

CRIME PREVENTION GUIDE

MURDER & ASSAULT

Most murder and assault victims know their attackers. Many times, the people involved in the incident are drunk or on drugs. Murder or assault can also be the result of another crime such as burglary or robbery. The victim is killed when he or she resists. Other murders or assaults happen because of some seemingly trivial confrontation that turns violent because of anger, irrational thinking, alcohol or drugs.

- If you think you are in danger, go to a safe place, then call police.
- Do not touch anything.
- While waiting for police, you should write down the license plate numbers of any vehicles leaving the crime scene.
- Make a note of any suspicious people you see in the area.
- When police arrive, they will search for evidence and ask you to provide any information you may have.
- If you have additional information after the officers leave, call the **Criminal Investigation Division at (972) 625-1887**.

Investigating officers will ask victims and witnesses for details of the incident. Correct information is extremely important because it can help in making a speedy arrest and determine what charges should be filed. When the initial investigation is completed, the officer will write a report and send it to the Criminal Investigation Division. The Division will review the case, contact the victim and witnesses, file charges if possible and do everything within reason to arrest the suspect.

PREVENTION

- Avoid high-crime areas when possible.
- If you have to travel in dangerous areas, remain alert to your surroundings. Watch for strangers who may approach you without apparent reason.
- Always be considerate of others, whether you are driving your car or attending a social or business function. Avoid arguing with strangers, especially individuals who appear to have been drinking or using drugs. If you sense that an argument or confrontation is getting out of hand, just walk away.
- Remain calm and do not resist.
- If you become a victim of a serious and potentially dangerous crime, remain calm. If you panic, you increase the chances of violence. Do not resist a suspect's efforts to take your property. Do not jeopardize your life. No property is worth more than your life.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

If you are a victim of sexual assault, you should:

Call 911 To Report a Crime/Emergency

- Report the crime as soon as possible.
- Recall as much as possible about the attacker.
- Preserve all physical evidence. Do not take a bath, douche, wash or change clothes or linens. Do not touch anything handled by the attacker.
- Notify your doctor and/or go to the closest hospital emergency room for a medical examination and treatment. The police department will pay for the examination and the rape kit if the victim files a report for an offense that occurred in our city.
- Be sure to take clean clothing to wear after the examination. Clothing worn during the attack will be turned over to the police for laboratory analysis.
- When the officers arrive, they will look for evidence and fill out a report. This report will be sent to the Criminal Investigation Division for further investigation. You will also be provided information for helpful resources.
- One of the unit's investigators will contact the victim as soon as possible to get a written statement.

Sexual assault is not a sexual crime; it is an act of violence.

BE ALERT WHEREVER YOU ARE

Sexual assaults can occur anywhere. Be alert to your surroundings and to the people around you when you are outside, especially if you are alone or if it is dark. Remember these preventive measures:

WHEN OUTSIDE

- Avoid walking at night. Otherwise, stay in well-lit areas as much as possible.
- Walk confidently, directly, at a steady pace.
- Walk on the side of the street facing traffic.
- Walk close to the curb. Avoid doorways, bushes and alleys where someone can hide. Be familiar with your surroundings. Be alert.

WHEN AT HOME

- Make sure all doors are solid and sturdy. Entry doors should be solid core wood (at least 1-3/4 inches thick) or metal. Good locks, such as a dead-bolt lock with a one inch throw, are a must. Do not rely on chain locks.
- Make sure all windows can be (and are) locked securely
- Be sure the exterior of your home is well lit at night.
- Move exterior door hinges to the interior or install non-removable hinge pins.
- Install a wide-angle peephole so you can have a full view outside the door.
- Keep doors locked at all times.
- Always acknowledge a knock at the door without opening the door. Never let anyone know you are alone. If the caller won't go away, call the police.
- Put curtains or blinds on all windows and keep them closed at night.
- When moving into a house or apartment, change or re-key all locks.

