

Personal Crimes

Part One

Captain Ed Bailey

Most criminals are opportunists. This means they take advantage of promising situations that are presented to them. The key to crime prevention is to remove the opportunities for crime from our daily activities.

Primary strategies for dealing with any type of crime include the following:

- **Be Alert-** Don't be afraid, but look around you and be aware of your surroundings. If you are uncomfortable or afraid, change your activity and report your suspicions to someone.
- **Be Determined-** If you are in an unfamiliar or lonely area, quicken your pace. Walk purposefully with your head up as if you are going to meet someone.
- **Walk Carefully-** Walk in well lighted areas. Avoid dark doorways and alleys. Travel and shop with companions whenever possible, especially at night. You are always safer with a group.
- **Plan Ahead-** try to arrange your schedule to times and areas that present the least risk. If you should find yourself in an uncomfortable situation, always head for an area where there are more people.
- **Trust Your Instincts-** If you are in a situation where your intuition tells you that something is not right, act on those instincts. Don't ever be afraid to call the police or ask someone to call the police for you.
- **Report All Crimes-** If you become a victim of a crime, report the incident to the police as soon as possible. Not only does this increase the chance of catching the offender, but it may also help put you in touch with other needed services such as victim assistance and victim compensation.

Mugging (Armed and Unarmed Robbery)

Mugging is a street crime that can happen anywhere. It usually takes place in an uncrowded area. Muggers select isolated victims. If you are mugged, the criminal may:

- Show you a weapon of some type and demand your money.
- Indicate they have a weapon they will use if you don't give them your money or follow their instructions.

- Physically attack or overpower you and tell you they will injure you if you don't give them your money.

Your best course of action is to comply with the mugger. It is not worth risking your safety for a few dollars. If you are carrying a purse, an option is to throw the purse in one direction and run away from the direction you threw the purse. The same strategy can be used with a wallet or money clip. The mugger's interest should lie in the cash. If possible, do not allow the mugger to force you into a car or take you to a more secluded area. If he or she wants to take you elsewhere, your main objective becomes survival. Chances are you will be better off risking injury and surviving rather than going with the mugger. Most street muggings are of very short duration and the mugger only wants the money without resistance so he or she can escape as soon as possible.

If you are unable to run or feel you cannot escape the situation, it is recommended you sit down on the ground before you are knocked down. Never risk broken bones for money or property. If you are assaulted after sitting on the ground, tuck your chin towards your chest and put your hands on the back of your head. In this position, your arms will protect your head from kicks or blows. Start shouting for help or the police. Make noise and call attention to the assault. Your objective is to survive the attack.

If you are grabbed from behind and the attacker has his or her arm around your throat, turn your head so your chin is pointing towards the attacker's elbow. This will allow you to breathe and if you can breathe, you can think. Remember, your intent is not just escape but survival. As the victim, you have to decide what your options are and what course of action you need to take. This may be the time to fight or faint. You want to be away from this person either by them getting what they want and leaving, by being rescued or by escaping.

You can reduce your chance of being mugged by reducing opportunity. Here are some tips to reduce opportunity:

- Don't exhibit large amounts of cash when shopping or banking. Muggers can select victims by observing how people handle their money. Carry only what you need to conduct your transactions.
- Don't wear expensive jewelry or watches if you don't need to wear shopping. Avoid calling attention to yourself.
- Have pension or social security checks direct deposited to the bank. Transact business by check if possible. Reduce the amount of business that requires you to go to the bank.

If you are suspicious and think you are being followed or watched, go into a store, public place, or business and call the police. If you are in an isolated area, scream and shout, yell “FIRE”, call attention to yourself. There is a good chance this action will scare off the mugger.

REMEMBER...

The keys to good prevention techniques are BEING PREPARED AND PLANNING AHEAD.

Purse Snatching

Older women are favorite victims of purse-snatchers. Usually they are unable to chase the thief and they are easily overpowered. Purse-snatchers tend to be young and can run very fast. For the most part, the only thing they are interested in is any money found in the purse. Occasionally, credit cards found in a purse are used quickly then discarded or sold to individuals that will send them to other parts of the country for use. Any items other than cash like family pictures and mementos will be lost. Most purses are not recovered.

In a typical purse snatching, the criminal will run up behind the victim, grabbing the purse as they pass. The purse-snatcher is halfway down the block before the victim knows what happened. Sometimes, the victim will have the purse strap wrapped around their arm or wrist. When the purse is grabbed, they are pulled down and possibly dragged on the pavement. This usually results in serious injury to older persons. Sometimes a victim will fight for the purse. This also will result in injury to the victim.

