

## Personal safety

- Do not put your home address on your personal cheques or business cards.
- Use a private mailbox service/post office box to receive all personal mail.
- Place real property in trust and list utilities under the name of the trust.
- File for confidential voter status or register to vote using mailbox address.
- Destroy all discarded mail.
- Telephone lines can be installed in a place other than the person's residence and can be call forwarded to their residence.
- Place residential rental agreements in another person's mail.
- Do not allow your name to be put on service or delivery orders to the residence.
- Use your mailbox's address as your official address on all records. It may be necessary or more convenient to list the mailbox as "suite 123" or "apartment 123" instead of "P.O. Box 123".
- File a change of address card with the post office giving the mailbox address as the person's new address. Send postcard to friends, family etc., giving the mailbox address and requesting that they move the old address from their file.
- All current creditors should be given a change of address card to the mailbox address. Some credit agencies will remove past addresses from credit histories if a report is made.
- File a change of address with the Ministry of Transport with the mailbox address given. Get a new driver's license with the new address on it.

## vehicle safety

- Park in well lit areas.
- Do not park anywhere where you must leave your door unlocked or leave a key with an attendant (only surrender the ignition key).
- Allow items to be placed in or removed from the trunk only in your presence.
- When parking in your garage, turn on the garage light, lock the vehicle and the garage door.
- Equip your gas tank with a locking gas cap - should be controlled from inside the vehicle.
- Check the front and back passenger compartments before entering your vehicle. If you drive a two-door vehicle, always keep the front seat forward when you get out.

- Choose a reliable service station to do work on your vehicle.
- Keep doors locked while you are in the vehicle. Lock them as soon as you get in.
- Be alert for vehicles that seem to be following you.
- Plan ahead when travelling. Know where to find police stations, fire stations or busy shopping centres.
- Use a different travel schedule and route everyday.
- If followed, drive to a police station/fire station/busy shopping centre. Stay in your car and honk your horn to attract attention.
- If you see a stranded motorist, call to get help for them - do NOT stop to help.
- Always check your brakes.
- Look under your car before approaching it.
- Touch the hood to see if it is warm, and has been in use.
- Walk around the car to see that it appears safe (unless you are uneasy of your surroundings or it is dark).
- Do not leave anything unidentifiable in your car.
- Have your keys or automatic door opener ready in your hand as you approach your car.
- Leave quickly, do not idle in your car unless you have to warm it up.
- If you turn on your car and hear any strange noise (like a "click"), often accompanied by the car seeming to stall, get out!
- Back into parking spots so that you can see all activity in front of you.
- Circle parking lots once before taking a spot.
- Turn off car and listen for noises before getting out. Unlock the door at the last possible second.
- Always lock your car.
- Don't leave blankets in your car - can be used to hide under.
- Get a parking spot as close to the elevator as possible in underground lots.

**If you are concerned for your personal safety, please call to arrange a Personalized Safety Plan appointment with a Victim Services Representative.**

**519-585-2363**

[www.vswr.ca](http://www.vswr.ca)

[victimservices@wrps.on.ca](mailto:victimservices@wrps.on.ca)

*The views and opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the Ontario Government of the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General.*



# Personal Safety Tips

**24 hours a day/7 days a week**

**519.585.2363 [www.vswr.ca](http://www.vswr.ca)**



**To accompany the Personalized Safety Plan**



# victim services of Waterloo region

The following booklet provides safety tips that are of great relevance to high risk groups such as victims of domestic violence and criminal harassment, but it is also important for the general population to take steps to help prevent their being victimized by crime. There is no way of knowing who will become a victim in their lifetime, but with each preventative measure you practice, you lower your odds.

Whether you are working with a personalized safety plan to help prevent future incidents, or are just interested in making your habits and surroundings a little safer, this booklet will help you to assess your habits and become more aware of your everyday surroundings - two of the most important steps in increasing your level of personal safety.