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- If the door keys are lost, change the locks or re-key immediately.
- Do not hide door keys outside.
- Avoid giving your house keys to anyone other than family members or trusted friends.
- Know the neighbors you can trust in an emergency.
- Use your initials rather than your first name in the phone book and on your mailbox.
- If you hear a prowler inside your house or apartment, get out through a back door or window if possible. Avoid any confrontations.
- When returning home, have your keys ready to enter the house or apartment as quickly as possible.
- If you sense something is not right, do not enter your home or apartment. Call the police.
- Do not allow any stranger into your home. If a stranger asks to use your telephone, get the information and place the call yourself.

WHEN DRIVING

- Keep your doors locked and windows rolled up at all times.
- Be sure your house, garage and driveway are well-lit.
- Always check the back seat before getting into your car.
- When you go out, be sure to let someone know your destination, route and expected time of arrival.
- Keep your car properly maintained.
- Use busy, well-lit streets when possible.
- Be sure you have enough gas to get to your location.
- Leave your car in gear when you have to stop at intersections.
- If you wish to help a stranded motorist, do not stop, go to the nearest telephone and call for help.
- If you think you are being followed by another car, do not go home. Drive to the nearest police or fire station, open gasoline station or other well-lit place. Do not get out of your car; use your horn to summon help.
- If your car breaks down in an isolated area, turn on the emergency flashers, raise your hood, get back in your car as quickly as possible, then lock your doors and keep the windows rolled up. If people stop, ask them to send help. Do not get out of your car or accept rides from anyone.
- If someone attempts to force his or her way into your car, blow the horn.
- Always park in a well-lit busy location.
- If you park during the day and return at night, park near the street and building lights when possible.
- Stay alert and attuned to things going on around you. Do not leave your car if you observe any suspicious persons in the area.
- Have your key ready before you reach the car so you do not have to spend time searching for the right key.
- When parking in a valet lot, leave only your ignition key with the attendant.
- When you reach home, leave your lights on until you open the garage.
- Have your house key ready before you get out of the car.

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ROBBERY

Robbery is a theft in which the offender intentionally or recklessly injures another person or the offender intentionally threatens another person with imminent bodily injury or death.

Aggravated robbery is a robbery during which the victim is seriously injured or the offender displays or uses a deadly weapon.

DURING A ROBBERY

- Remain calm and listen to the robber's demands. If you panic, you increase the chances of violence.
- Avoid sudden movements.
- Do not resist a robber's efforts to take your property.
- Do not offer items not specifically demanded.
- Observe the robber's physical description (for example sex, race, age, and clothing).
- Without placing yourself in danger, attempt to obtain the license plate number of the robber's car, if there is one.

AFTER THE ROBBERY

- Go to a safe location as close as possible to the robbery scene and notify the police immediately.
- Keep all witnesses at the scene until police arrive to interview them. If a witness has to leave, get his or her name, address and phone number.
- Do not touch or move any evidence.
- Write down a complete description of the suspect; weapon, if any; and vehicle used.
- List all property taken, along with serial numbers, when possible.
- Avoid poorly lit areas.
- Approximately 44 percent of the robberies involving individuals happen between 9 p.m. and 3 a.m. If you must walk in poorly lit areas, walk purposefully. Communicate the message you are calm, confident and know what is going on around you. Make quick but deliberate eye contact with people around you.
- When walking to your vehicle, have your car keys in hand before starting across a parking lot. Check under your vehicle as you approach it and check the front and back seats before getting in.
- Be alert to vehicles parked near you.
- Have your key ready when you reach your car.
- When driving, keep car doors locked at all times. Keep the windows rolled up enough so that no one can reach through the opening.
- Avoid walking alone and stay away from dark streets. Avoid shortcuts through deserted areas.
- Avoid displaying large amounts of cash or other tempting targets, like jewelry.
- Always park your car in well-lighted areas. This will enable you to see your car and its surroundings from as far away as possible. Park as close to an open business as possible.