You can reduce your chances of being victimized by observing the following:

- If possible, don't even carry a purse. Distribute your money and credit cards among your pockets. Carry only what you need for the day. Many people today wear what are called “Fanny Packs”, pouches on a belt that can be worn under coats and jackets so they are out of sight.
- Don't keep your keys in your purse. If the purse is taken, the combination of identification with your address and your address and your keys can result in a second crime, such as a burglary of your home.
- If you have a purse with a long strap, don't carry it so the strap is on the opposite shoulder as the purse. Loop the strap over the shoulder on the lame side as the purse close to your body with your arm and elbow. Don't dangle the purse but keep control of it close to you. If a purse-snatcher should grab it close to you. If a purse-snatcher should grab it from behind, it will slide right off as he passes.

- Do not wrap the strap around your arm or wrist. You risk serious injury if the purse is grabbed.
- Keep your purse with you at all times. Do not put it on the floor or under a seat. Keep it in your lap where you have control of it.
- Take a serious look at what you carry in your purse and decide what is necessary for your day to day existence. Carry only what you can afford to lose. Remember, smaller is better. Large purses are easier to spot and grab.
- Try to avoid situations that increase your chances of being a victim. Travel with groups on the street and in malls. Be aware of your surroundings and of those around you.
- Most importantly, DON'T fight for your purse or with a purse-snatcher. There should be nothing in the purse that would be worth the injuries you could sustain. If your purse is grabbed, LET IT GO! Holler and shout to call attention to the purse-snatcher, but do not fight with him.

Other Assaults

When you are entering your home or apartment, you are vulnerable at the time of entry. Always try to have your keys ready to open the door as you approach. Be aware of anything around you that appear suspicious. If you see someone or something suspicious, take an appropriate action. Go to a neighbor or another apartment where you know someone is home. Don't take a chance on being forced into your own home and out of sight.

Once you are safely inside your home or apartment, lock the door behind you. Your doors should be locked at all times whether you are home or away. Do not depend on locked screen or storm doors to protect you. These doors and the locks on them are flimsy and easy to pull open. The main doors are always the ones that should be locked.

If you are outside in the yard for any reason, any doors that are out of sight should be securely locked. It is not unusual for a burglar to enter a house through an unlocked front door or window while the homeowner works in the back yard. If the unsuspecting homeowner should enter the home and encounter the burglar, they may become the victim of what is called a secondary crime. They may be assaulted, robbed or raped by an individual that originally intended to commit a simple burglary.

Another way persons are assaulted in their own homes is by opening the door to a stranger. NEVER open your door to someone unless you know who it is. Have a peep hole or door viewer installed and keep your door locked at all times. Verify who is at the

door before you open it. If someone claims to be from a utility company or any type of business, they should have proper identification. If you are suspicious, you can either verify who it is by calling the utility or business or by calling the police. NEVER hesitate to call the police. If someone at your door asks to use your phone for an emergency, offer to call for them or offer to call the police. Don't ever let them in your home.

Rape

The thought or threat of rape has a devastating effect on a woman, and while this fear cannot be disregarded, the fact is that the incidence of rape among older women is low. It is believed that among reported rapes of older women, most are what are termed "secondary crimes" or crimes committed in conjunction with a primary crime such as a burglary. Many prevention techniques are the same as with other types of crime. Don't place yourself in situations where it is possible to be assaulted or abducted without being seen or heard.

Tips to avoid victimization.

- Have your car or house keys in your hand and ready as you approach your door. Don't linger. If you have to stop and search for your keys at the door, you become more vulnerable. Your attention is diverted to finding the key.
- Once inside your home or car, lock the doors. Don't give someone the opportunity to get inside with you and control the situation.
- If someone tries to get in your car, drive away. Drive to a place of safety and call the police. Even if you are at a red light, if you can safely drive away, do it!
- If you think you are being followed in your car, drive to a police station or a service station where you can get help from someone who will come out to your car. Stay locked in your car, ask the attendant to call the police.
- Be cautious when using elevators in office buildings, apartments, and someone gets on that makes you uncomfortable; get off before the door closes or at the next floor. Don't get on an elevator with a suspicious looking person. Wait for the next car or an empty car. When you are on the elevator, stand near the floor buttons. If a situation arises, you are in a position to push the buttons for all floors, causing the elevator to stop at the next floor and providing you with an opportunity to exit. NEVER push the red emergency button. The emergency button causes the elevator to stop immediately, even between floors.
- Avoid enclosed stairwells when possible. Use the elevator because they are less isolated and used by more people.

- If you are a woman living alone, do not list your first name on your mailbox or in the phone book. Use your first initial and last name only. Don't advertise that you are a living alone.
- Secure your home or apartment (see section on home security) and keep your doors and windows locked. Don't open your door to anyone unless you know who it is.
- Be cautious about who you go out with. Date rape or acquaintance rapes are not crimes confined to younger persons or college students. An older woman should be just as careful about dating and whom she spends time alone with as any other woman.

