

Personal Safety

Here you will find information on how to stay safe, and keep yourself from becoming a victim of crime.

Many people cite crime and fear of crime as a determining factor in how they feel about their neighborhood, but in fact criminal victimization in 2004 was at its lowest level since 1973, according to the Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Figures for murder, rape, robbery, and assault were highest in the early 1980s, peaking in 1982 at 52.3 victimizations per 1,000 people age 12 and over. But by 2004 this figure had dropped to 21.1 per 1,000. The decline in violent victimization was experienced by persons in every demographic category surveyed - gender, race, origin, and household income.

Young people ages 12 to 24 were still the victims of the most violent crimes (an average of 83.7 victimizations per 1,000 people), while those 65 or older were victimized at a much lower rate (9.1 per 1,000 persons). While violent crime was down, crimes that used modern technology were up: identity theft cost consumers some \$5 billion in 2004, according to the U.S. Postal Service. Preventing crime is everyone's business - children, youth, adults, and seniors must all work together to protect themselves, their families, and their neighborhoods. Below are some safety tips:

- Ask law enforcement for a free home security survey.
- Make sure you have sturdy metal or solid wood doors at all entries into your home and that sliding glass and similar doors are properly secured.
- Trim the shrubbery around your doors and windows so crooks don't have a place to hide.
- Do not give out personal information over the phone, through the mail, or over the Internet unless you have initiated the contact or know with whom you are dealing.
- If you're a senior, use direct deposit for your Social Security check and other regular payments.
- If you notice someone following you when you're driving, head for the nearest busy, brightly lighted area. Write down the license number and make and model of the car. Call 911 or your local emergency number.
- Always lock car doors and take the keys when you leave your car, even if you'll be gone "just for a minute."
- Don't leave valuables in view in the car. Leave them in the trunk or, better yet, take them home immediately.
- As you walk down the street or through the parking garage, walk alertly and assertively. Don't weigh yourself down with too many parcels. Take several loads to the car if necessary.
- If you carry a purse, hold it close to your body; if a wallet, keep it in a front pocket.

- Don't display your cash or any other inviting targets such as pagers, cell phones, hand-held electronic games, or expensive jewelry and clothing.
- When traveling, carry only the credit and ATM cards you absolutely need. Leave the others at home, safely stored.
- Make sure your home is secure when you are traveling—all deadbolts locked, lights left on timers, newspapers stopped, and mail held at the post office or collected by a trusted neighbor who has your travel schedule.

Copyright © 2009 National Crime Prevention Council. All rights reserved.
McGruff the Crime Dog® and "Take A Bite Out Of Crime®" are registered marks of the National Crime Prevention Council.