entering. Your home or business may be burglarized but when you are personally involved you have suffered a robbery.

Robbery occurs when someone steals or takes anything of value from your person or in your presence against your will, by force or violence, or puts you in fear of force or violence with the intent to deprive you of your property permanently.

Cooperate with the police. You can help reduce the number of criminals on the street by:

- Being available for questioning.
- Answering questions factually.
- Refraining from exaggerating or guessing.
- Being willing to identify suspected robbers.

Carjacking

Strategies for Prevention: Awareness, Avoidance, and Action

Violence continues to plague our society. The most recent example of senseless violence is carjacking. Carjacking is the term for a crime in which a car is taken from a person either by force or a threat of force. It is more serious than auto theft because the victim is present during the crime. Carjacking is on the rise throughout the country, but if you are aware and alert to the possible dangers, you can greatly reduce your chance of becoming a victim of this violent crime.

Carjackers usually target unlocked cars with unsuspecting motorists. Citizens must be aware of their surroundings and follow preventive guidelines if they are going to reduce this crime of opportunity. Everyone is vulnerable to carjacking. Our findings show us that regardless of the time of day, location, or the type of car, everyone is at risk. Carjacking can occur while entering, driving, or exiting your vehicle.

Carjacking occurs for many reasons: Anti-theft devices make parked cars more difficult to steal; the car is used to flee a crime scene or to commit other crimes; the car is sold to feed a drug habit; the carjacking is part of a gang initiation, or perpetrated just for kicks.

Remember: If or when an incident occurs, only you can make a decision as to what action to take. Every situation is different and must be evaluated accordingly. Your safety is most important. The following crime prevention information on carjacking is provided for your safety and peace of mind.

While driving your vehicle:

- Plan your route – try not to travel alone.
- Don't drive in unfamiliar areas, avoid trouble spots.
- Keep your doors locked and windows up.
- Look in the rearview mirror often.
- Observe 180 degrees around you.
- Be observant as you approach an area or intersection.
- Stay alert! Don't "zone out" when stopped.
- Leave room ahead of your car in case you need to pull out to escape.
- If bumped from behind, motion for the other driver to follow, drive to the nearest police/fire 24 hour station, and notify the police.
- When stopping to use outside phones or ATMs, choose a well-lit and highly visible area.
- Don't stop to help stranded drivers – call the police for them.

If confronted while stopped:

- Don't panic.
- Avoid verbal/physical confrontation.
- If pulled from your car or confronted while in your car, cooperate – move away quickly.
- Walk/run away from the immediate area.
- Call the police immediately.
- Give a description of your car and the suspect(s).

Options to consider:

- Have a plan – do something, don't just sit there
- Park in a well-lit area.
- Park near a main aisle, where other cars and pedestrian traffic are nearby.
- Park in an outside parking lot with an attendant if possible.
- If you suspect something is wrong, don't stop.
- Always park where you have a 360-degree view around you.
- Be aware of your surroundings before you get out of your car.
- Use your auto alarm, if you have one, as a personal safety device.
- When confronted by a suspect or suspects, drive away with caution – usually a right turn is safest. Even if it means pulling onto a sidewalk or yard, etc.
- Be extra cautious when someone approaches your car and asks you for information. If you must talk to them, do so with the window up, the doors locked and be ready to drive away if necessary.

Tips on Being a Good Witness

Remember! A good witness answers as many of these questions as possible.

Who? Who is involved? What?

What are they doing? Where?

Where are they doing it? When?

When are they doing it? How?

How are they doing it?

Why? (This may be impossible to answer since you should not have any personal contact with any suspects.)

Tips on identifying people:

- Begin by knowing exactly how tall you are. This will give you a basis for comparison.
- Know where the top on an automobile measures with your height, so you can judge the perpetrator's height in relation to your car.
- Make sure the outside of your house is adequately lit. Drug dealers, like other criminals, may like to do their business at night; lighting puts them at risk of being identified.
- Pay particular attention to facial hair and hair style. Rarely does a criminal change these.
- Look for the color of clothes, stripes, athletic team names, numbers, and unusual designs.
- Does the person limp, or is there anything else unusual about his/her walk?
- Does the person have a speech impediment or speak with an accent?
- You do not have to be exact, give a little leeway. All the police need is probable cause to believe the person you are describing has committed a crime.
- Write it down! Keep a pad and pencil at hand. Do not compare notes with neighbors. Report the information quickly to your neighborhood Blockwatch coordinator, or local police department.

