

Are You Aware of Your Surroundings?

People fall victim to crime at all hours of the day or night. This can happen in an isolated area or in a jammed packed grocery store parking lot. Your level of awareness can directly impact the way a criminal perceives you, either as a victim or as an alert citizen that should be avoided at all costs. Experienced criminals will specifically look for a certain type of victim. People who do not pay attention to where they are walking, or they do not see a crowd conversing until they are right up on them, or people that stand at their car doors fumbling for keys while their hands are full would all be prime targets for criminals. Below is a list of general tips that will assist you in becoming the alert citizen that criminals hate to see. These tips are simple yet very effective, and should be practiced in the daytime as well as night. Remember, don't slip into a false sense of security just because it is broad daylight or just because there are other people in the same area. Career criminals will strike a vulnerable victim at the first chance, regardless of time or location.

- 1.) When leaving a store to go to your car, try to leave the store with a group of people. If you are alone, then scan the parking lot first. Look for suspicious persons, vehicles or any other activity that catches your eye. If something just doesn't look or feel right, call store security for an escort. Be aware and follow your "Gut" feelings.
- 2.) Have your car keys ready before you get to your car. Standing beside your car with your head looking down to find keys opens a window of opportunity for lurking criminals. This same rule applies when you are going into your house or office.
- 3.) Unloading several items into your car in a parking lot can also present a vulnerable moment. One way to avoid this is to first place your purse or handbag into the car, then load one or two items and stop to look around you. Keep repeating this until all of your parcels are in your car. A criminal who sees a person doing this will more than likely turn the other way.
- 4.) When jogging or walking, it is not recommended that you wear headphones. This prevents you from hearing other persons as well as vehicles that may be approaching you. If you must wear them, then make sure that you check your surroundings every couple of minutes or so. If a stranger approaches you in a Van, be aware of the large doors in the rear and sides of the vehicle. Stay clear from these areas and always keep a comfortable distance between you and any stranger.
- 5.) If you happen upon a stranded motorist while driving, and you decide to stop and offer assistance, there are certain actions that an alert citizen should display. You should make an immediate mental note of the vehicle type, color and license plate if possible. You should then get a good look at the driver and carefully scan the surrounding area. Keep all of your car doors locked and speak to them through a partially opened window until you are comfortable that you want to get out of your car. If you do not reach a comfort zone, tell the motorist that you will drive to the nearest gas station and call 911 for them. If the scene does not look or feel right from the beginning, then do NOT stop. Call 911 with the location of the motorist and a Deputy will immediately be sent out.
- 6.) If at any time, you are quickly approached by a stranger, or placed in a severely uncomfortable situation then YELL. Yelling "Help", "Police" or "Fire" will immediately draw the attention of anyone within hearing distance. This is very effective in scaring off a possible attacker.

For related topics, please continue viewing our "Safety Tips" page.

