



Be cautious. Be aware. Be prepared. SAFETY TIPS FROM SHERIFF SEXTON:

Safety from attackers – In Your Car:

- Danger areas are stepping out of your car either at home or in isolated areas, and also walking to your car
- Always approach your vehicle with the keys ready
- Windows should be up and doors locked even when driving to avoid unwanted passengers at intersections. (Please note that this conflicts with quick entering and exit procedures in the event of an accident)
- Always check your car before entering
- Never leave your car unlocked, even for the few minutes it may take you to return a video, buy milk and so forth. Attackers have been known to lie in wait for such an opportunity.
- Never get into a car even if someone is pointing a knife or a handgun at you from inside. Just start to run away from the car screaming at the same time. It's much more likely that he will drive away to find an easier target than attacking or killing you. But if you get into the car, he has a much better opportunity to drive to a quiet place and attack/assault/harm/kill you.
- Never pull your car over from a quiet road even if someone drives alongside your car pointing at the tires, for example. Always continue driving to a well-lit and crowded area before exiting your car. The problem might be a bluff and the driver wants you to stop at the side of the road to "help" you without a reason.
- Always be alert in parking lots, especially when it's dark. If you are afraid, don't be too shy to ask someone to escort you to your car. Between cars and inside cars, it's easy for someone to hide and wait until an unsuspecting person comes along.

Safety from attackers – While Walking/Jogging:

- If you have car trouble and are walking to look for help, always walk against the traffic so that you can see what is coming.
- If shadowed/tailed by a car, run back in the direction from which you came. If you continue in the same direction, you will make it easy for the shadowing to continue.
- Don't use a "walkman" when walking in isolated areas at any time.
- Regularly change your routines, route, time of exercise, etc. If someone wanted to do you harm, by maintaining a consistent routine you only make yourself more vulnerable. They can watch your habits, know when you leave and return, how you may be distracted, whether or not you lock your door, note your neighbor's habits during the times of your routine, etc.
- Mark out houses at intervals on each route you take that may be used as "safe houses" in the event of attack. Shops or houses that you know to be occupied by a friend or acquaintance are ideal "safe houses". Try to incorporate these houses every time you vary your route.
- Be alert at all times.
- Don't presume that because your area has been "safe" thus far, that it will continue to be.
- If approached by a stranger, heed great caution. Keep in mind that you don't owe anyone complete sympathy. Many times, potential attackers may first appear as an innocent person in need of something (i.e. money, food, phone, transportation, directions, etc.-) This time, they may seem perfectly friendly and harmless, only to make you feel more comfortable with them when you happen to "bump into them" again...but the next time may not be a friendly encounter.

Safety from attackers – In Your Home:

- Arm your security system (if you have one) even when you are home. This is a common mistake homeowners make, and home invasion robbers know it.
- Do not open the door without question. Question EVERYTHING and EVERYONE you don't know.
- Never completely rely on a chain-latch as a barrier; a home invader will kick in the door.

- If you are not expecting a package, delivery, or service call do not answer the door. Insist that the deliverer provide you with verbal verification of his/her employment and call the company to confirm that the deliverer's impromptu visit is legitimate. Your front door should remain closed and locked! If their intentions are honest they shouldn't mind waiting.
- Keep doors, garage doors and windows locked at all times, even when you are home.
- Add panic buttons to your security system and place them around your home so you can alert the proper authorities from any location in your home, other than only the keypad.
- Hold a family meeting to discuss home security plans. The best defense against home invasion is education and planning.
- Make sure that the exterior of your home is well-lit, and that there are not any large trees or brush that block the view of your front door from the street.
- Ensure that any door that leads from your garage to your home remains locked.
- Do not keep large amounts of cash in your home.
- Be wary of what you say to people you don't know well. Small pieces of information can be used to determine many things about you.
- Watch your actions in front of unfamiliar people. Gestures, habits, etc. can be used by criminals to learn more about you. Be aware of what they see and hear. Don't freely give out information about yourself. In an effort to be friendly, many people divulge information about their families, jobs, and interests without realizing the potential danger of it. Criminals are listening and watching intently to learn more—how far away is "the office"; does the spouse stay at home; does your job require frequent travel; does the job pay well; do you have children? These are all bits of simple information; but if known by the wrong person could become fatal information.

In addition, the Sheriff's Department is offering life-saving tips should you become a victim of a home invasion robbery or assault:

- Stay calm.
- Cooperate. No amount of cash or property is worth getting hurt over.
- Don't fight back. Instead, concentrate on getting information so you can be an effective witness.
- Look carefully at the intruders, even if they are masked. Is there something unique about them such as scars, tattoos, eye color, accents, large or small facial features such as nose or ears? Pay attention to what they are wearing, what color is their clothing and are there any distinguishing writing or brands on shirts, hats, or shoes. Listen to everything they say, and how they say it. Catch any distinguishing odors such as tobacco, alcohol, or aftershave.
- CALL 911 as soon as you know you are safe to do so. Regardless of threats, calling law enforcement and reporting the incident is the only way to take the criminal off the streets and prevent him/her from coming back. In the event of a physical attack or sexual assault, immediate testing and gathering of forensic evidence is imperative. Don't wait to seek help.
- Talk. Whether your incident became physical or not, any invasion of your privacy and security is emotionally traumatic. It's okay to talk about it. The Sheriff's Office is in favor of referring victims to the services that are available to help them work through the lingering effects of such an incident.