

Overview of Personal Security and Safety Considerations for All Citizens

Provided by the Town of Vienna Police Department

www.viennava.gov

Home Security

The facts about burglary...

- More than six million residential burglaries occur every year in this country. That's one every ten seconds!!
- Nearly half of these burglaries are committed without force - that is, through **UNLOCKED** doors and windows!!

Most of these burglaries could be prevented.

- Always lock your doors and windows even when leaving for "just a minute." Never leave a house key available: under a doormat, in a flower pot, on the ledge of the door. *These are the first places a burglar will look.*

If you would like to make life even harder for crooks - Remember the following tips:

- Exterior doors should have "dead bolt" locks with a 1 inch strong metal bar extending into the door frame.
- Sliding doors and windows should all have "ventilation" locks as well as auxiliary locks to bolster security and be sure to include good locks for garage, cellar, patio or other doors that lead out through storage areas or a spare room
- For more information on locks, contact the Vienna Police Department.

Going Out?

- Lock all doors and windows.
- Use timers so that lights, radio, TV, go on and off throughout the house to indicate someone is home.
- For longer trips be sure to stop mail and newspaper delivery or have a neighbor collect them daily.
- **IN SHORT - MAKE YOUR HOME LOOK "LIVED IN".**

Remember, if you come home and see a broken window or a jimmed door, don't go in. Confronting a burglar can be dangerous. Phone the Vienna Police Department immediately.

Other tips

- Install a wide-angle lens viewer in the front door. Never open the door without knowing who is there.
- Consider alarm systems or trained security dogs for additional protection.
- Whenever you move to a new home, have the locks changed.

Operation ID

Another deterrent to "would be" burglars is *operation identification*.

- Mark your valuables with your Virginia Drivers License number preceded by the letters VA.
- Burglars don't want marked merchandise because it is difficult to fence and is evidence of guilt if they are caught.
- So mark your items as conspicuously as possible without defacing them.
- Photograph those items that can not be engraved (jewelry, silverware, antiques).

"Don't let 'em knock your block off!"

Want to know the best crime prevention device ever invented?

- **A good neighbor!**
 - Law enforcement officers can't be everywhere at once, but you and your neighbors can. You're the ones who really know what's going on in the neighborhood.
 - Put that neighborhood know-how to work. It's simple: just use your eyes and ears - and then your telephone. If you spot something suspicious, call the police or sheriff immediately.
 - Don't try to stop a criminal yourself - it can be dangerous.
 - Neighbors working together in cooperation with law enforcement make one of the best crime fighting teams around. For more information on how to start your own **NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH GROUP** - contact MPO Bill Murray- Vienna Police at wmurray@viennava.gov
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Vacation Security

"Vacation is a time for fun and relaxation. Don't let yours be ruined by crime. Follow the crime prevention tips below."

Before leaving...secure your home!!

- Have good locks on all doors and windows, **AND USE THEM!**
- Leave your trip plans and an emergency phone number with trusted neighbors or friends
- Follow the other tips listed above in [Home Security](#)

On the road

- Never carry large amounts of cash; use traveler's checks. If you must carry large sums of money, do not display it openly.
- Keep a record of traveler's check numbers and your credit card numbers in a safe place. Have the telephone numbers to call in case your checks or credit cards are lost or stolen.
- Be aware of your surroundings and never advertise your plans to strangers; this includes travel routes and the amount of cash you are carrying.
- Be careful about stopping to offer help to a stranded motorist. Go to the nearest phone booth or use a cell phone and call for assistance.
- If you suspect someone is following you, drive to the nearest service station, restaurant or business and call the police or sheriff's department while enroute to your location. If you believe it is unsafe to get out of your car, honk your horn and flash your lights to draw attention.
- If your car breaks down, raise your hood and attach a white cloth to the car antenna. If someone stops to help, it is advisable that you stay in your locked car and ask them to call the police or a garage. If you must abandon your car, keep all passengers together.

Car security

- Always lock your car when entering or leaving it.
- Park in well-lighted, busy areas.
- Check the back seat before getting into your car.
- Mark your car radio and other removable car equipment with your Virginia driver's license number followed by "VA" for identification.
- Always lock valuables out of site, preferably in the trunk. Always carry wallets, checkbooks and purses with you.
- Do not advertise that you are a tourist. Place maps and travel brochures in the glove compartment.

Sightseeing

Remember: Planning reduces your chance of becoming the victim of a crime.

- Ask for directions at a hotel/motel on how to get to those attractions you want to visit.
- Select tour guides carefully.
- Ask if there are any areas in town you should avoid. Stick to well-lighted main streets and public areas.
- Looking lost (stopping and looking at addresses or staring at street signs) may make you look like an easy target for crime. If you do get lost, find an open business and ask for directions.
- Only carry with you the cash you will need, and only small denominations.
- If older children go off separately, be sure they understand the importance of keeping track of time and returning promptly at appointed hours.

Hotel & Motel Security

When staying overnight at a hotel or motel, remember the following:

- Determine the most direct route to and from your room, to the fire escapes, elevators, and nearest phone.
- When occupying or leaving your room, use all auxiliary locking devices on your doors and windows. (You may want to purchase a portable door lock for traveling.)
- Use the door viewer to identify anyone requesting entry. Open the door only if you are certain the person has a legitimate reason to enter your room. If in doubt, call the hotel/motel office.
- Unpack and place belongings in the closet and dresser. Arrange your things so you'll know if anything is missing.
- Consider locking any electrical appliances (blow dryers, electric shavers, etc.) in your luggage. (Suitcases should always be locked so they cannot be used to carry your property out of your room.)
- Never leave money, checks, credit cards or car keys in the room. Take them with you. Place extra cash, expensive jewelry or other valuables (furs, gems, gold, or silver) in the hotel/motel safe.
- Report any lost or stolen items to the hotel/motel management and to the police. Report to the management any suspicious movements in the corridors or rooms.