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SAFE BANKING

- Do not keep large amounts of cash at home or in your possession. Open a checking account. Most banks offer low cost, economy checking for those who do not need to write a large number of checks.
- Protect your deposit slips and checkbook. Never give anyone a deposit slip or blank check. Your deposit slip has your account number and should never be used as a way to give someone your address and phone number. Never tell anyone your account number other than for legitimate business reasons. Your account number could allow someone to access your account.
- Protect your bank statements. Either keep them or destroy them. Do not put them in the trash.
- Never give out information about your bank account by telephone. Your bank will not ask for information of this kind by telephone.
- Exercise caution when going to and from your bank lobby. Stay alert and do not loiter. Do not display cash or checks. Keep them concealed in your purse or pocket. Be wary of strangers.
- If you are victimized near your bank or on bank property, report it to the bank and to police.
- Have Social Security checks and other regularly recurring checks deposited directly into your bank.
- Find out what checks your bank will accept by direct deposit. Ask your employer about having your payroll check deposited directly into your bank.
- Use a safe deposit box to store valuable items such as jewelry and important documents. This provides protection against damage from fires and floods as well as from theft. The cost of a safe deposit box is usually only a few dollars a month.

AUTOMATIC TELLER MACHINE (ATM) AND NIGHT DEPOSIT SAFETY

- Protect the personal identification number (PIN) you use with your ATM. Do not write it on your card. Stand directly in front of the ATM when you enter your number so no one can look over your shoulder. Try to have another person with you when you use your ATM or night deposit.
- Be ready to conduct your transaction before you approach the ATM or night deposit. Conduct your business quickly and do not loiter in the vicinity.
- At night, use an ATM or night deposit that is well-lit.
- Be observant when you use your ATM or night deposit. Be cautious of anyone who is loitering around the ATM or night deposit. Do not talk to strangers. Leave quickly if you are approached while using an ATM or night deposit.
- Do not use an ATM if the equipment appears to be altered or tampered with.
- Put away your money as soon as you withdraw it from the ATM. Do not stand by the ATM and count your money. Do not openly carry money to your ATM or night deposit. Keep it concealed until you are ready to make the deposit.
- Always take your receipt from the ATM. Do not leave it in the machine or lying on the ground nearby. The receipt shows your account number.

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- Do not forget to remove your ATM card.

THEFT

DO NOT DISTURB ANYTHING AT THE SCENE

The investigating officer will collect evidence and prepare a report. The officer will ask the victim to make an inventory to determine what was taken. Avoid touching or disturbing anything until the officer has arrived and collected evidence.

The investigating officer will ask questions such as:

- What time did you leave the house?
- What time did you return?
- What did you see when you returned?
- Where was the stolen property located?
- Have you talked with any of your neighbors?
- If you have, what did they tell you they saw or heard?
- Are you willing to prosecute if arrests are made?

If more property loss is discovered after the investigating officer leaves, you have the following options:

- Mail any additional information to the Criminal Investigation Division at 5151 North Colony Blvd., The Colony, TX 75056. Make sure you include your name, address and incident number.
- Call to file a supplement report.

Only a small percentage of burglary and theft cases have follow-up investigations because there is usually not enough evidence. Cases not followed up are put on the inactive lists. The victim is NOT contacted again unless there are new developments.

Should you obtain additional information regarding your case, call **(972) 625-1887 MONDAY – FRIDAY, 8AM – 5PM** to supply updated information on your case and have your case number ready.

PREVENT BURGLARY AND THEFT

A burglary is the act of entering a home or building, not open to the public, with the intent to commit a crime. A theft has been committed if someone unlawfully obtains property with the intent to deprive the rightful owner.

STEPS TO TO TAKE TO KEEP FROM BECOMING A VICTIM

- Keep your doors and windows locked at all times.

