

WHAT IS SUSPICIOUS?

“Basically, anything that seems even slightly out of the ordinary . . . could be criminal activity.”

Examples (not a complete list):

- ❖ A stranger inspecting or entering your neighbor's home while your neighbor is away.
- ❖ Someone trying to open a neighbor's door or window.
- ❖ A moving truck or van pulled up to a neighbor's home while they are gone. Remember, burglaries often occur at times when they should be most obvious (broad daylight, in full view of observers).
- ❖ Someone carrying property such as televisions, stereos, etc., at an unusually late hour or in an unusual place, especially if it does not appear that the property is newly purchased.
- ❖ The sound of shattering glass could signal a possible burglary, vandalism or larceny in progress.
- ❖ Anyone peering into vehicles as they walk down the street or someone removing tags, gasoline or parts from a vehicle.
- ❖ Someone attempting to enter a vehicle using a coat hanger or other device. Never assume that it is the owner who has locked his keys in his car. Be suspicious of anyone tampering with the hood or trunk of a car.
- ❖ An improperly parked vehicle or abandoned vehicle or someone leaving one vehicle and driving away in another may be signs of a stolen vehicle.
- ❖ Anyone being forced into a vehicle could be a victim of possible abduction.
- ❖ Persons loitering around schools, parks, and isolated areas or in the neighborhood. These loiterers could be possible sex offenders or burglars.
- ❖ Business transactions conducted from vehicles, especially around schools playgrounds or parks. A steady flow of strangers to and from a particular house on a regular basis could indicate drug sales or a fencing operation (purchasing of stolen goods).
- ❖ Offers of goods or repair work at an unusually low price could indicate stolen property or some type of fraud.
- ❖ All fights, screams and loud noises (such as explosions) should be reported.
- ❖ Door-to-door solicitors without properly issued licenses and identification should be suspected.

“DON'T WAIT FOR SOMEONE ELSE TO CALL. CALL THE POLICE IMMEDIATELY TO REPORT IN PROGRESS SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY.”

Emergency: 911

Non-Emergency: 441-5610

Personal Safety

Introduction

It has been said about self defense training that fully half of what we learn is preventive, and we practice it in hopes of never having to use the other half.

--Joan Nelson--

All activities (driving a car, filling the bathtub, walking through the parking lot at night) entail some risk. We all have different attitudes toward risk. At one end of the scale is refusing to engage in an activity by exaggerating the risk involved. At the other end is engaging in very risky activities while refusing to take any precautions. Neither of these attitudes are useful for living an empowered life. What is useful is to accurately assess the risks involved, take whatever precautions make sense, and live as fully as possible.

Following these guidelines will not guarantee your safety, but *will* minimize your availability to an assailant.

GENERAL

- Create a safety plan.
- Listen to and act on your intuition. It's better to be safe and risk a little embarrassment, than stay in an uncomfortable situation that may be unsafe.
- If you are in danger or being attacked and want to get help, yell "Call 911!" or give specific directions to onlookers; for example: "You! Get the police!" or "FIRE"
- Have your keys ready when approaching your car or building.
- Vary your routine: drive or walk different routes every day.
- If you suspect that someone is following you, by foot or in a car, don't go home (or they will know where you live). Go to a trusted neighbor or to a public place to call police, or directly to police station.
- Do not label keys with your name or any identification.
- Don't talk about your social life or vacation plans where strangers can overhear you.

IN YOUR HOME

- Have lights in all entrances.
- Have good locks on all doors and windows and use them.
- Do not use your full name on your mailbox, in the phone directory, or on your answering machine.
- Do not leave a schedule of your times away from home on your answering machine.
- If you live alone, do not let strangers know. Invent a roommate or big dog.
- Know which of your neighbors you can trust in an emergency.

- Check who is at the door before opening it, and do not open the door to an unexpected visitor.
- Don't hide extra keys in easily accessible places. Criminals will find them.
- Ask for photo identification of all repair persons, etc. If you are still suspicious, call to verify employment.
- Never give personal information to telephone solicitors.
- Do not let strangers into your home to use the phone. Offer to make the call for them.