Remember the only way to stop crime is to get involved in crime prevention

Vehicle Security

You Can Help Prevent Car Theft!

Though professional car thieves have entered the field in increasing numbers, most cars are still taken by amateurs who can be stopped fairly easily. You can greatly increase your protection against this type of crime by taking the following sensible precautions.

Lock Up

- An unlocked car is an open invitation to a car thief. Lock up whenever you leave your car, and take the keys with you.
- Lock the trunk and/or tailgate.
- Close all windows - professional thieves have tools that help unlock cars through a minimum of open space.
- When you park the car, remove valuable possessions from the car. Do not leave gift-wrapped packages or cameras lying on the seat of your car. Lock all valuables in your trunk or take them with you.

Park Carefully

- Avoid leaving an auto unattended in public parking lots for an extended period of time. A car is five times more likely to be stolen from an unattended lot than from the street or an attended lot. If possible, park your car in a lot where you don't have to leave your keys.
- Never attach a tag with your name and address to your key ring. If the keys are lost or stolen, the tag will lead the thief directly to your car and your home. If you have to leave your keys with a parking attendant, only leave the ignition key.
- At night, park in well-lighted areas with pedestrian traffic.
- Whenever possible, turn wheels sharply toward the curb when parking, making it extra difficult for thieves to tow your car.
- Be sure vent or wind-wing windows are shut tight. These are favorite means of entry for car thieves.

Operation ID

- With an electric engraver, etch your Virginia Driver's License number preceded by the letters "VA" on removable items.
- Record your vehicle identification number (located on a small metal plate on the dashboard of newer cars) and store it in a safe place.

Use "Anti-Theft" Devices

- When buying a car, check the manufacturer's list of anti-theft options, such as interior hood and trunk releases, locking steering columns and others.

- Consider the purchase and installation of security devices, such as:
- - Interior hood lock and release.
 - A second ignition switch or "kill switch" which prevents electrical current from reaching coil distributor.
 - A fuel switch which prevents fuel from reaching the carburetor.
 - A locking gas cap.
 - Locking devices for batteries, wheels, decks, etc.
 - An alarm device which will activate a siren, horn or lights - or all three - to frighten the thief away before he is able to steal your car.

How to Prevent Theft of Other Motor Vehicles

Thefts of motorcycles, boats and trail bikes are also occurring. Many of the same precautions that apply to cars and bicycles also apply to recreational vehicles.

Lock It

- Lock up and take the keys with you.
- Make sure all easy-to-carry items like motors, water skis and camping gear are locked up before leaving your vehicle.

Chain It

- Vehicles carried on trailers should be secured with a strong chain and padlock.
- When the trailer is not attached to your car, secure it with a heavy chain and lock to a stationary object.
- Chain your motorcycle to a stationary object such as a lamppost or sewer grating. Even when your vehicle is in the garage, use a heavy chain and padlock that resists conventional steel hacksaw blades.

Other Anti-Theft Devices

- You can buy an alarm for your vehicle that is mounted behind the license plate, and sounds off if the vehicle is moved.
- Locking steering columns are effective anti-theft devices.

How to Prevent Bicycle Theft

- Always chain your bicycle when leaving it - even for a short time. The chain should be case-hardened, at least 3/8 inch thick covered with plastic or an inner tube to prevent scratching the bike's finish. Make sure you use a sturdy padlock. Always chain both the rear wheel and the frame to a stationary object in a conspicuous place. If you only chain one wheel to the other, it can be thrown in a truck and unlocked later.
- Never leave your bicycle unlocked, even at home. Store it indoors or in a locked garage whenever you're not using it.

- Register the serial number, make, model and description of your bicycle with your local law enforcement agency. You are more likely to recover a stolen bike if it has been licensed.

Recreational Security

Camping Tips

- Avoid camping alone in isolated areas.
- Park your vehicle so it cannot be blocked by another vehicle in case of emergency.
- Familiarize yourself with local emergency locations and phone numbers in case of accidents or crime.
- Avoid leaving your camping gear (cook stove, lantern, ice chest, chairs, etc.) out in the open unattended.
- Get to know your camping neighbors - and help protect each other's belongings.
- Avoid walking alone at night.
- Carry a spare lock so you can use storage containers available at many parks. Use a chain and lock to secure propane tanks, extra fuel tanks, portable generators, spare tires, bicycles, etc.
- Always lock your camping trailer when you leave the vicinity.
- Install a locking device on the trailer towing hitch, so your trailer cannot be towed away.
- Before taking weapons with you, be aware of the regulations. In many parks and wildlife refuges, it is against the law to carry weapons.
- Report any suspicious activities and all crimes to the proper authorities - in parks, the park rangers; on private land, the sheriff or police.

When Boating

- Never overload your boat beyond recommended capacity.
- Never leave your keys aboard - even in a "hidden" place.
- Always moor your boat with a chain or cable. Use a good lock and secure the cable/chain around something that cannot be moved or that will not allow the cable/chain to be lifted over it or torn loose.
- Secure outboard motors with special transom bolts or clamping screw locks.
- Consider leaving your engine out of commission. When you are away remove the rotor; install a hidden cutoff switch; drain the fuel; remove a spark plug or the propeller.
- Before leaving your boat moored, secure all removable items. Never leave fishing equipment unattended.