In spite of any precautions you may take, there is still a remote possibility you could be attacked by a rapist. There is no right or wrong answer to tell you how to react in a particular situation. The decision whether or not to resist an attacker is a personal one only you can make. You should know that rape is a very serious crime that inflicts tremendous psychological damage. Physical injuries are usually not permanent or serious. Your decision as to how to react should depend on the situation at the time, and whether or not there is a weapon involved.

The crime of rape is one of the most under reported crimes. Rape victims suffer deep emotional damage and are often reluctant to report an attack. Over the years, many stories have been told about the treatment of rape victims by police and hospital personnel. Times have changed. Often special teams have been developed to investigate rapes and sexual assaults. Hospital emergency room personnel have been trained in special evidence gathering procedures and the special needs of the victim. Local rape crises centers offer support and guidance through all procedures.

If you are a rape victim, it is very important that you try to remember to do the following:

- Call the police and report the rape immediately.
- Do not bathe or shower until after you have had medical treatment and evaluation.
- Do not discard clothing or bed covering or any other articles that may provide evidence.
- If you want someone with you through any procedures or questioning, inform the investigating officers and they will contact the crisis center or anyone else you desire.
- Try to remember everything you can about the attacker no matter how minor it may seem.

- **MOST IMPORTANTLY**, know that the attack is not your fault. Sexual assaults are **NOT** caused by victims.

Property Crimes Part Two

Property crimes are crimes that do not usually involve a personal confrontation. The property crimes that most affect ordinary citizens are burglary, theft, and auto theft. Many people think they don't have anything of much value that a thief or burglar may want, but in today's society, a person that will steal your TV set doesn't care if you paid \$500 for it. If they can sell it for \$25 on the street, that's a \$25 profit for them.

Auto Theft

Most auto thefts are crimes of opportunity. Organized or professional car thieves only target specific makes and models for easy resale or sales of parts. Other cars are taken for what are called "joy rides" or used for temporary transportation then "dumped" or left somewhere.

The following tips should reduce your chances of being an auto theft victim:

- Always lock your car, no matter where you leave it and **NEVER** leave your keys in the ignition, even for a short time.
- Be especially careful at self-serve gas stations. Always take your keys with you when you go to pay. **NEVER** leave your car running when no one is in it.
- Always park in well lighted areas.
- Park with the front of your car towards a barrier or building or the car opposite you and turn your steering wheel to the right or left before shutting of the engine. This will lock the steering wheel in place and make the car difficult to tow from the rear.
- If you have a high value car that may be desirable to car thieves, contact your dealer or the crime prevention officer at your local police department about available anti-theft devices.

These devices include:

- Alarm Systems
- Armored Ignition Covers
- Fuel or Ignition Shut Off Switches

- Hood Locks
- Digital Code Switches
- Steering Wheels Locking Bars
- Marking Parts and Etching Glass With The Serial Number

Burglary

Burglary refers to the act of breaking in. Most burglars do not wish to confront their victims. They would prefer to make an entry as quickly and quietly as possible. Burglars usually take items that are difficult to trace and can be sold quickly although there are reported cases of burglars taking the entire contents of a house. Most burglars do not fall into the “professional” class but instead are talented amateurs. The easiest type of entry is through an unlocked door. Estimates are, that 40 to 60% of all residential burglaries are committed via unlocked doors or windows.

Burglars know that most people are creatures of habit. The first area they usually check for valuables is the master bedroom. Jewelry, money, and credit cards can almost always be found on or in a dresser or dressing table. The second place they may check will be an area where bills are paid.

Popular items include televisions, stereos, cameras, VCRs, cash, jewelry and credit cards. The burglar will usually sell the items for whatever price they will bring.

Burglars do not want to be seen or heard. They want to get in and out as soon as possible. There are steps you can take to reduce your chance of becoming the victim of a burglar.

- Make sure all of your exterior doors are in sound condition. The doors should be of a solid construction of wood or steel with heavy hinges.
- All exterior doors should be equipped with good quality dead bolt locks. The locks should be the single cylinder type that are operated with a key on the outside and a thumb turn on the inside. The bolt should be at least 1 inch long.
- You should know how many keys are for your doors. If all of your locks are the same brand, they can be changed so that one key will operate all the locks. You should know who has keys for your door. If you have recently moved into a home or apartment, you should contact a locksmith to set your locks to a different key. You have no way of knowing how many keys the previous tenant had given out.
- If you have a sliding glass door, you should invest in a gar type lock that will secure the sliding part of the door when closed.