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- If you move into a previously occupied house or apartment, change or re-key all locks. When replacing locks, replace them with a dead-bolt lock.
- Install dead-bolt locks and metal strike plates. A dead-bolt lock has a solid metal bar that covers the gap between a door and its frame. The word "dead-bolt" means there are no springs to operate the bolt. When fully engaged, it cannot be pushed back with a credit card or any other flexible "shimming" device. It must be manually locked and unlocked.
- If your door that is secured by the dead bolt lock has breakable glass within 40 inches of the lock, the lock must be key operated from both sides unless barred by safety codes. When you are in the house, keep the key for the dead bolt lock in a place where you can get it quickly in case of fire.
- It is important that a reinforcing metal strike plate be used with the dead-bolt lock. The strike plate should be anchored in the studs of the building so that the door cannot be kicked in.
- Purchase only high-quality, name-brand locks. Consult professional locksmiths and consider having them do the installation.
- Install solid core or metal outside doors, since most intruders enter a home by physically destroying a door or door frame. Strong doors and frames, including your garage door, are vital to your security. Exterior doors must be metal or solid core wooden doors that are a minimum of one and three-eighths inches thick.
- Steel doors and frames are harder to destroy than simple wooden doors and frames. If you have wooden doors and frames, you can improve your security by taking out the least possible amount of wood when installing any security device.
- Use a door peephole or view grill. Always acknowledge a caller at your door, but do not open the door. Some burglars ring the doorbell and break in when there is no answer. A peephole with a 180-degree viewing angle is an excellent way to verify who is on the other side of the door.
- Put extra locking devices on all windows. In many cases, entry is made through a window. Window locks that secure both the inside and outside frames can provide another effective means of discouraging would-be burglars. Windows can be secured by auxiliary locking devices, such as screws, wooden dowels, pinning devices and key-operated locks.
- Install secondary locks on sliding glass doors. People often install sturdy locks on their front doors but leave sliding doors wide open. Usually, a sliding door is hidden from public view, making it a perfect place for burglars to enter. One way to bolster your security is to install a bolt lock on the door to help prevent a burglar from sliding or lifting it off its tracks.
- Remember that if you can keep burglars occupied for several minutes trying to open a door or window, they usually will become frustrated and leave.
- Always keep your garage closed and locked. A dead-bolt lock is especially important here. Once inside the garage, a burglar is free to work at getting into the house. Your garage and its possessions are part of your home. Keeping it locked is just as important as keeping your home locked, especially if the garage is attached to your home.
- When away for an extended period of time, cancel mail and suspend newspaper delivery. An accumulation of mail and newspapers is a sure tip-off that the family is not home.

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Arrange in advance to have a neighbor take any papers, mail or free samples that may be delivered while you are gone.

- Have a trusted neighbor watch your home when you are away. Your neighbor's eyes are some of the best crime-prevention tools available. Many burglaries could be stopped or prevented if only more people would report suspicious happenings. Tell the neighbor who is watching your home, where you will be, and how long you will be gone.
- Be sure your home always looks "lived in". Leave some interior lights on while gone. Set several timers to turn your lights on and off automatically. However, do not leave the lights on 24 hours a day. Lights burning night and day do not look natural. Set the timer so the lights are on until normal bedtime hours. Burglars are nervous about two-story homes that have lights burning on both floors.
- Do not leave a door key under a doormat, in a mailbox or at other outside locations. If you must leave a key behind, give it to a trusted neighbor. Make sure each member of the family knows who has the key.
- Do not carry an identification tag on your key ring. This could allow a would-be burglar or thief to easily identify your home or vehicle.
- Do not leave ladders or tools outside where a burglar could use them to break into your home.
- Keep doors and windows highly visible. Outdoor low-voltage lights with timers and neatly trimmed shrubs and foliage eliminate potential hiding places and allow neighbors to see and report any suspicious activity.
- Engrave your drivers license number on all valuables. Marked valuables can be more easily traced in case of theft or burglary. Using an easily identifiable number such as your driver's license and state abbreviation can help police track down the owners of recovered property. Do not use your Social Security number because it is difficult to verify.

REDUCING PROPERTY THEFT

- Lock your car and take your keys.
- Never hide a spare key on the vehicle.
- Roll up windows completely.
- Remove keys from the ignition.
- Park in well-lit areas.
- When parking in attended lots or parking garages, leave only the ignition key with the attendant.
- Park as close as possible to an open business.
- Do not leave valuables in sight to tempt a thief.
- Always park with the wheels turned toward the curb.
- Back your car into the driveway. If you drive forward into the driveway, a car thief could raise the hood to hot wire the car, and it would appear to the neighbors that you were just working on the car.
- If you have a garage, use it.
- Lock your garage door.
- When going out of town, remove the distributor cap or coil wire, if possible.