Vehicle Security

If it's not possible to park your vehicle within eyesight of your group, leave it some place where it can be watched by park patrols or someone you know; or arrange for someone to drop you off and pick you up later. Other prevention techniques are:

- If you must leave valuables in your vehicle, place them in the trunk - not under the front seat or hidden under clothing. (Be cautious that you are not being observed when putting valuables in your trunk.)
- Install a locking hood latch. Install an alarm device in your vehicle which will activate a siren, horn or lights to frighten thieves away. Equip your vehicle with locking lug nuts to prevent your wheels from being stolen.
- Install a battery locking device to prevent the battery from being stolen.

Mark Your Property!

Like your TV, VCR, stereo and other belongings at home, camping equipment is also vulnerable to theft, especially when left in the open. Mark all your belongings with your Virginia driver's license number, and keep a record of equipment.

- Mark your tent, sleeping bags and clothing with indelible ink.
- Engrave your food locker, thermos, coolers, lamps and flashlights - and don't forget fishing poles, tackle boxes, backpacks, barbecue grills, snorkels and fins.

Safety Precautions

- Be sure everyone in your party is aware of park/campground rules and regulations.
- When hiking, backpacking or cross-country skiing, notify the ranger or campground host of your plans, including the trails you are taking, the expected time of your return and the name of a friend or relative to be notified in case of an emergency.
- Consider having everyone carry a whistle to use in case of an emergency.
- Never let children wander off by themselves or leave them unattended near a body of water.
- If you are being annoyed by a discourteous person, report the person to the police or park ranger.

You Can Help!

Remember, parks and wilderness areas are for everyone's use. Be sure to pick up your litter and extinguish all fires, so that we can preserve the natural beauty of our parks. Report any acts of vandalism and any suspicious activity you witness to park rangers.

Make Robbery Risky

Robbery...

It is a crime "against the person" and a frightening experience. It can result in injury or even death to the victim.

It is important to remember, in protecting your business from robbery, to take preventive measures and make it obvious that those measures have been taken.

Here are some ways to discourage robbery:

- Lock unused doors.
- Avoid working alone. If you must, turn on a hidden radio or TV so robbers will think there is someone with you.
- Vary the schedule and route for your bank deposits each day, only keeping necessary cash in the drawer. Then, if you are robbed, you'll reduce your losses.
- Make sure your cash register is clearly visible to passers-by. Arrange the counter so that the customer - or robber - is visible from the street.
- Avoid placing signs or displays near windows that block visibility from the street.
- Record the serial number of the bottom bill in each bin of the cash drawer, and instruct employees not to use these bills in making change.
- Keep "bait" money in a spare compartment of cash registers. The bait packet should be separated by face value as other bills. Keep a list of the serial and series year numbers to give to law enforcement officials if you are robbed.
- If your business runs an exceptionally high risk of robbery, you may want to invest in a bulletproof cashier screen. A screen "defuses" the robber's threat, but other prevention measures may be equally effective at lower cost.
- Display signs at entrances and exits indicating that safes require secondary keys not in possession of employees.
- Advertise your security alarm system with signs in visible locations.
- Develop a mutual aid system among stores on your block. Agree to keep an eye on each other's buildings and watch for any suspicious activities. Install "buddy buzzer" alarms so you can signal your neighbor to call the police if you are being robbed.
- Place colored tape markers at exits, at heights of 5 feet 6 inches and 6 feet. Then, if you are robbed, you can get an accurate estimate of the suspect's height as he leaves.

A robbery may be over in less than a minute. You need a quick eye to get a good look at the robber. That's why stores in some cities are placing hidden cameras behind cash registers.

If a robbery happens...

Someone points a gun at you and demands your money. What do you do? Give it to him. **Never refuse a robber!**

- If you have a silent alarm and can reach it unnoticed, use it. Otherwise, wait until the robber leaves. (Use your alarm with care. Excessive false alarms can cause problems for law enforcement and for you).
- If possible, signal other employees. Have a prearranged signal for such emergencies. Again, if the robber will see you, wait. Try to avoid sudden moves. Many robbers are just as nervous as you are.
- The most important thing to do if you're robbed: **OBSERVE**. The description of the suspect you give to police may be the only information they have to go on.

After a robbery...

- Call the police immediately - don't waste a minute.
- Write down everything you can remember about the robber and the crime itself: the robber's appearance; height, weight, color of hair and eyes, scars, tattoos, accent, anything unusual - and as much as possible about his clothing, weapon and mannerisms. Try to remember the robber's exact words and try to observe any vehicle the robber uses to get away.
- Keep everyone away from surfaces the robber may have touched.
- Cooperate fully with the law enforcement and prosecutors. Your help is crucial, so stick with the case.

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Preventing Arson/Vandalism

What can you do?

Many of the same precautions taken to discourage burglars may also discourage arsonists and vandals. By taking a few preventive steps, you can help curb these crimes.

Improve general security

- Secure all doors, windows, skylights - especially entrances on alleys.
- Install an alarm system. Don't allow landscaping to provide camouflage or hiding places.
- Keep the building windows visible and well-lighted.
- Keep your property well-lighted at night.
- Be watchful of strangers and immediately report suspicious actions near homes, schools, vacant buildings, businesses or other structures.

- Ask your neighbor to help keep watch over your business while you are away.

Add fire prevention

- Install smoke alarms, automatic and tamper-proof sprinklers, and other fire safety equipment.
- Clear your premises of fuel sources such as yard trimmings, newspapers, leftover paint, old rags and other trash.
- Keep storage and other infrequently visited areas secure.
- Secure flammables in a locked, fire-resistant cabinet.
- Dispose of all flammable waste materials as quickly as possible. (Check with local authorities for approved methods of disposal).
- Establish frequent and regular fire patrols.
- Maintain an efficient emergency plan program.
- Educate employees about arson prevention program.