- Make sure all of the windows have some type of additional lock on them. If you open the windows often for ventilation, there are ways to secure them from being opened too far.
- Basement windows can be either replaced with glass block or protected with a grill or bar that would restrict the size of the opening if the glass is broken.
- Get to know your neighbors and form a neighborhood watch group. This can be one of the most effective tools against burglars. Neighbors who know each other tend to care more about each other.

Also remember when you take a vacation, burglars don't. When you go away for extended periods of time, try to make your home look like it is still occupied. Here are some things to remember before leaving on vacation:

- Have your lawn and yard maintained. If it is winter, arrange for your drive and walks to be shoveled or at least appear used.
- Stop mail and paper delivery or arrange to have them picked up each day.
- Put two or three lights on timers as well as a radio or television. Use lights that are normally in use in the home.
- Leave drapes, curtains and blinds as you normally would if you were home.
- Close and secure all of the doors to the garage. If you have an electric door opener, unplug it after the door is closed. Be sure to lock the walk-in door.
- Be sure all doors and windows are secured.
- Have a neighbor park their car in the driveway or leave your second car out in the drive.
- Ask a neighbor to use your trash cans and put trash out where you normally do on pick-up day.
- Consider hiring a house sitter for extended absences.
- Only tell people that you know and trust about your plans. The fewer people who know you will be gone the better. Not all burglars are strangers.

- Contact your local police department to see if they have a home check program. Many police departments will check homes of registered vacationers on a random basis. All information is strictly confidential.

Contact Your Local Crime Prevention Officer

In addition to following standard suggestions for securing your home, you may also want to contact the crime prevention officer for your local police department. Most law enforcement agencies with crime prevention officers or units, will be happy to conduct a free security survey of your home. This general survey will help you pinpoint areas that need further attention.

If you are in the market for better locks or even an alarm system, the officer can provide you with information that will assist you in making an informed choice. While virtually all commercial alarm companies will offer to give you a free estimate, you receive from a crime prevention officer may help you decide if the product offered is proper for you and what you need it for:

Frauds and Con Games

Part Three

Of all reported crimes, frauds and con games tend to target older persons more than other groups. Economic considerations may encourage senior citizens seek out bargains and discounts. Their willingness to trust and assist others makes them easy targets for con-artists.

Fraud

Generally, fraud is committed when you purchase an item or a service and the item or service you receive is not worth what you paid, or is not as advertised. Frauds come in all shapes and forms and sometimes cross the fine line between fraud and con games.

One popular example of a fraud is called the “Bait And Switch”. In a bait and switch, a store or company will advertise an item at a very low price. When a customer comes to the business seeking the low priced item, they will be told there are none left but there are similar items with more features available at a higher cost. While laws have been enacted to prevent this type of fraud, the practice still exists.

One very popular area involving frauds against the elderly is home repairs and improvements. A good illustration of a home repair fraud concerns asphalt driveway resealing. This is how it works:

The Driveway Fraud

A person in a pick up truck will come to the door of a homeowner, usually one that has an asphalt drive way. They will tell the homeowner they are working in the area and they have some extra material left over.

Because they are close and Have extra supplies, they can offer to reseal the driveway at a very low cost. If the homeowner does not know at the time is that the materials used for the job, in this case driveway sealer, is either an inferior product or an improper product. In most cases, the parties operating the fraud have purchased old motor oil from service stations. This oil is what is used to coat the asphalt drive and because asphalt is a petroleum product, the oil is what is used to coat the asphalt drive and because asphalt is a petroleum product, the oil makes it look very good. The problem is the oil never dries and will wash away with first rain. It may even do further damage to the driveway. By the time the homeowner realizes he has been had, the people who did the job are long gone.

To avoid being a victim, you should never do business with someone who comes to your door offering inexpensive work because they “happen to be in the area” or “have an excess of materials”. Be cautious of workers who want their money up front or require payment in cash. Don’t allow yourself to be convinced you have to take advantage of a deal “right away”. If you need repairs or improvements, look for someone local who you can contact if there is a future problem. Ask friends or relatives for referrals. Shop carefully and spend cautiously. Here are some of the things you can do:

- Be aware of HIGH PRESSURE sales tactics. Walk away. Shop elsewhere.
- Pay by check, NEVER with cash. Pay when the job is completed. Don’t put up money for materials or tools before the job starts.
- Get several written estimates for any job.
- Check with friends and the local Better Business Bureau before you enter into a contract with someone.
- Have a contract for the work to be done. Have the contract checked by a trusted relative or attorney before signing. Be sure the contract states exactly what work will be used, when the job will start, when the job will end, and how much the job will cost. If there is a problem in the future and it is not covered in the contract, you may be out of luck.
- Ask for written guarantee for the work. Verbal guarantees are worthless.

- Ask for old parts back on auto and appliance repairs. Make sure the parts you pay for have actually been replaced.

