



Ways we can help ourselves to avoid being a victim.

How To Protect Yourself While Shopping

Source: Florida Attorney General's Office

- Avoid shopping alone. Try to shop with a friend or relative.
- Park your vehicle in a well-lighted area. Put radar detectors and cellular telephones out of sight.
- Know your surroundings. Keep an eye on the people in front of as well as behind you.
- Carry your purse close to your body. Don't swing it loosely. Don't flash large amounts of cash.
- Walk with confidence. Avoid talking to strangers.
- Approach your vehicle with your keys already in your hand.
- Try not to carry too many packages. Place all packages out of sight in your vehicle, preferably in the trunk.
- Keep your vehicle doors locked and your windows shut.
- If you see anything suspicious or if something just doesn't feel right, leave immediately and contact security or the police.

General

1. Be aware! Recognize your vulnerability.
2. Report all suspicious persons, vehicles and activities to the Police
3. Use the "buddy system" and watch out for your neighbor.
4. Keep your doors locked whenever you find yourself alone in a building.
5. Report lights that are out and any hazardous conditions immediately to the business or Ameren if a street light.
6. If you see someone being victimized, get involved and notify the Police.
7. Know the locations of security and/or local police departments.

Walking

1. Avoid traveling alone at night.
2. Confine walking to well-lit, regular traveled walks and pathways. Avoid shortcuts and keep away from shrubbery, bushes, alleyways, or any other areas where an assailant might be lurking.
3. Do not accept rides from casual acquaintances.
4. When walking to your vehicle or residence, have your keys ready in hand.
5. When being dropped off by taxi or private vehicle, ask the driver to wait until you get inside.
6. If threatened by an approaching vehicle, run in the opposite direction. The vehicle will have to turn around in order to pursue you.
7. When getting out of a car, take a look around to make sure that you are not being followed.
8. If you think you are being followed, cross the street and, if necessary, keep crossing back and forth. If you are pursued, call for help and run to a campus building, business, residence, enlist the aid of a passerby, flag down a passing motorist, or as a last resort pull a fire alarm. Do anything that might attract attention or summon assistance. If you are walking alone and someone passes you, check to be sure that person has continued walking in the other direction.
9. If you find yourself confronted by an assailant you must remember that while screaming and struggling may in some instances frighten off the assailant, in other instances you may further antagonize the assailant and bring forth a more violent reaction. Above all you must keep your head and assess the situation before choosing your course of action. Whether or not the assailant is armed or has made threats against your life should be a determining factor in your decision. The key word in this type of situation is survival.
10. When walking on streets/sidewalks use your ears, so no earbuds, listen for motors of vehicles. If suddenly you hear them slow down, or maybe you just hear them slowly moving beside or behind you, take immediate action to run to the nearest safe place, cut in and out of bushes, yards, whatever it takes to lose the assailant. Call the police immediately once safe.
11. Be cautious when using bathroom facilities when there is no one else around, particularly at night.

Athletic Facilities

1. Avoid using athletic facilities alone, especially after dark or during off-hours.
2. Use the "buddy system." Work out with a friend and make arrangements to leave the gym together.
3. Confine your running and jogging to the daylight hours and to open, well-traveled areas. If you run or jog at night you must wear a reflective vest.

Elevator

1. If, while waiting for an elevator, you find yourself alone with a stranger, let him take the elevator and wait for its return.
2. If you are on an elevator with someone who makes you feel uneasy, get off at the next floor.
3. Always stand near the control panel, where you have access to the alarm and floor buttons.
4. Emergency phones are installed in all passenger elevators.

Driving

1. Do not pick up hitchhikers.
2. Whenever possible, limit traveling to well-lit, well-traveled roads.
3. Keep your windows closed and doors locked.
4. When stopped at traffic lights or stop signs, keep your vehicle in gear. If threatened, sound your horn and drive away as soon as possible.
5. Consider installing an alarm system with a panic switch.
6. Avoid stopping in poorly lit, out-of-the-way places.
7. If your vehicle breaks down, signal for assistance by raising the hood and by tying a white handkerchief to the radio antenna or door handle. Stay inside your vehicle with the windows closed and the doors locked. If a roadside Samaritan stops, roll down your window just enough to talk and ask that he/she call the police. If the person appears to be a threat, sound the horn and flash your lights.
8. If you think you are being followed, keep out of isolated areas. Look for a place where there are people, then stop and let the vehicle pass you.
9. If the vehicle continues to follow, drive to the nearest location where you can get assistance, i.e., gas stations, shopping centers, police or fire station, etc.
10. If you are followed into your driveway or parking lot, stay locked inside your vehicle until you can identify the occupants of the vehicle. If threatened, sound your horn until you attract attention or the vehicle leaves.
11. When parking at night, choose well-lit areas. Before getting out of your vehicle, check for people loitering.
12. Always remove your ignition keys. Lock the vehicle whenever it is unattended.
13. Before entering your vehicle, always check the interior, paying particular attention to the floor and rear seat.
- 14. For escorts to and from your vehicle, remember if you do not feel safe...ask a manager for someone to walk you to your car or call the police, they would rather walk you to your car than have you become a victim, make the call.**