Remember...

It is very difficult to catch an arsonist. Cooperation between citizens and government agencies is a key weapon against arson.

- Report any information you have that would help in the investigation of arson-suspected fires.
- Protect property you own or occupy from would-be arsonists.
- Support efforts to investigate, apprehend, and prosecute arsonists.

If you have information which may help apprehend an arsonist, call your local law enforcement agency.

Vandalism prevention

Most vandalism occurs in the evenings and on weekends so set up prevention techniques accordingly.

- Post anti-vandalism signs as a deterrent.
- Schedule custodial crews at night.
- Provide a means of incentive for reporting vandalism.
- Keep local law enforcement agencies informed about acts of vandalism to your property
- Repair damage promptly. The sooner you repair vandalism, the less chance there will be more vandalism.

Encourage community participation...

Newspapers, radio and television are good methods of mobilizing the community to be concerned and watch for vandalism and arson.

Check, Credit Card, & Refund Fraud

What can you do to prevent business fraud? Learn to recognize it before it's too late. Here are some common frauds to watch out for:

Identification

Contributing to losses from bad checks and credit cards is the use of false identification. To minimize this problem, require at least one primary ID, preferably backed by at least one secondary ID.

Primary I.D.'S Are:

- Virginia driver's license (do not accept a temporary license).
- Virginia identification card.
- Employee identification card with laminated photo (check for alterations).

Secondary I.D.'S Are:

- a. Check guarantee card (check expiration date and maximum amount of coverage).
- b. Oil company and major credit cards (with expiration dates).

NEVER Accept The Following Cards As Id:

- Membership cards.
- Library cards.
- Any card or ID that appears to be altered.
- Social security cards.
- Temporary driver's licenses.

Credit card fraud

- Do not accept credit cards without proof of identity.

Watch for these telltale signs of credit card fraud:

- The card has been altered, has expired, or is not yet valid.
- Signatures on the card and sales slip don't match.
- The customer makes several purchases in the same department, all under the amount of the floor limit or that which would require an authorization call to the card issuer.

When suspicious:

- Call for an authorization from card issuer, indicate your suspicions and follow instructions.

REMEMBER... Always destroy carbons from credit card invoices or offer carbon copies to customer so that credit card numbers and names do not fall into the wrong hands.

Check Fraud

- There are a number of ways that fraudulent or stolen checks can bounce into your business. Stolen checks can be forged. Legitimate checks can be altered to show much higher amounts.

Set Up Check Cashing Guidelines - And Follow Them...

- Require two proper I.D.'s to cash a check. Make no exceptions.
- Only accept checks with the name and address imprinted on them.
- Only accept payroll or government checks when you know the person or verify the check.
- Consider limiting the check to the purchase amount.
- Do not accept two-or-more party checks.
- Do not accept postdated checks.
- Do not accept checks with alterations.

Fraudulent refunds

Refunding is a courtesy extended by the store and no store is compelled to honor any request.

If merchandise is defective, you may refund, exchange, or follow the posted policy.

To minimize losses on fraudulent refunds, consider the following:

- Issue cash refunds only to persons who have a receipt verifying the purchase.
- Establish a policy for returning merchandise without a receipt:
- - Refund by check, to be mailed from bookkeeping department.
 - No refund - exchange only.
 - Always require valid identification and maintain a file on returns.

Schemes To Defraud Manufacturers, Suppliers Or Distributors

Schemes to defraud manufacturers, suppliers or distributors can be used by all sorts of dishonest persons on all kinds of businesses. It's a favorite ploy of con men and organized criminals. Often, they will establish a fake company, buy materials on credit, and vanish. Sometimes they'll set up a company with a name and address almost identical to a well-known, respected company. That way, many suppliers are fooled into granting them credit. Finally, organized crime may buy a legitimate business, and use it (and its credit rating) as a starting point for such schemes.

Sometimes these types of frauds are hard to detect. Watch out for conditions like these:

- A sudden change in your customer's management, without any public notice.
- The customer's payments start to lag behind, and the credit balance starts to climb.
- A new customer suddenly orders unusually large amounts of merchandise - on credit.
- Trade references for the customer cannot be verified.
- Suddenly a company increases its orders; sales become "too easy."

If you notice these signs, take action. Get to know the new management of a company. Do a careful credit check on the customer. Make sure that new orders are not filled until a credit check has been completed.

Bicycle Safety

Rights and Responsibilities

Bicycle riders are part of the traffic and share the road with automobile drivers. They must stop at stop signs, obey traffic lights, and most other traffic laws and signs. Bicycle riders must ride near the right hand curb or edge of the roadway but they can legally move left to turn left, to pass another vehicle or bicycle, or to avoid dangerous conditions such as parked cars. They may also ride on sidewalks if conditions on the roadway are unsafe.

Rules for Bicycle Riders

- Ride **WITH** traffic.
- Ride in a straight line except when necessary to make a turn, avoid hitting someone or something, or drive over water drains, railroad tracks, holes, or other hazards.
- Use a hand signal just as drivers of automobiles do before turning left or right.
- Ride as near the right curb or edge of the street as practicable when riding slower than other vehicles. On one way streets with two or more lanes, ride near either left or right curb or edge of the street. When passing parked cars, look through the rear windows to see if there is someone in a car who may open a door in your path. If there is, or if you cannot see into a vehicle, check traffic behind you and move out far enough to avoid the door if it should open.
- Get off the bicycle and "walk" it across using the crosswalks at busy intersections.
- Do not permit anyone to ride as a passenger unless using a separate seat attached to the bike. If the passenger is a child weighing 40 pounds or less, the seat should have a device to hold the child in place and protect him/her from the bike's moving parts.
- Do not carry anything which prevents fielding the handlebars with at least one hand. "No hands" riding is dangerous.
- Do not "hitch rides" by holding on to, or attaching the bike to, any other vehicle.
- Do not ride on freeways which have signs prohibiting bicycles.

