

# Maryland Crime Prevention Safety Tips

## When Shopping

- Keep gifts and valuables out of sight in your car. Lock your packages in the trunk.
- At night park in a well-lighted area, and remember where you've parked.
- Shop with a friend, especially at night. If you are alone try to walk near other people.
- Make sure your children know to go to a store employee or security officer if lost.
- Lock your doors immediately after entering your vehicle.
- Place wallets in your front pants pocket, instead of a back or jacket pocket.
- Have your keys ready to enter your vehicle when you approach it. Stay alert and be aware of your surroundings.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash. Pay with a check or credit card whenever possible.

## In The Mall

- Carry only receipts and small change in your purse.
- If you take a break in a restaurant or restroom, don't place your purse or packages on the floor.
- Never let your child use a public restroom alone; these are favorite places for kidnapers and people who like harming children.
- Try to make your most expensive purchases last. This will reduce your exposure to costly losses.
- Never use a video arcade or toy store as a baby sitter. Predators are on the prowl for unattended children. Malls and shopping centers are prime locations for abductions according to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC).
- Avoid using bathrooms that are tucked away in a back area of a mall concourse or department. If you can, find a bathroom near the mall's food court.

## Credit Card Precautions

- Make sure your card is used only for one transaction, watch transactions carefully. Be aware of card skimming.
- Never give out information about your credit card to any phone solicitor.
- Immediately report the theft or loss of credit cards.

- Never give out your social security number to a phone solicitor or store clerk.
- Do not carry your social security card in your wallet or purse. Keep it at home in a secure location.
- Do not use your credit card to purchase items on the internet unless you initiated the contact and make sure the site is secure and encrypted.
- Cancel all credit cards that you haven't used in the last six months. Open credit accounts with a zero balance are prime targets for identity theft.

### **When Driving Around Town**

- Keep your vehicle doors locked at all times. Carjackers often target vehicles at stop signs and traffic lights.
- Drive in the center lane to make it harder for would-be carjackers to approach your vehicle.
- At intersections leave room between your vehicle and others for an escape.
- Don't stop to help someone with car trouble, use your cell phone to call police.
- Don't stop for flashing headlights. Police don't use this method to stop vehicles.
- If your car breaks down, stay inside until police or a road service arrives.
- If someone motions that your car has a problem or your vehicle is "bumped," don't stop. Stay in your car, ensure your doors are locked, and drive to a public place. Carjackers will sometimes use this method to get you out of your vehicle. It's called the "Bump and Rob".
- Park in well lit areas where there is plenty of pedestrian traffic.
- Wait until you get to your vehicle before deactivating your alarm. Deactivating the alarm prior to arriving at your vehicle; will give a criminal your intended destination.
- If you feel that you are being followed to your vehicle, re-enter the store and have security escort you to your vehicle.
- When you arrive at your vehicle, look under and in the back seat of your car before entering.

### **At ATM Machines**

- When possible, use ATMs during the day.
- Avoid using ATMs late at night, most ATM crimes occur after normal banking hours.
- If you need to use an ATM at night, use one inside a busy establishment.
- Before using an outside ATM, make sure no one is loitering in the area..."Be aware of your surroundings. "Use only well lit, secure ATM locations.

- Make sure you block the view of others nearby when you enter your personal identification number (PIN).
- After the transaction be sure to remove your card from the ATM, take receipts with you, and quickly place your card and money in your pocket.
- Do not count your money at the ATM. Criminals have been known to watch ATM transactions and size-up potential victims.
- If you are followed after making an ATM transaction, go immediately to a heavily-populated, well-lighted area and call the police.
- If you are attacked at an ATM don't resist. Cooperate and give up your money, then notify the police.

### **Traveling Out Of Town**

- Leave a house key with a trusted neighbor.
- Make your home look occupied. Use timers on your lights, radios and TVs.
- Do not stop newspaper and mail delivery. Have a friend or trusted neighbor pick up your newspaper and mail each day.
- Plan your route in advance and choose well-traveled roads.
- Tell someone where you are going, the route you are taking, and your expected times of departure and arrival.
- Become aware of the latest weather reports for your local area, the route you will be traveling, and your destination.

### **In a Hotel or Motel**

- Use all locking devices on your door.
- Don't answer a knock on the door (or open the door) without verifying who is there.
- Ensure all sliding glass doors, windows, and any connecting room doors are locked.
- Don't display room keys or swipe cards in public or leave them where someone can steal them.
- When returning to your room late at night, use the hotel main entrance.
- Report all suspicious activity to the hotel management.
- Don't draw attention to yourself by displaying large amounts of cash or expensive jewelry.
- Place all valuables in a hotel/motel safe deposit box.