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- Never leave your car running while it is unattended.

Vehicle thefts should be reported as soon as possible. Before the vehicle can be listed as stolen, you must have your license plate number and/or the vehicle identification number (VIN).

IF YOU RECOVER YOUR VEHICLE

You must not touch or move your vehicle so you can preserve possible evidence. You should call (972) 625-1887 to report the recovery. If you do not follow these steps, your car will continue to be listed as stolen.

HATE CRIMES

Hate crimes are on the increase across the nation. These crimes are especially vicious because they are rooted in prejudice against race, religion, ethnicity or sexual orientation of the victim. The crimes include threatening phone calls, hate mail, physical assaults, vandalism, cross burning or destruction of other religious symbols and arson. The Colony Police Department actively pursues all reports of such crimes to ensure everyone's rights under state and federal laws are protected. All acts or threats of racial or religious violence are viewed as being serious, and they are given top priority when investigated.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

It is a crime for a member or a former member of your family to physically injure you.

- Tell the investigating officer if you, your child or any other resident in the house has been attacked.
- Tell the investigating officer if you think you will be in danger when the officer leaves.
- You have the right to have the prosecutor file a criminal complaint against the suspect.
- You have the right to ask for a court order to protect you. You should consult a legal-aid office, a prosecuting attorney or a private lawyer.
- You could get a court order to forbid the abuser from any more acts of violence.
- Forbid the abuser from threatening, harassing or contacting you at home or work.
- Force the abuser to leave your house.
- Gain temporary custody of your children and bar the abuser from interfering with your children or any property.

CHILD ABUSE

The Colony Police Department or the Denton County Children's Protective Services should be notified as soon as possible.

Failure to report child abuse is a crime. Persons reporting actual or suspected child abuse incidents are protected by law from civil liabilities and lawsuits, provided the reports are made in

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good faith and without malicious intent. The identities of the people making the reports remain CONFIDENTIAL, and, in some cases, reports will be accepted ANONYMOUSLY, if necessary.

When the police department receives a call, a uniformed officer is sent to see the victim and conduct the initial investigation. When a report of suspected child abuse or neglect is received, a full investigation is made. Both the police and the Denton County Children's Protective Services are concerned with the safety of the child. They share information, although their responsibilities are different during the investigation. For example, the police department decides whether or not a criminal offense has been committed. Children's Protective Services determines the state of the victim's well being and the need for civil intervention. The apprehension and prosecution of a suspect depends on many factors, especially the following:

- Identification of the suspect.
- Credibility of the victim's testimony.
- Strengths of the evidence.

Child abuse is a non-accidental injury or a pattern of injuries to a child, inflicted by an older person with whom the child has regular contact. Types of abuse include physical, sexual, emotional and neglect.

Medical examinations are necessary in physical abuse cases to determine the extent of injuries and to provide expert medical verification the injuries did occur.

In sexual assault cases, medical attention is required to not only gather evidence from the victim's body and clothing, but also to determine whether or not:

- The child was injured.
- The assault resulted in pregnancy or venereal disease.
- Other physical indications that support the victim's claims.

If the sexual assault happened within the past 72 hours, a hospital examination should be sought immediately. Before the examination, do not bathe or otherwise clean the victim. Be sure to bring clean clothing for the victim. The police will keep clothing worn during the assault as evidence.

VICTIM'S COMPENSATION ACT

If you are the victim of a violent crime and receive a physical or psychological injury or suffer a property loss you may be eligible for benefits under the Texas Crime Victim's Compensation Act.

The act also provides for the survivors of someone who dies as the result of a violent crime. Specific requirements and conditions must be met to qualify for the benefits.

If you qualify, available benefits include compensation for:

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- Loss of Earnings and Support
- Funeral Expenses
- Medical, Drug, Counseling and Rehabilitation Expenses
- Care for Minor Children

If you want to file a claim, obtain applications from a local enforcement agency or by asking to speak with the Victim's Rights Advocate.

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