Con Games

A con game, short for confidence game, occurs when someone convinces you or tricks you into buying or doing something you would not ordinarily do. Con people are not only crooks, they are very good actors and judges of human nature. The main object of a con game is to relieve you of as much money as possible without you realizing you have been taken until the perpetrator is long gone. Two of the most popular con games are The Pigeon Drop and The Bank Examiner. Here is how they work:

The Pigeon Drop- The Pigeon Drop is named that because you become the pigeon or easy mark. In this scam, you will be approached by someone who shows you a large amount of money they to have found. They will wonder what should be done with the money as there is no way to identify who it belongs to. While this person is talking to you, a third person usually enters the conversation. This third person acts as if they do not know you or the person you are talking with. The third party will state they have a friend or employer in the area who is an attorney or some sort of knowledgeable authority on what should be done with the money. They state they will check with that person and come back and advise you.

When the third party returns, the usual story is that one of you should keep the money and if no one claims it within 30 days, you are all free to split the cash. By now the money will have been placed in an envelope or wrapped in bundle of some sort. The other two people indicate they will trust you with the money but then begin to wonder if you might use it yourself. To show them that you are trustworthy, they want you to come up with some “Good Faith” money for them. They will convince you to go to the bank and withdraw a large amount of money, perhaps equal to their share of the found money, and give it to them before they hand over the bundle of found money. They will also attempt to convince you not to disturb the bundle after the 30 days are up. Once you hand over your money, you are given the “found” bundle and the others leave. What has actually happened is you have been given a bundle of worthless paper. The “found” money has been switched and the con artists have disappeared with your money.

To prevent this crime, you first have to ask yourself why a perfect stranger would offer to share money that they found. Anytime someone wants you to produce your own money to show good faith or that you are trustworthy, you should realize it is a trick. NEVER hand over your own money to a stranger. If you are approached in this manner, simply state you are not interested, and walk away. Notify the local police as soon as possible if you suspect a con artist has approached you. Traditionally, con artists are not violent or overly pushy. They do not want to be caught and they do not usually work in an area where they reside. They tend to operate in cities away from their own homes.

The Bank Examiner- The Bank Examiner is a favorite scam among con artists who concentrate on older victims. In this rip-off, the con artist will contact a victim at home, usually by telephone, and claim to be a bank or law enforcement official. They will state they are having a problem at the bank the victim does business with and they need help catching a dishonest employee, usually a teller. They will encourage the victim to go to the bank and withdraw a large amount of money, perhaps from a certain teller.

They will arrange to meet the victim somewhere claiming they have to check or mark the money to make sure the teller handled the transaction properly. Sometimes they will return what they claim is the money to the victim asking him or her to re deposit in the bank. Other times they will state they will return the money and they give the victim a receipt. In both cases, the victim never gets the money back. Either the money has been switched with an envelope of worthless paper or a worthless receipt is issued.

The easiest way to avoid becoming a victim of a Bank Examiner scheme is to understand that: **ABSOLUTELY NO ONE IN AN OFFICIAL CAPACITY WITH THE BANK OR LAW ENFORCEMENT WILL EVER ASK YOU TO USE YOUR MONEY TO HELP CATCH A DISHONEST EMPLOYEE OR FOR ANY OTHER REASON.** Police officers and banking officials have many other methods to catch dishonest bank employees. If you are contacted about a situation like this, CALL YOUR LOCAL POLICE IMMEDIATELY!

Don't become the victim of a con artist. REMEMBER, if it sounds too good to be true, it usually is.

There are all types of people trying to get their hands on your money. They call you on the phone trying to sell you land, securities, tickets, magazines, and more. The list is endless. People knock on your door trying to peddle all manner of items. They even come to you through the television real estate, personal motivation, life insurance, health insurance, and supplemental insurance. You can't even trust some of the television evangelists.

The best way to avoid victimization is to decide your real needs. Try to avoid buying anything from parties who approach or come looking for you. They will try to convince you that you need a product or service and then seek out someone local to deal with. Deal with someone who has been around and has an established reputation.

If You Do Become a Victim

One of the reasons cons and frauds are so successful is that many if not most of them are not reported. This is particularly true when the crime involves older victims. Not only does the realization that one has been tricked or duped create a feeling of embarrassment or foolishness, it also generates a great deal of fear. There is a fear of

retaliation by the con artist if the crime is reported. There is a fear of family reaction to the victimization. There is a fear of loss of freedom or independence if the victim is perceived as no longer being able to look out for themselves. If you do become the victim of a fraud or con game, you should report it to your local police as soon as possible. If local authorities are not aware of the activities that are going on in an area, that type of activity will flourish and involve other victims. Local service agencies or victims support groups should be able to help family members understand the situation and provide support for the victim.