ON THE STREET

- Don't hitchhike.
- Be very careful using outside ATMs at night or in unfamiliar surroundings.
- When on the street, walk facing oncoming traffic. It will be harder for someone to pull you into a car and abduct you.
- Tell someone where you'll be and what time you're supposed to return, or if you will be with someone you don't know well.
- Try to not overload yourself with packages. If you must have your hands full, visualize how you would respond if approached, how you would get your hands free, etc.
- Do not wear music headphones while walking or jogging.
- Do not read while walking or standing on the street.
- If you wear a purse with a shoulder strap, be prepared to let it go if snatched. Otherwise you may be hurt if the mugger knocks you down and drags you, while fleeing with your purse.
- If someone asks you for directions, and if you choose to reply, remain at least two arms lengths away.
- Clogs, high heels, and tight skirts are hard to run and fight in. Capes, scarves, and long necklaces are easy to grab. Modify your fashion style, or wear comfortable clothing when walking alone (change into dress-up clothes later), or think through how you would fight in your dress-up clothes (for example, kicking off your high heels or hiking your skirt up around your hips before starting to run or kick)
- Avoid being on the street alone if you are upset or under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or have someone go with you.
- When dropping someone off at their home, make sure they are safely inside before driving away. Have them do the same for you.

IN A CAR

- Check the inside and around your car before entering to insure that no one is hiding there.
- Check your surroundings before getting out of your car.
- Don't pick up hitchhikers
- Keep doors locked and windows rolled up so that a hand can't reach in.

- If a group of suspicious people approaches you when you are stopped at a red light at a deserted intersection, run the light if your intuition tells you that the situation could get dangerous.
- Don't let gas indicator fall below 1/4.
- Plan your route and check a map before you start out.
- Park in well-lighted, heavily traveled areas if possible.
- Try not to park next to a van, as you can be pulled in through the sliding door.
- Don't leave valuables in plain sight inside your car.
- Give only ignition key to attendant.
- If you see an accident or stranded motorist, report it from the nearest telephone instead of stopping.
- Carry in your car:
 - flashlight, flares, fix-a-flat, maps, comfortable warm clothing, first aid kit, empty gas can, white cloth to tie to antenna to signal distress, cell phone.

ON PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

- Beware of overheard conversations. Do not tell anyone on the bus where you are going.
- Stay awake and alert.
- Have exact change ready.
- Try to sit near the driver.
- If you sense someone is following you when you get off, walk toward a populated area. Do not walk directly home.

AT THE OFFICE

- Don't leave your keys lying about
- Notify security personnel if you notice suspicious persons or vehicles, especially after normal working hours.
- Be extra careful in stairwells and isolated or poorly-lighted restrooms.
- In an elevator stand near the controls and locate the emergency button.
- Do not get in an elevator with someone who looks suspicious to you.
- Know your co-workers and look out for each other.
- At every phone: Emergency numbers for security, police, fire departments, and list of employees who are trained in CPR or first aid.

DEFENSE AGAINST DOGS

- When confronted by a threatening dog, our impulse is often to turn and run - the worst response, since movement triggers the chase instinct in dogs.
- Stand very still and try to be calm.
- Don't scream at the dog and run.
- Be aware of where the dog is. Look in its general direction, but don't stare into its eyes. This is considered an aggressive challenge.
- Let the dog sniff you.

- In a low voice say, "No! Go home!"
- Stay still until the dog leaves.
- Back away slowly until it's out of sight.
- If a dog does attack, try to "feed" it your work jacket, briefcase, purse, lunch, etc., to distract the dog while you back slowly away towards safety.
- If you are knocked down or fall, curl into a ball and keep your hands over your ears, face, and neck. Try not to scream or roll around

Home Security Tips

Exterior and Interior Lighting:

It is a known fact, that good lighting is a deterrent to crime. While any lighting will help reduce your risk of becoming of a victim, the proper lights, used correctly will be the most effective deterrent to criminal activity.

Exterior:

Exterior lights are important, especially near doors and in the rear of the house, where intruders do most of their work. All sides of your home should be protected by security lighting that is located high out of reach, and is vandal resistant.

Interior:

When residents go out for an evening, they usually leave on their "burglar beacon". A burglar beacon is a small light that is left on so they don't walk into a dark house when they come home. These are lights like the one above the kitchen sink or stove, the hallway light, or a light in the corner of the living room. Unfortunately these lights are a signal for the criminal that no one is home. If you go out for an evening leave a radio and several lights on. When you go on vacation put at least two lights, in different parts of the house, and a radio on timers. Contact the Norfolk Police Department and sign up for a Vacation Watch. Regardless of whether you are on vacation, or just gone for the evening, from the outside your house should look as if someone is home.