- Do not park a bicycle on its side, or so there is no room for persons walking on the sidewalks.
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Crime Prevention for seniors

Crime prevention is everyone's responsibility, not just a job for law enforcement. Seniors can learn how to protect themselves from crime by following these simple, common-sense suggestions. Share these tips with your neighbors and friends, too, and make it tough for criminals to work in your neighborhood.

At home...

- Always keep your doors and windows locked. Install dead bolt locks on all your doors.
- Keep your home well lit at night, inside and out, and keep your curtains closed at night.
- Install a peephole in your front door so you can see callers without opening the door.
- Ask for proper identification from delivery men or strangers. Don't be afraid of asking if they are legitimate; they won't mind.
- If a stranger asks to use your telephone, offer to place the call for him/her yourself. Never let a stranger into your home.
- Do not leave notes on your door when you are gone, and do not hide your keys under the mat or in other conspicuous places.
- Never give out information over the phone indicating you are alone or that you won't be home at a certain time.
- When you are gone for more than a day, make sure your home looks and sounds occupied - use an automatic timer to turn on lights and a radio or TV.

While you're out...

- Carry your purse very close to you - don't dangle it from your arm. Also, never leave your purse in a shopping cart.
- Don't carry any more cash than is necessary.
- Avoid walking alone at night. Try to have a friend accompany you in high risk areas even during the daytime.
- Be careful carrying weapons - they may be used against you by a criminal.
- Have your paychecks or government checks sent directly to your bank account; many banks have senior citizens discounts.
- Never withdraw money from your bank accounts for anyone except **YOURSELF**. Be wary of con artists and get-rich schemes that probably are too good to be true.

In your car...

- Keep your gas tank full and your engine properly maintained to avoid breakdowns.
- Always lock your car doors, even when you're inside, and keep your windows rolled up. Driving with the windows closed also improves gas mileage.
- Lock packages and other valuables in the trunk. Do not leave them on the back seat or on the floor of the car where potential thieves can see them.
- When you return to your car, always check the front and back seat before you get in.
- Never pick up hitchhikers.
- If your car breaks down, pull over to the right as far as possible, raise the hood, and wait inside the car for help. Do not get out of the car or unroll the window until the police arrive.



If you are a victim at home...

- If you arrive at home and suspect a stranger may be inside, **DON'T GO IN**. Leave quietly and call 911 to report the crime.
- If you are attacked on the street, make as much noise as possible by calling for help or blowing a whistle. Do not pursue your attacker. *Call 911 and report the crime as soon as possible.*
- If you have been swindled or conned, report the crime to your local police. Con artists count on their victim's reluctance to admit they've been duped, but if you delay, you help them get away. Remember, if you never report the crime, they are free to cheat others again and again and you have no chance of ever getting your money back.

Crime prevention tips for the disabled

Disabled persons face many physical challenges. This could make them vulnerable to would-be assailants who assume the disabled are incapable of protecting themselves.

If you are a disabled person, or know someone who is, the following information may be helpful. Take your time to read and remember these tips. You may be able to prevent yourself or a friend from becoming a victim of a crime.

General Crime Prevention Tips

- Know and avoid situations and locations that could invite crime, i.e., dark alleys, unlit parking lots, etc.
- Decide what you plan to do in the event you are confronted, i.e., show confidence; scream, etc.
- Consider your options in these situations and practice your responses often so that you can recall them in a real situation.

Home Security Tips

- Consider having a peephole installed in your doors. Make sure you have the proper locks on doors and windows and use them while you are at home as well as when you are out.
- Never open the door for a stranger. Always demand verification of the stranger's identity and the purpose of the visit.
- Never tell a stranger calling by phone that you are alone or that you are disabled.
- Plan an avenue of escape from each room in your residence to use in case of emergency, such as a break-in or a disaster.

Consumer Protection Tips

- Always ask for identification from all solicitors and call their agency for verification.
- Don't commit yourself to purchases or charitable donations over the phone. Ask the caller to mail the information to you so you can make an informed decision. If you are not familiar with the company or organization, consult the State Department of Consumer Affairs or the Better Business Bureau.
- Be sure to read and understand all contracts before you sign them. If your sight is impaired, have someone you trust read the entire document to you.
- Beware of anyone who is offering products or services at a "once in a lifetime" offer.
- Consider having your checks mailed directly to your bank to avoid mail theft or robbery.

Travel Safety

- Whenever possible, travel with someone you know. There is safety in numbers.
- Leave word of your plans with family including your ultimate destination and estimated time of return.
- When waiting for a bus, train, etc., wait in a centralized location near other passengers.
- When riding the bus, sit as near to the driver as possible, particularly during late hours.
- Keep your handbags and packages on your lap instead of the floor or the seat next to you.
- Consider using travelers checks instead of carrying cash.
- Be aware of those around you, particularly when exiting a bus or train.
- If you have a speech or hearing impairment, always carry a card of communication symbols.

If You Become a Victim of a Crime...