Residences

1. Keep the door(s) to your residence and windows locked at all times..
2. Never sleep in an unlocked house.
3. Do not put your name or address on key rings.
4. Do not keep your residence and vehicle keys on the same ring.
5. If you lose the keys to your residence, have the lock(s) changed.
6. Women living alone should not use prefixes "Ms," "Miss," or "Mrs." On their doors or mailboxes. Instead, use the first initial and last name. This is also advisable for telephone directory listings..
7. Require callers to identify themselves before opening your door. Solicitors are required to have a city id, if they cannot show you one, call the police to have them checked out. This will help to keep the neighborhood safe and your neighbors safe as well.
8. Do not let strangers in to use your telephone. Direct them to a public telephone.
9. If you receive obscene or harassing telephone calls, or several calls with no one on the other end, immediately notify the Police Department.
10. If you find that your home has been entered, DO NOT GO INSIDE. Go to a neighbor and call the Police. If you are already inside, DO NOT TOUCH ANYTHING. You may disturb evidence that is important to the police investigation.
11. If an intruder awakens you in your home, do not try to apprehend him. He may be armed or may easily arm himself with something inside the room. If he poses an immediate threat, get out of the room.
12. If you see a suspicious person or vehicle in your neighborhood, IMMEDIATELY contact the Police Department. Try to get the license plate number.
13. In private residences you should consider installing "peep holes" and intruder chains on outside doors. Also, if returning after dark, leave a light on at the entrance to your residence.

Motor Vehicles

1. Report all suspicious persons or vehicles around parking areas to the Police immediately.
2. Keep your vehicle locked and the windows rolled up tightly.
3. Never leave your vehicle running when unattended.
4. When parking, choose a well-lit, heavily traveled area.
5. Packages, luggage, and other valuables should be locked in the trunk.
6. Stereo tape players and C.B. radios should be mounted either out of sight or with slide-out brackets. These brackets will permit the removal of the unit and allow you to take the unit with you or to put it in the trunk when the vehicle is unattended. C.B. radio antennas should be magnetic or detachable and should be stored in the trunk or taken with you.
7. Stereo tape players, C.B. radios, and other auto accessories should be marked with your driver's license number and registered under Operation Identification.
8. Consider having your vehicle ignition, doors, and trunk keyed differently.
9. Keep spare keys in your wallet or purse, not inside the vehicle where a thief can easily find them.
10. Consider the installation of anti-theft devices such as alarm systems, hidden ignition or fuel "kill" switches, steering column ignition switch protectors, steering wheel to brake pedal bar caps, mag wheels, spare tires, etc.
11. Keep a record of your vehicle identification number (VIN), registration plate number, and title certificate number.
12. If someone leaves a note on your car, leave it on windshield and drive away. Read it later when you are in a safe place.

Bicycles

1. Invest in a good U-Bar bicycle lock.
2. Always lock your bicycle. Bicycles should be locked around the frames to an object such as a telephone pole, sign or lamppost, bicycle rack, etc.
3. Whenever possible, keep your bicycle in your home.
4. If you must leave your bicycle outside, choose a well-lit, heavily traveled location.
5. Find out if your bicycle is covered under your parents' insurance policy. If not, it would be advisable to insure it.
6. Register your bicycle with the Police Department. Bike registration is an excellent way to further secure your property against theft.

Operation Identification

Operation Identification is a nationwide crime prevention program. The program involves the permanent marking of valuables with your driver's license number, recording of identification information, and affixing a decal to the exterior of the residence warning potential thieves that the property within is registered with the police. This program deters theft by making stolen property more difficult to sell and easier to identify.

The program works as follows:

- a. an electric engraver.
- b. a property inventory sheet, on which to record identification information for each item of value.
2. Engrave your state driver license number on all moveable items of value.
3. Methodically inventory the contents of each room and record the pertinent identification information on the property inventory sheet.
4. The property inventory sheet should be kept on file for your future reference in case of loss.

What You Can Do

Your involvement is essential to the prevention of crime. Disinterest and complacency are the prime contributors to the success of crime. The burden of crime prevention rests not only with the Police but also with each member of the community.

Police cannot be everywhere at once and are, therefore, dependent upon you to recognize and report incidents of suspicious and criminal activity. The extent of your cooperation will greatly influence Police effectiveness in combating crime. Doing your part means:

1. Being aware of your vulnerability and following the suggestions outlined to protect yourself and your property.
2. Being alert for suspicious or criminal activity and conditions that may represent a hazard to the community.
3. Getting involved by becoming more security conscious and by reporting all incidents of suspicious or criminal activity, no matter how insignificant, to Police immediately.

Remember that unreported crimes cannot be solved and that, by not reporting crimes, you allow the perpetrators to commit additional and perhaps more serious crimes. Many times, crime solving depends upon how accurately and promptly the incident is reported.

It is important that you be able to provide as much of the following information as possible:

1. The nature of the incident.
2. When and where the incident occurred.

3. Number of persons involved (names, sex, race, age, height, hair style/color complexion, distinctive characteristics, i.e. facial features, scars, physical defects, glasses, clothing, etc.).
4. Direction and method of travel.
5. Vehicles involved (color, type, make, model, license plate number and state, distinctive characteristics, i.e., decals, bumper stickers, damage, number of occupants, etc.).
6. Description of stolen property (item, manufacturer, model number, serial number, value, color, dimensions, etc.).
7. Any other applicable information.

<https://gustavus.edu/safety/tips/crime.php>

This is by no means a complete list of suggestions to help you prevent from being a victim, but merely compilation of suggestions to help assist in these conversations. Please if anyone has any comments or additional suggestions... Leave them in the comments section.

I have put this together at the request of a resident who encountered one of these situations in another city and one of my daughter's who also recently encountered one of these situations in hope it will help others.