Keys:

As many as half of all burglaries take place without forced entry. Many times the burglar uses a key. Be sure your keys don't fall into the wrong hands.

- Never carry identification on your key ring or holder.
- Re-key all locks, if your keys are lost or stolen and your address is attached in any way.
- Know who has keys to your home. Make sure that each member of your family knows where his or her key is.

- Never hide a key outside. Burglars know all the hiding places.
- Do not hang keys on hooks within plain view inside your home.

Home Inventory List:

Keep a "Personal Property Inventory List" in a safe place, possibly with your insurance papers. This helps to recover stolen property in the event of a theft or burglary. Keep a duplicate copy in a safe deposit box or other safe place.

The more complete your inventory lists the better. In case of a loss by causes other than theft it may help you establish your loss with your insurance company. As an example, if you have a fire in your residence and lose a couch, an end table and a portion of your carpet in your front room, the accurate listing of when and how much you paid for the items will assist you in establishing your loss.

On the inventory list indicate the room the property was located in. Make the description of the item as complete as possible. Include the manufacturer model number, size, color, and the material the item is made of. This list might include damage marks, repairs, etc. Make sure to list the manufacture's serial number on the list. Do not confuse the model with the serial number.

If you mark your property with a personal number, use your Virginia Driver License/Identification number, not your social security. Start your engraving with VA and then your number.

Safety Tips at Home:

- Always be observant of your surroundings
- If you live alone don't use your marital status or first name on your telephone listing or on your mail box.
- Get to know your neighbors.
- When returning home, or to your car, have your keys in your hand so that you can let yourself in without delay.
- If you think you're being followed, **Don't Go Home!** Go to an open business. If you are still being followed call the police from there.
- Park your car in well lighted areas. Lock the doors and take the keys.
- If you think a prowler is threatening, take no direct action yourself, dial 911 immediately.

Do's and Don'ts:

Do's:

- Use the security devices you have.
- Leave lights on inside and out when you go out for the evening.

- Have the police and fire department telephone number near your telephone. (Police Non-Emergency 441-5610) **EMERGENCY--911**
- Carry only what is absolutely necessary in your purse.
- Close your curtains/blinds/drapes in the evening hours.
- Be suspicious of people loitering around your house, apartment complex, or the parking lot.
- Call the police if you see anything suspicious.

Don'ts:

- Don't keep large sums of money in your home.
- Don't carry large sums of money while you are out
- Don't let strangers in to "use your telephone."
- Don't undress in front of open windows.
- Don't leave notes on your door.
- Don't hide a key.
- Don't display expensive equipment or items in plain view through your window.
- Don't use your name or telephone number on your answering machine message. Use a generic message that does not state that you are not home.
- Don't answer personal questions on telephone surveys.
- Don't admit "service reps" from utilities unless you have an appointment or can verify their authenticity.

Suspicious Persons:

- Going Door to Door in Residential Area - Especially suspicious if, after a few houses are visited, one or more of the subjects goes into a back or side yard. More suspicious if another remains in the front when this occurs.
Possible significance: "Casing" for a house to burglarize, burglary in progress, soliciting violation, or a trespass.
- Waiting in Front of a House or Business - Particularly suspicious if owners are absent, or, if it's a business and the establishment is closed.
Possible Significance: Lookout for a burglary in progress inside.
- Forcing Entrance To or Tampering with a Residence, Vehicle, etc. - Suspicious under almost any circumstances.
Possible Significance: Burglary, theft, malicious mischief, or trespass in progress.
- Non-Resident Going Into Back or Side Yard of House - Suspicious under almost any circumstances.
Possible Significance: Possible burglary or trespass in progress.