- Get help immediately by calling:
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- The police department
 - A doctor
 - The sheriff's department
 - A friend
 - A relative
 - Try to remember as many details about the assailant as possible, such as clothing, hair color, identifiable marks, etc.
 - Be certain not to destroy any possible evidence.
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Elder Abuse

A MAJOR ISSUE

Many senior citizens will retire comfortably and lead happy and robust lives. However, many of America's elderly are not experiencing the relaxation of retired life. Many are being physically, psychologically or financially exploited - some by strangers, some by acquaintances and some even by their own family members. Gerontologists consider this type of exploitation to be elder abuse.

Elder abuse crosses all social, economic and ethnic lines - any elderly person could become a victim. It is important to become aware of the possibility of elder abuse and to be able to recognize signs that might suggest its occurrence. This awareness will enable us to help neighbors, friends or family members who may be in trouble.

Types Of Abuse

Abuse of the elderly usually falls into the following categories:

- Physical abuse
- Financial abuse
- Psychological/emotional abuse
- Physical neglect

The example cases that follow outline typical characteristics of elder abuse. Although ***they are hypothetical***, they do include aspects of actual reported cases.

Physical Abuse

- Joan is an 84-year-old widow who was living with her grandniece. Her home environment was clean and in a nice rural setting, however, the landlord often noticed bruises on Joan's face and arms. Suspecting abuse, he immediately notified County Adult Protective Services (APS). After assessing the situation, the APS investigator found that Joan had been beaten and slapped by her grandniece. APS removed Joan from the grandniece's care and placed her with a new caretaker.

Psychological/Emotional Abuse

- Alex is a 77-year-old man who had his house cleaned twice a week by a neighborhood volunteer. When a next door neighbor did not see Alex come out of the house for several weeks she suspected something was wrong so she notified the county sheriff's department. Sheriff's investigators discovered that the volunteer cleaning person had often isolated Alex in a room and verbally abused him. The mailer was referred to APS, who helped Alex find a new cleaning person.

Financial Abuse

- Eighty-one-year-old Mitsuko is a recent widow and was residing alone in her home. A friend suggested she allow a college student to move in with her as a boarder to help pay for expenses. Soon afterwards, the student allowed two of his friends to move in without offering to pay Mitsuko any additional rent. Next door neighbors, who regularly kept an eye on Mitsuko, became worried when they noticed groups of young people coming and going from the house at all hours. They phoned the city police department to report the matter. Police investigators found that the students had threatened Mitsuko and had used her automated bank teller card to withdraw large sums of money. The students were arrested and Mitsuko is once again living alone.

Physical Neglect

- Eighty-two-year-old Eva is paralyzed. Her eldest son was legally granted conservator-ship of her estate and they lived together in a four-bedroom home. When a younger son who lived out of state came to visit he contacted APS to report that his mother was living in an environment that he believed was unfit. An APS investigator visited Eva's home and discovered she had been locked up and forced to live in one room that was filthy and unkempt. The representative also found that she had frequently been denied proper food and medication. After this initial visit Eva was moved to a skilled nursing facility and her younger son was placed in charge of her financial affairs.

Your Involvement

- Fortunately, most older persons do not experience this type of treatment. Nevertheless, elder abuse is a frightening and real issue. Knowing what to look for and who to contact if you suspect abuse, will help you do your part to correct the situation. By being alert to situations that could lead to abuse of an elderly person, you may be able to prevent a serious injury or even save a life.
- If you live with and/or care for an elderly person, you know that the responsibility can be overwhelming at times. One way to cope is to be sure to take time away from your responsibilities on a regular basis. This will help to alleviate stress and the potential for abuse and give you a chance to put everything into perspective.

Reporting

Virginia law mandates elder care custodians, medical and non-medical practitioners or employees of elder protective agencies to report suspected abuse. The following is a list of elder protective agencies that you can contact if you are uncertain about reporting suspected abuse:

- The State Department of Social Services
- A county probation department
- A county welfare department
- A police or sheriff's department
- A nursing home ombudsman

Remember, one alert person can make a difference.

Family Violence Reduction

Beyond Burglary Prevention

- Neighborhood Watch is not a new concept - in fact it has become one of society's most effective tools to reduce residential burglary.
- Neighborhood Watch is very simple - neighbors get to know each other and work together in a program of mutual assistance. They are trained to recognize and report suspicious activities in their neighborhoods.
- But Neighborhood Watch can do much more than just help reduce theft and burglary.
- Now neighbors are being taught to detect another kind of residential crime family violence.

What Is Family Violence?

Family violence consists of abuse -physical or mental - of children, adults or seniors in a familial setting. Family violence is broken down into three major categories: child abuse, battered women, and elderly victimization. It is not uncommon that if one type of abuse is occurring within a home, other abuse may be (or soon will be) taking place.

Through family violence reduction information, you can learn...

- To recognize signs of abuse
- How to contact family - help agencies; and
- How to help prevent family violence and abuse.

Your Involvement.

Involvement does not mean physical intervention. It does not mean snooping on your neighbors. It simply means a willingness to help by recognizing the obvious

signs - the continuously injured child, the couple who becomes involved in physical confrontations, or the long-term, unexplained absence of the senior living next door.

How to Start a Neighborhood Watch/Family Violence Reduction Program

1. Contact MPO Bill Murray at wmurray@viennava.gov or 703-255-6396 and ask him to assist you in developing a Neighborhood Watch Program.
2. Contact your local child abuse council, battered women's shelter, family service center, etc., to arrange for speakers at Neighborhood Watch meetings on the programs and the services they provide. They can also provide you with printed material or assist you in locating it.
3. Plan your Neighborhood Watch Meetings to cover each family violence category (child abuse, battered women & elderly victimization).
4. Develop and print a list of agencies which provide emergency assistance to abused children, battered women and victimized elderly. Distribute this list to all of the members of your Neighborhood Watch group.
5. Encourage your Neighborhood Watch members to start Block Parent groups and support prevention programs for children in the schools, scouting programs, churches, etc.