Even if you only suspect that a con game or a fraud is going on, report it to your local police department. Many older persons are afraid or reluctant to make reports to the police because the “Don’t want to bother them”, or they think the police are too busy doing more important things. In reality, the only way police are often aware of things that are going on is through reports by citizens. Police officers are hired by the community to serve the community. If you ever think that you should report something, then report it. The collection of this information is part of the police role and may police officer would rather take information from you as a concerned citizen than have to take it from you as a victim.

Other agencies that may be able to help you are the Postal Inspector, the Federal Trade Commission, the Better Business Bureau and the Ohio Attorney General, Consumer Frauds Division. Remember, nothing can be done unless you become involved. Report all frauds and cons as well as suspected frauds and cons.

Vandalism

Part Four

What Is It? By definition, vandalism is “the willful or malicious destruction of public or private property.” Vandalism is a crime. While many view it as a harmless prank, or someone just letting off steam, vandalism wastes time and money. It causes inconvenience, suffering and sometime serious injury or death. Vandalism is also one of the crimes that can generate great amounts of fear in older persons. This fear is caused by the act even if the older person is not the direct target of the vandalism. The effects of this type of fear are well recognized and they can be just as devastating as the effects of being a direct victim. This fear is called vicarious victimization, and vicarious victimization appears to have a much greater effect on older adults.

Who Does It and Why? Surveys indicate that 75% of vandalism is committed by children, boys and girls, aged 7 to 18. It also appears to be a group activity. Usually there is more than one person involved in acts of vandalism.

A poll of high school aged youngsters found that 65% of all vandalism was done purely for fun. Beyond fun, 15% was committed for revenge, 7% as a side event

connected to a more serious crime, 5% to draw attention to some sort of grievance, and 8% for various other reasons.

What To Do! Vandalism needs to be reported. As with any other crime, police often depend on citizens to keep them advised. It is not possible to be everywhere and know everything that is happening. All acts of vandalism should be reported whether they are in progress or after the fact. Often, if you are a victim and your property is involved, your insurance company will require you to file a police report. Don't depend on someone else to do it. Become involved in caring for you neighborhood.

General Prevention Part Five

On The Street, Walking

- Women – keep your purse close to you, don't advertise it by swinging it, or consider carrying a "fanny pack." Men – carry your wallet where is inaccessible or put a large rubber band around it so you will feel it if someone tries to slip it out of your pocket.
- Be cautious handling your cash at bands or checkout lines. You never know who is watching.
- Try not to walk anywhere alone. Avoid problem areas and stick to well lighted and well traveled parts of town.
- NEVER carry a weapon. There is a good chance the weapon would be taken and used against you.
- If a car appears to be following you, turn around and walk the other direction. Head for someplace there are people like a store or office. Don't be afraid to ask for help.
- If you are accosted, don't fight for a purse or wallet. It's not worth getting injured for.

While Driving

- Keep your car doors locked and windows up at all times.
- Have your car keys in your hand when you leave a building to go to your car. Be aware of your surroundings. Look around outside before you go out, if you see something you don't like, don't go out, report it.
- Always park in well lighted areas at night.

- NEVER pick up hitchhikers!
- If someone tries to get in your car, drive away, even if it means going through a red light. Use caution, but drive away. It is unlikely you will get a ticket if you are trying to escape an attacker.
- If your car breaks down, pull to the side of the road, turn on your flashers, and hang a white cloth like a handkerchief out of the driver's side window. If you have a "CALL POLICE" sign, put it in the back window. Stay in your car with the doors locked. If someone stops, talk to them through a partially rolled down window. Ask them to call the police. Do not get out of your car.
- If you think you are being followed, DO NOT DRIVE HOME! Drive to a place where there are people and you can ask for help or ask someone to call the police. Try to find a busy store or gas station, or drive to a police station. Blow your horn to attract attention and stay in your car.

At Home

- Keep your doors locked at all times. Never open the door unless you know who is there. Don't let anyone in to use your phone, make the call for them.
- Never give any information out about yourself over the phone. Never tell anyone you are alone or live alone.
- Arrange to have a phone installed in your bedroom next to the bed. This is one of the best protections you will have at night. An extension phone is not very expensive and is very easy to install. In most areas today, if you call 9-1-1, the operator at the other end will know your address even if you cannot talk. Help will be sent as soon as possible.
- If you are alone, arrange to have a friend or relative call at least once a day or to expect a call from you at least once a day.

The Telephone

There is no reason for you to have to talk on the telephone to any one you don't want to talk with. You are in control. You can simply hang up. If the call is from a salesperson, as soon as you realize the nature of the call and you decide you are not interested, you can say to the caller, "Sorry, but I'm not interested." Then hang up. There is nothing to compel you to listen to the caller. You don't have to be rude or overly nice, just hang up.