Identity Theft

Tips for Prevention and Restitution

This guide provides victims of identity theft with the major resources to contact. Unfortunately at this time, victims themselves are burdened with resolving the problem. It is important to act quickly and assertively to minimize the damage.

In dealing with the authorities and financial institutions, keep a log of all conversations, including dates, names, and phone numbers. Note time spent and any expenses incurred. Confirm conversation in writing. Send correspondence by certified mail (return receipt requested). Keep copies of all letters and documents.

1. Credit bureaus. Immediately call the fraud units of three reporting companies: Experian (formerly TRW), Equifax, and TransUnion (please see contact information that follows).

Be aware that these measures may not entirely stop new fraudulent accounts from being opened by the imposter. Ask the credit bureaus in writing to provide you with free copies every few months so you can monitor your credit report.

Ask the credit bureaus for names and phone numbers of credit grantors with whom fraudulent accounts have been opened. Ask the credit bureaus to remove inquiries that have been generated due to the fraudulent access. You may also ask the credit bureaus to notify those who have received your credit report in the last six months in order to alert them to the disputed and erroneous information (two years for employers).

2. Creditors. Immediately contact all creditors with whom your name has been used fraudulently – by phone and in writing. Get replacement cards with new account numbers for your own accounts that have been used fraudulently. Ask that old accounts be processed as “account closed at consumer’s request.” This is better than “card lost or stolen,” because when this statement is reported to credit bureaus, it can be interpreted as blaming you for the loss. Carefully monitor your mail and credit card bills for evidence of new fraudulent activity. Report it immediately to credit grantors.

Fraud verification requirements. You may be asked by banks and credit grantors to fill out and notarize fraud affidavits, which could become costly. The law does not require you to provide a notarized affidavit. A written statement and supporting documentation should be enough (unless the creditor offers to pay for the notary). Overly burdensome requirements by creditors should be reported to federal government authorities. For help in determining which agency to contact, call CALPIRG or the Privacy Rights Clearinghouse.

3. Law enforcement. Report the crime to all police and sheriff’s departments with jurisdiction in your case. Give them as much documented evidence as possible. Get a copy of your police report. Keep the phone number of your fraud investigator handy and give it to creditors and others who require verification of your case. Credit card companies and banks may require you to show the report in order to verify the crime. Some police departments have been known to refuse to write reports on such crimes. Be persistent.
4. Stolen checks. If you have had checks stolen or bank accounts set up fraudulently, report it back to the check verification companies. Put stop payments on any outstanding checks that you are unsure of. Cancel your checking and savings accounts and obtain new account numbers. Give the bank a secret password for your account (not mother’s maiden name).
5. ATM cards. If your ATM or debit card has been stolen or compromised, report it immediately. Get a new card, account number, and password. Do not use your old password. When creating a password, don’t use common numbers like the last four digits of your Social Security Number or your birth date.
6. Fraudulent change of address. Notify the local postal inspector if you suspect an identity thief has filed a change of your address with the post office or has used the mail to commit credit card or bank fraud. Call the local postmaster to obtain the phone number. Find out where fraudulent credit cards were sent. Notify the local postmaster for that address to forward all mail in your name to your own address. You may also need to talk with the mail carrier.

Identity Theft

Tips for Prevention and Restitution

7. Secret Service jurisdiction. The Secret Service has jurisdiction over financial fraud, but it usually does not investigate individual cases unless the dollar amount is high or you are one of many victims of a fraud ring. To interest the Secret Service in your case, you may want to ask the fraud department of the credit card companies and/or banks, as well as the police investigator, to notify the particular Secret Service agent with whom they work.
8. Social Security Number misuse. Call the Social Security Administration (SSA) to report fraudulent use of your Social Security Number. As a last resort, you might want to try to change your number. The SSA will only change it, however, if you fit their fraud victim criteria. Also order a copy of your Earnings and Benefits Statement and check it for accuracy.
9. Passports. If you have a passport, notify the passport office in writing to be on the lookout for anyone ordering a new passport fraudulently.
10. Phone service. If your long-distance calling card has been stolen or you discover fraudulent charges on your bill, cancel the account and open a new one. Provide a password which must be used any time the account is changed. If your cell phone is cancelled, call your cell phone service provider to cancel service.

Credit bureaus you should notify:

Equifax	1.800.525.6285	www.equifax.com	P.O. Box 740241 Atlanta, GA 30374-0241
Experian	1.877.322.8228	www.experian.com	P.O. Box 9532 Allen, TX 75013
TransUnion	1.800.680.7289	www.transunion.com	Fraud Victim Assistance Division P.O. Box 1000 Chester, PA 19022