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Help stop family violence

Family violence prevention information in a Neighborhood Watch setting is a new concept. It needs your support.

Battered Women

Did You Know...

In Virginia, it is a crime for any person to threaten, beat, sexually assault, or otherwise harm another person, **even IF they are married.**

- Domestic violence is more than just a "family problem" - it's a crime!
- Battering is not exclusively a crime against women, but they do constitute the majority of victims; thus this publication is primarily directed to the battered wife or woman.
- Although we have few statistics on the incidence of domestic violence we do know that
 - Approximately 30 percent of female homicide victims in the United States are killed by their husbands or boyfriends.
 - Females are much more likely than males to be killed by their spouse.
 - Domestic violence affects at least one out of every four American families

Why Do They Stay?

The most frequently asked question concerning a battering situation is why does she stay? While reasons cover the range from children, love, guilt, fear, pride, embarrassment, financial dependence - or a combination thereof - it is very possible the woman is unaware that she may be locked into a violence cycle.

Three-Phase Theory of Family Violence

The family violence cycle consists of three phases; the tension building phase, the acute-battering incident, and the loving reconciliation.

Tension-Building Phase

- During this phase the woman senses her mate's increasing tension. He is "edgy" and perhaps challenges her and tells her she is stupid, incompetent, etc. The woman may internalize her appropriate anger at the man's unfairness and experience physical effects such as depression, tension, anxiety and headaches. As the tension in the relationship increases, minor episodes and violence increase, such as pinching, slapping, or shoving.

Acute-Battering Incident

- The tension-building phase ends in an explosion of violence. The woman may or may not fight back. Following the battering, she is in a state of physical and psychological shock. The man may discount the episode and underestimate the woman's injuries.

Loving Reconciliation

- During the last phase of the family violence cycle, both parties have a sense of relief that "It's over." The man is often genuinely sorry for what happened and is fearful that his partner will leave him. He apologizes and may "shower" her with love and praise that helps her repair her shattered self-esteem. He tells her he can't live without her, so she feels responsible for his well-being and guilty for her actions and blames herself for what led up to the abuse.

Increasing Spiral of Violence

Once violence has begun, it continues to increase in both frequency and severity. Understanding the psychological consequences of her violent relationship can help the woman take power and choose constructive alternatives, as well as aid those who intervene to help her.

If you become a Victim of Domestic Violence

- Call the Police Department by using 911.
- Make sure you are safe from another beating. Whenever you believe you are in danger, leave your home and take your children with you. Also take important papers such as your birth certificate, vehicle registration, etc.
- Get medical attention. Don't try to treat yourself; you may be injured much more seriously than you realize.
- Seek assistance. Whether or not you file charges against your batterer, you may need to talk to a professional about your situation. Contact your local battered women's shelter, women's support group or victims' assistance center.
- Save all the evidence (proof) you can. (You may even want to take photographs of your injuries.) Whether or not you file charges now, you may later change your mind and will need proof that you have been assaulted.

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A Way Out

Everyone has the right to be safe from threats and beatings -- but you must take that first step. Once you recognize that it isn't your fault and it is possible to change your situation, seek the help you need to correct your situation.

Help Available

Child Abuse

It Shouldn't Hurt To Be A Kid

- Yet, children continue to be hurt every day. For these children there is no hope unless each one of us realizes that our most important duty is the protection, welfare and growth of our children.
- Child abuse can leave a scar that is carried throughout life. In fact, statistics show that the abused child all too often grows up to be an abuser. We know that breaking the cycle of abuse will not only protect our children, but will reduce crime now and in the future. Studies suggest that 85 percent of convicted felons were abused as children.
- Without individual and community concern and involvement there are really three "victims" of child abuse: the child, the abuser, and the community. However, each of us may make a valuable contribution to the protection of children and the prevention of abuse. Our concern and involvement is critical - it may save a life.

What Is Child Abuse?

Child abuse is legally defined as:

- A physical injury which is inflicted by other than accidental means on a child by another person,
- Sexual abuse, including both sexual assault and sexual exploitation,
- Willful cruelty or unjustifiable punishment of a child,
- Cruel or inhuman corporal punishment or injury,
- Neglect, including both severe and general neglect,
- Abuse (all of the above) in out-of-home care.

Indicators of Child Abuse

Below are some indicators of child abuse which can help you recognize an existing or potential problem of abuse.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may be defined as any act which results in a non-accidental physical injury.

Indicators of physical abuse:

- Bruises, burns, abrasions, lacerations, or swelling caused by other than accidental means,
- Belt buckle marks, hand prints, burns, bite marks and pinches,
- Child states injury was caused by abuse injury unusual for a specific age group,
- A history of previous or recurrent injuries,
- Unexplained injuries; conflicting explanations or reasons for injury,
- Child excessively passive, compliant or fearful,
- Caretaker attempts to hide injuries.

Neglect

Neglect is essentially the negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child by a parent or caretaker under circumstances indicating harm or threatened harm to the child's health or welfare

Indicators of neglect:

- Child lacking adequate medical or dental care.
- Child is always sleepy or hungry.
- Child is always dirty or inadequately dressed for weather conditions.
- There is evidence of poor supervision.
- Conditions in home are extremely or persistently unsafe or unsanitary.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is defined as acts of sexual assault on, and the sexual exploitation of, minors.