If the call is of a different nature such as obscene or threatening, try not to let fear overcome your reason. Most obscene or annoying phone calls are random in nature and the caller gets enjoyment from having someone listen to them. If you deny them this enjoyment, they will try someone else.

As a rule, there are two types of obscene callers. Sometimes people get calls even when they have an unlisted number. This may happen with the first type of caller who dials numbers randomly. This may happen with the first type of caller who dials numbers randomly. This random dialing will eventually reach an unlisted number. If the party hangs up, there is a good chance the caller doesn't remember the number that was dialed. End of problem.

The other type of caller is a sequential caller. This caller will start with a particular exchange and start dialing the numbers in sequence (555-3827, 555-3828, 555-3839, etc.). While there is a chance the caller will call back if you hang up, it is unlikely he or she knows who they are calling. If you do not give them the pleasure of listening to them, they usually seek another party.

If you should receive a call from an unknown person calling about a friend or relative of yours needing assistance or money, be very cautious. Check out the information. Try to contact others that may have information. If you are suspicious, call the police.

If annoying or obscene calls persist, keep track of them by recording the times and dates. Report them to the police and contact the customer service center of your phone company. The phone company may be able to detect who is calling and conduct a proper follow up.

Health Care Facilities

If, because of illness or injury, you are required to spend time in a health care facility, it is a good idea to minimize the amount of personal property you take and keep with you. Not all items can be measured by value in dollars and cents. Rings, watches, other jewelry items, and photos may have a great deal of sentimental value that makes them irreplaceable. While it may be comforting to have these familiar items close, it must also be remembered they can be vulnerable to theft, misplacement or damage. You should place these items in the care of a trusted family member or friend until you are released from the facility. If your stay will be long term, any items brought in with you or brought at a later date by friends or relatives, should be brought to the attention of the staff at the facility.

Victims and The Courts
Part Six
Questions about...The Court

Victims of crime often ask the following questions about the courts.

What are my rights if I miss work to appear in court as a witness?

Your employer cannot penalize you if you miss work to attend a grand jury or criminal proceeding when you are subpoenaed to appear. They are NOT, however, required to pay you for time you did not work. If you are subpoenaed because of charges against your employer or because of something that happened at work, your employer cannot decrease or withhold your pay because you obeyed the subpoena.

Who will contact me about the trial?

Ideally, the prosecutor will notify you of when and where a trial will take place. Sometimes a case ends without a trial. The prosecutor will notify you before that happens. You will be told when and where the prosecutor will request that the case be dismissed or when and where the offender will plead “guilty” or “no-contest”. Your case should not be closed without your knowledge. The prosecutor will notify you of new developments and court dates.

What are my rights at the offender’s trial?

Crime victims and their families have the right to attend the trial of the person accused of a crime. The court will provide you with the following information: Name of the offender, Case Number, and a phone number for you to use to learn more about the case in the future.

If you are present at the trial, you can provide the Adult Parole Authority your name, address, phone number, and name of the offender. They will use this information to notify you when the offender is considered for parole, pardon or sentence reduction. The law gives you the right to attend the trial and obtain the information mentioned above. It does not give you the right to make a statement at a prisoner’s trial. However, you may be subpoenaed by the prosecutor to testify as a witness.

Will the judge find out how the crime hurt me?

A “Victim Impact Statement” will be prepared for you. It will describe the injuries you suffered and the crime’s effect on your family life and finances. This will be considered by the court when the offender is sentenced.

What if I am threatened?

No one has the right to threaten you or your witnesses because you participate in a criminal case. An attempt to frighten you can result in a misdemeanor charge. The use of force or threats can result in a felony charge.

Can I get protection?

If someone threatens you or a witness, notify the prosecutor or your attorney. The court can provide you with law enforcement protection. The court can also order the person be kept away from you.

What are the penalties for misdemeanors?

The penalties for misdemeanors vary according to the seriousness of the crime. The MAXIMUM FINE for a minor misdemeanor is \$100. The MAXIMUM PENALTY for a 1st degree misdemeanor is \$1000 and SIX MONTHS in jail.

What is the penalty for a felony?

Felony penalties vary greatly and depend on the nature of the crime. Punishment can include prison, a fine, restitution, or a combination of all three. The least serious may be punished by six months in jail or a \$2,500 fine. The most serious felonies, or “capital offenses”, can be punishable by death.

Abuse and Neglect Part Seven

Below is a list of the categories that describe various types and levels of mistreatment according to information from the American Association of Retired Persons:

Passive Neglect-

The unintentional failure to fulfill a care taking obligation; there is no conscious or willful attempt to inflict physical or emotional distress on the older person. Examples: non-provision of food or health related services because of the caregiver’s infirmity, laziness, or inadequate skills, knowledge, or understanding of prescribed or other essential services.