## security recommendations

- Be alert for suspicious persons.
- Positively identify all callers before opening doors. Install a wide angle view peephole in all primary doors.
- Install a porch light at a height which would make it difficult to remove the bulb.
- Install motion sensing lights on all sides of the house, so that you can see light through your windows if someone is trespassing.
- Install deadbolts on all outside doors.
- Install glazed glass in all windows within the doors, next to doors or leading to the basement.
- If you cannot account for all your keys - change your locks!
- Keep all spare keys well hidden. Do not hide them on the ledge above your door, under a rock or a welcome mat. Find a really creative hiding place, try to think of the last place you would expect a key to be and put it there.
- Place a dowel, sawed off broomstick or hockey stick in the tracks of all sliding doors and windows.
- Maintain security steps taken while away from OR inside your home.
- Keep shrubs and trees well trimmed.
- Install locks on your fence gates.
- Keep your fuse box locked.
- Have battery operated flashlights in your home (or wall plug charger ones, which have a long battery life when regularly charged).
- Install a loud exterior alarm bell that can be manually activated in more than one location in your home.
- Get an unpublished phone number - unlisted ones can still be published!
- Alert household to unusual and wrong number calls. If such activity continues contact law enforcement.
- A written or telephone threat must be taken seriously and reported.
- If you find an unusual package, box, bag, gift or device on your premises or nearby your vehicle - do not touch. Call the police.
- Install and check your smoke detectors - at least one per floor.
- Have an all-purpose fire extinguisher on every floor.
- Tape emergency phone numbers (not family and friends) to all phones.
- Place lights and radio/TV on a timer while you are away, but if you can stagger the pattern do so - the same time every day is predictable.
- Notify a friend or trusted neighbour of your comings and goings.
- A family dog is a highly-effective alarm system. Even the sound of a small dog barking will deter many would-be criminals.
- Know the whereabouts of your family members at all times.
- Accompany children to school or bus stops.
- Discuss safety, emergency escape scenarios, block parents and quick routes to safety with your children. Decide upon a meeting spot so that you can find them quickly after an incident, should they escape the house.
- Walking routes and time should be varied.
- Ask for identification of all repair or salespeople before allowing them to enter. Call the company to verify.
- Inform a trusted neighbour of your situation. Provide them with a photo, a good description and a vehicle description of the suspect. Ask them to call police if they hear any strange noises coming from your home.
- Inform neighbors of any vacations, trips, etc, and ask for them to pick up your packages and/or mail.
- If living in a complex with an on-site manager, provide them with a photo of the suspect. If in a secured building, provide photo to the valet, doorman or security team.
- Get call ID.
- Screen all your calls
- Save all messages from suspect.
- Don't answer late night calls.

- Bell Canada \*57 will trace the call. Issue Warrant and Bell Canada may waive fee if police are involved.
- Never identify yourself to the random callers.
- Do not put your name on your mailbox or apartment listing.
- If the suspect does not know your maiden name/spouses name, list your phone number under that name.
- If there is a knock on your apartment door, but no one buzzed you to get in, do not answer it.
- Follow your gut, if you get a feeling that something is wrong, it is.
- If someone knocks on your door but you can't see them through the peephole, do not open your door. Look for things out of place, smells etc. in a perimeter check after you are sure they have left (call superintendent to verify that no one is there or in stairwells, etc.).
- Always do your laundry on different days, at different times. Bring your cell phone if you have one.

## contact With the susPect

- If suspect is in your home, be compliant so as not to anger them. Protect yourself as best you can. Use non-confrontational language and tone of voice. Try to wait in a locked room until the police arrive. Don't communicate with them except to allow them to vent until the police arrive.
- If you see the suspect in a public place, don't acknowledge them and go to where there are many people who could witness any incident which might arise.
- Tape and keep records of all phone calls, messages, emails, written correspondence etc.

## leaving the country

- Do not tell anyone (If you are leaving to escape the accused).
- In your passport application, do not fill in "expected date of travel".
- Carefully choose your passport references, e.g. doctor and dentist.