Indicators of sexual abuse:

- Child reports sexual activities to a trusted person.
- Sexual knowledge not appropriate for age - inappropriate understanding of sexual behavior (especially by younger children).
- Child wears torn, stained or bloody underclothing.
- Child is victim of other forms of abuse.

Reporting

- The law requires certain professionals to report suspicion and/or knowledge of child abuse, which includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, and cases of severe emotional abuse that constitute willful cruelty or unjustifiable punishment of a child. But, community members also have an important role in protecting children from abuse and neglect. The life of a child may be saved if community members become involved and report cases of suspected child abuse.

Your Involvement

- Involvement does not mean physical intervention or snooping on your neighbor. It simply means not ignoring the obvious. Fear of involvement has resulted in family tragedies in which neighbors reported they knew what was going on, but declined to get involved.
- If a member of the community, who is not required by law to report, does not want to identify himself or herself, the report may be made anonymously.

After Your Report

Many people are under the misconception that if a family is reported for child abuse the parent will always be arrested and the child will be taken away from the family. Although this may occur in serious abuse cases, the family is usually referred to services such as counseling or parenting classes. In neglect cases, the family may be referred to public assistance agencies. However, the goal of child protective agencies is to try to keep the family unit intact unless the child is in danger. The goal of all of us is to protect our children and help them grow up healthy and happy.

To report suspected child abuse contact your local:

- Police or Sheriff's Department,
- County Welfare Department, or
- County Juvenile Probation Department.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Preventing Sexual Assault

Know the facts about rape...

- Rape is a violent crime - a hostile attack - an attempt to hurt and humiliate. It is **NOT** the result of "uncontrolled passions."
- Rape can happen to anyone. Students, working women, wives, mothers, children, grandmothers, and even males are the victims of rape.
- Rape can occur anywhere and at any time, in public or in your own home, day or night.
- Rapists are not necessarily strangers. In fact, in over one-third of reported cases, the rapist is an acquaintance, neighbor, friend or relative of the victim.
- Rape is one of the most underreported crimes. The majority of rapists continue until caught. So report any kind of sexual assault.

Prevention tips

The tips given here are designed to increase your odds against sexual assault. The more you know about rape prevention, the better your chances are of never becoming a victim.

- First, know the facts about rape. Become aware of locations and situations where rape might occur and avoid them, if possible.
- Consider your alternatives if confronted by a rapist. Practice possible responses so that you can recall them even under the stress of a real encounter.

Safety at home

Many rapes occur in or near the victim's home. One of the best ways to prevent sexual assault is to practice good home security.

- Install effective locks on all doors and windows--and **USE** them.
- Install a peephole viewer in your door. **NEVER** open your door without knowing who is on the other side. Require salespeople or repair people to show identification.
- If you live alone, use only your last name and initials on mail boxes and in telephone directories.
- If strangers telephone or come to your door, don't admit that you are alone.
- Don't let any strangers into your home, no matter what the reason or how dire the emergency is supposed to be. Offer to make an emergency phone call while they wait outside.
- If you live in an apartment avoid being in the laundry room or garage by yourself, especially at night.
- If you come home and find a door or window open or signs of forced entry, **DON'T GO IN!** Go to the nearest phone and call the police or sheriff.

Don't walk into danger

Be alert to your surroundings and the people around you--especially if you are alone or it is dark. Know where help may be if you should need it.

- Whenever possible, travel with a friend.
- Stay in well-lighted areas as much as possible.
- Walk confidently, directly, and at a steady pace on the side of the street facing traffic. A rapist looks for someone who appears vulnerable.
- Walk close to the curb. Avoid doorways, bushes, and alleys where rapists can hide.
- If you think you are being followed, walk quickly to areas where there are lights and people while calling police. If a car appears to be following you, turn and walk in the opposite direction, or walk on the other side of the street.
- If you are in danger, scream and run, or yell "fire."

Car Safety

- Keep your car in good working order and the gas tank at least half full.
- Always lock car doors after entering or leaving your car.
- Park in well-lighted areas.
- Have your car keys in your hand and check the back seat area before entering your car.
- If you think you are being followed, drive to a public place or to a police or sheriff's station, call 911 while enroute.
- If your car breaks down, turn on your flashers, open the hood, attach a white cloth to the car antenna, and wait inside your car with the doors locked. If someone stops to help, stay in your car and ask them to call the police a garage or a tow service for you.

Weapons

Carrying weapons for self-defense is controversial and sometimes illegal. **BE SAFE** - for more information, contact the Police Department.

If you are attacked...

Remember, your main concern must always be **YOUR SAFETY**. No one can tell you whether you should fight back, submit, or resist. **IT DEPENDS ON YOU AND THE SITUATION.**

Keep assessing the situation as it is happening. If one strategy doesn't work, try another. Possible options are: negotiating, stalling for time, distracting the assailant and fleeing to a safe place, verbal assertiveness, screaming to attract attention, flight or physical resistance. Your best defense, however, is to **BE PREPARED** - know your options ahead of time. Your safety may depend upon your ability to stay cool and calm.

If you are a victim of rape...

- Go to a safe place immediately and call the police. The sooner you make the report, the greater the chances the attacker will be caught.
- Do not wash, douche, change clothes or clean up in any way until after talking to the police and going to the hospital. You could destroy valuable evidence for court use.
- Remember, you are the victim. You have nothing to feel guilty or ashamed about. You may want to contact a treatment or crisis center to help you deal with the consequences of the assault.

For further information regarding safety issues, feel free to contact MPO Bill Murray-Town of Vienna Police Department at wmurray@viennava.gov or 703-255-6396.