- Person Running - Especially if something of value is being carried.
Possible Significance: Fleeing the scene of a crime.
- Exhibiting Unusual Mental or Physical Symptoms - Do not approach these people.
Possible Significance: Possibly injured, under the influence of drugs, or otherwise needing medical or psychiatric assistance.
- Carrying Property - Suspicious depending upon the circumstances. For example, if at an unusual hour or in an unusual place, and if the property is not wrapped as if just purchased.
Possible Significance: Subject leaving the scene of a robbery, burglary, or theft.
- Excessive Human Traffic To and From a Certain Residence - Not suspicious unless it occurs on a daily or very regular basis, especially during late or unusual hours.
Possible Significance: Vice or narcotics activities, or a "fence" operation

Suspicious Vehicles:

- Certain Moving Vehicles - Especially if slow moving and without lights, or if the course followed appears aimless or repetitive. This is suspicious in any location, but particularly in the area of schools, parks or playgrounds.
Possible Significance: "Casing" for places to rob or burglarize. Drugs or sex offender.
- Certain Parked, or Occupied Vehicles - May contain one or more persons, especially significant if observed at an unusual hour.
Possible Significance: Lookout for a burglary or robbery in progress. True even if occupants appear to be lovers.
- Vehicles Being Loaded With Valuables - Suspicious if parked in front of a closed business or unattended residence, even if the vehicle is a legitimate looking commercial unit, possibly even bearing a sign identifying it as a repair vehicle, moving van, etc.
Possible Significance: Burglary or other theft on progress.
- Abandoned Vehicle - Possible stolen car.
- Vehicle Containing Weapons - Suspicious under almost any circumstances.
Possible Significance: Owner may engage in criminal activity.
- Other Unusual Activity Involving Vehicles - Persons attempting to forcibly enter a locked vehicle, especially at night or in a parking lot.
Possible Significance: Larceny or auto theft.
- Persons Detaching Mechanical Parts or Accessories from a Vehicle - Suspicious especially at night in the street or in a parking lot.
Possible Significance: Theft.
- Apparent Business Transactions Conducted from a Vehicle - Suspicious especially if around schools or parks, and if juveniles or females.
Possible Significance: abduction or drug transactions.

- Objects Thrown From a Vehicle - Suspicious especially while traveling at high rate speed.
Possible Significance: Disposal of contraband or garbage dumping.
- Property in Vehicles - Not suspicious unless the property is not normally found in vehicles, especially if observed at unusual hours or if TV sets, stereos, un-mounted car stereos, or auto parts are involved.
Possible Significance: Stolen Property.



Norfolk Police Department Crime Prevention Tips For Burglary Prevention

Home Security

Most residential burglars devote little if any time to the advance planning of any specific break-in. Their crimes are, for the most part, crimes of opportunity. They pick what appears to be an easy mark. If their advance checking and closer examination reveal a greater risk than anticipated, they move on to a safer target. The more you can do to keep your home from looking like an easy target, the safer you are. There are also many steps that you can take to minimize your loss and improve your chances of recovery if a break-in does occur.

The first step in improving overall security is to take a hard look at the security measures already in use in your home. To help you with this task, the Norfolk Police Department has developed a Home Security Survey. Conducting a security survey is important; we offer this as a **free** service to all residents of Norfolk. Go through this simple test carefully.

Look at your house at night as well as in the daytime. Remember, the test points out security weaknesses around you home. Your home cannot be adequately protected until these weaknesses are corrected.

Landscaping and Yard Security

A few alterations to your landscaping can be enough to put off intruders. To avoid getting caught, intruders look for property they can get into and out of quickly. Their ideal target

is a house surrounded by large hedges and shrubs, which hamper visibility from the street and neighbors houses.

- ◆ How high are your hedges and shrubs?
- ◆ Are your windows and doors visible and unobstructed?

Street Numbers

Street numbers should be easily visible from the street. Critical time can be saved by emergency responders when the street address for the house is visible from a distance.

- ◆ Is your address easily visible from the street?
- ◆ If someone were looking for your house, could they find it quickly and easily?

Exterior and Interior Lighting

It is a known fact, that good lighting is a deterrent to crime. While any lighting will help reduce your risk of becoming a victim, the proper lights, used correctly will be the most effective deterrent to criminal activity.

- ◆ Are there dark areas in your yard?
- ◆ Are some areas in the shadows?
- ◆ Is your yard and house well lit?
- ◆ When you leave home at night, do you leave the same light on every time?

If you answered YES to any of the above questions, your home could be at risk. Please contact the Norfolk Police Department Crime Prevention Section for a Home Security Survey 664-6901