Psychological Abuse-

The infliction of mental anguish. Examples: demeaning, name calling, treating as a child, insulting, ignoring, frightening, humiliating, intimidating, threatening, isolating.

Material (Financial) Abuse-

The illegal, or unethical exploitation and/or use of funds, property, or other assets belonging to the older person.

Active Neglect-

The intentional failure to fulfill a care taking obligation, including a conscious and willful attempt to inflict physical or emotional stress or injury on the older person. Examples: deliberate abandonment, deliberate denial of food or health related services, depriving of dentures or eyeglasses.

Physical Abuse-

The infliction of physical coercion (confinement against one's will). Examples: slapping, bruising, sexually molesting, cutting, lacerating, burning, physically restraining, pushing, shoving.

Who Does It?

There is a wide range of individuals who are involved in mistreatment of the elderly. Usually, the older person has some level of dependency on one or more younger adults. Often the abuser and the victim live together, sometimes in the older person's home. These situations usually involve related parties.

Besides persons with on-going direct contact with the victim, abusers can also include individuals who exploit the resources of a victim living alone. These could include landlords, neighbors and friends. Others include relatives with whom the victim does not have a truly dependent relationship. Any one who provides a level of service and has semi-regular contact with the older person can be a potential abuser.

The types of abuse do not appear to be restricted by gender, and while the numbers of female victims is higher than male, it must be realized that, among the upper age groups, there are simply more women.

Spouse abuse must also be a consideration. But, because spouse abuse crosses all ethnic, economic, and age boundaries, it is not considered to be a crime that specifically targets older persons. Many specific laws are now in place to address the problem of spouse abuse. Mistreatment of the elderly often goes unnoticed or unrecognized because of many of the victims are isolated and removed from many social activities.

What Can Be Done?

While mistreatment of the elderly is a recognized problem in today's society, we are just beginning to learn what all is involved. Very little research and hard data has been collected. The causes of mistreatment are many and varied and it is difficult to produce a clear list. Family groups and individuals are very complicated. Combinations of the personal traits of persons involved, finances, interpersonal relationships, and external events can lead to incident of mistreatment.

Of all types of mistreatment, passive neglect appears to be the most prevalent. Usually, passive neglect occurs because a well meaning family member or friend takes on a care giving role of an older person but is unable to adequately meet the needs of that older person.

Across the country, laws have been enacted to address the problem of mistreatment of the elderly. Professional service providers are becoming aware of the signs of mistreatment and in most cases, they are required by law to report suspicions and findings. Agencies are in place to investigate, but because of the nature of the victim, who can often be isolated, ill or confused, the process can be very difficult.

Prevention is one of the more effective strategies against mistreatment. The following suggestions are offered to help avoid future incidents of mistreatment other than passive neglect and keep control of your life.

Things To Do:

- Remain sociable as you age; maintain and increase your network of friends and acquaintances. New activities can bring new friends.
- Participate in community activities as long as you are able. Be a volunteer or become a member or an officer in a new organization.
- Develop a mutual reassurance "buddy system" with a friend outside your home. Plan at least weekly contact and share openly with this person.
- Keep regular medical, dental, barber, hair dresser, and other personal appointments. These professionals can be helpful and, in special cases, could be used to attest to your levels of competency. Ask your friends to visit you where you live, even if it is just a room in someone else's home. Even brief visits will allow friends to check on your well-being and visit you where you live, even if it is just a room in someone else's home. Even brief visits will allow friends to check on your well-being and attitude.

- Have your own telephone and send and open your own mail. If mail is being intercepted, discuss alternatives with postal authorities.
- Keep your belongings neat and orderly and store your effects in a customary storage place.
- Make others aware that you know where everything is supposed to be.
- Expect records, accounts, and property to be available for examination by anyone you trust, in addition to the person you have designated or whom the court has designated to manage your affairs.

Things Not To Do:

- Don't voluntarily give up control over your property or assets until you determine that you cannot manage them.
- Don't leave cash, jewelry, or personally prized belongings lying about.
- Don't accept personal care in return for transfer or assignment of your property or assets without a lawyer, advocate or other trusted persons being involved as witnesses to the transaction.
- Don't lose contact with old friends and neighbors if you must move into a relative's home or another living arrangement.
- Don't allow anyone else to keep details of your finances or property management from you. Even if you have a guardian or conservator or have given someone power of attorney, these representatives are acting as your fiduciary, which means that they must act on your behalf in good faith. You have the right to examine records and accounts or to see your property.

While not nearly complete, this list will give you an idea of how to begin a prevention program for yourself, and, perhaps aid you in identifying a potential for mistreatment of someone else.

Additional information on this subject can be obtained from:

American Association of Retired Persons
Criminal Justice Services
601 E. Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20049