



St. Johns County Sheriff's Office

"Taking Care of People"

Crimes Against the Elderly

Crime prevention is everybody's business! It's not just a job for law enforcement. Common-sense measures – like locking a door, joining a Neighborhood Watch, going to the bank with a friend – can help prevent crime.

Many older men and women fear crime even though, statistically, their risk of being victimized is low. Seniors are more vulnerable to certain crimes – purse snatching, mugging, and fraud. But, you can reduce the opportunities for criminals to strike by being careful, alert and a good neighbor.

Here are some common sense tips you can use to stay safe:

When Driving:

- Always lock your car doors. Never leave keys in the ignition when you leave the car, even for a few minutes.
- When you drive, keep the doors locked and windows up. Park in well-lighted busy areas.
- Don't leave packages or other tempting articles in view in a locked car. Lock them in the trunk.
- Never, never pick up hitchhikers.
- If you have car problems, be especially wary of strangers who offer help. Stay in the car and ask them to call a service truck and law enforcement.

On the Bus or Trolley:

- Use busy, well lighted stops.
- Don't fall asleep. Stay alert!
- Watch who gets on or off the bus or trolley with you. If you feel uneasy, walk directly to a place where there are other people.
- When using the bus or other public transportation, sit near the driver if possible.

When You Are at Home:

- Use deadbolt locks on all exterior doors. Keep your doors locked at all times, even when you are inside.
- Protect windows and sliding glass doors with good locks or other security devices.
- Never let strangers in your home without checking their identification. Call their company if you are not sure. Install a viewer in your door and use it.
- Use only your first initial in phone books, directories, and apartment lobbies. If you live alone, don't

advertise it.

- Be sensible about keys. Don't put an address tag on your key ring, and don't hide an extra key under a doormat or flower pot.
- Hang up immediately on harassing or obscene phone calls. If the caller persists, call law enforcement and the phone company.
- Engrave your valuables with a unique identification number recommended by the Crime Prevention Unit.
- Keep bonds, stock certificates, seldom worn jewelry, and stamp and coin collections in a safe deposit box.
- For an extra measure of protection, don't keep large amounts of cash at home.
- Use Direct Deposit for Social Security or pension checks.
- Keep emergency numbers for police and fire agencies handy.

Out and About:

- Go with a friend whenever possible.
- Stay alert and tuned into your surroundings. Don't daydream.
- Try to walk in a confident, relaxed manner. Make brief eye contact with approaching strangers.
- Trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable in a place or situation, leave.
- Try carrying a small change purse with only the money or credit cards that you need, instead of a large handbag with straps. Keep your wallet in an inside jacket or front pants pocket.
- Don't burden yourself with packages.
- Walk on well-lighted busy streets. Stay away from vacant lots, alleys, or construction sites. Avoid dark deserted routes, even if they are the shortest.
- Don't flash cash and other tempting targets such as expensive jewelry.
- Make sure someone knows where you're going and when you expect to return.
- Carry change for emergency telephone and transportation use.
- If a friend or a taxi takes you home, ask the driver to wait until you are safely inside.
- Have your car or house key in hand as you approach your vehicle or home.

Awareness Pays Dividends

Con games and swindles are crimes over which people have total control. The keys to prevention are alertness to any offer involving money or property that "sounds too good to be true," awareness about the most common con games, and cooperation with law enforcement. If it does happen, report it. It's embarrassing to be the victim of a con game. But, the only way to expose the con artist and prevent others from being hurt in the same way is to tell law enforcement.

FOR YOUR OWN PROTECTION!

1. Be suspicious of anyone who offers you a chance for quick and easy wealth.
2. Be wary of exaggerated claims for health and medical products, such as cures for cancer or arthritis, hair restorers, quick weight loss. Before buying any cure-alls, check with your doctor, pharmacist, or clinic.
3. Don't give any details about your credit cards to phone solicitors even if they offer you gifts, a free vacation, or a sweepstakes prize.

4. Check out any “work-at-home” schemes with your local or state consumer protection agency.
5. Don’t give credit cards, checkbooks, or savings account passbooks to your housekeeper or caretaker. Don’t make an employee a joint owner of your bank account or your property.
6. Never make cash transactions in secret. Discuss any large transaction with your banker.

What to Do if You Are Assaulted

- If the attacker is only after your purse or other valuables, don’t resist. Your life and safety are worth more than your possessions.
- Make a conscious effort to get an accurate description of the attacker and call the Sheriff’s Department or police immediately.
 - Contact your local victim assistance agency to help you deal with the trauma that all crime victims experience. They can help you learn more about counseling, victim compensation laws and how to follow your case’s progress.
- Start a crime prevention program in your neighborhood.