

Security Spotlight

An informational Guide for Securitas Canada Clients and Employees



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Conquering Crime Requires Vigilance



Conventional wisdom tells us that crime increases in the summertime. However, several recent statistical studies have shown that this is not true. While the studies have found that there are some months that have a higher incidence of criminal activity, those months are spread throughout the year and are not specifically related to climate.

Statistics Canada states that the police-reported crime rate, which measures the overall volume of crime, has continued to decline since the early 1998. This great news is cause for celebration, but while you are celebrating do not forget to maintain your vigilance. Crime may be lessening, but it is not gone according to the most recent statistics 6 out of every 100 people will be the victim of a crime this year. So, while it is true that Canada is a safer place to be these days, it is also true that crime is still a problem against which you must remain on guard.

"Common Sense" Rules

There are a few "common sense" rules that will help to keep you safe from criminals. First and foremost is to maintain a vigilant attitude. Be aware of your surroundings and the people around you. Criminals are generally a cowardly lot. They look for "easy pickings" and avoid a challenge.

If you project an attitude of confidence and awareness, most criminals will regard you as a "high risk target" and will pass you by in favor of a "target" that appears to be weak, mild, unsure, or distracted.

Your vigilance applies to your home and automobile as well as your person. Keeping your doors and windows locked is a great deterrent to a lazy thief who would rather just walk in and take what he wants instead of struggling to break into a secure home or auto.

Another "common sense" rule is to trust your instincts. One of the many wonders of the human brain is that, even when you are not aware of it, your senses are always gathering information about your surroundings. This information can alert you to an unsafe situation. You may feel uncomfortable in a place or a vague sense of unease towards a nearby person. Trust your instinct! It could be that your perception of a threat is mistaken, but why take the chance? Turn around, cross the street, duck into a building where there are safer looking people. Get yourself away from the possible threat to a safer place as quickly as possible.

The third "common sense" rule is to plan ahead. Planning ahead and practicing your plan can give you crucial advantages. Your reaction time will most likely

be quicker, you will have more confidence in your ability to escape from or deal with the situation, and you will be less likely to panic.

Using these three "common sense" rules as your guides can help protect you against crime. There are also, many specific tips that can assist you in protecting yourself and your home from crime. Here are a few.

Protecting Yourself

- Try to avoid being on the street alone in the early morning or late night.
- Avoid poorly lit and deserted streets, alleys, parking lots/garages, or public parks whenever possible.
- Carry only the money you need for that day.
- Do not keep your money in one place on your person. If robbed, you may be able to offer the robber money from your wallet or purse, while keeping money hidden in your pocket or other place (hat band, shoe, sock, etc.).
- Try to park in well-lighted areas.
- Have car keys in hand as you approach your vehicle.
- If you can do so safely, escape as quickly as you can. Fight back only if you cannot escape and are in danger of being harmed. Your health and life are more important than money or jewelry.
- Pay attention to the physical appearance and sound of the criminal and report these details to the authorities. Your description may help the police to catch the criminal before he strikes again.

Preventing Theft or Burglary

- Beware of pickpockets! Generally your front pockets are safer than your back pockets.
- Keep valuable items in your vehicle out of sight. Put them in the trunk, glove box, or under a seat.
- Always lock your doors and windows.
- If possible, install an alarm system in your home.
- Do not leave spare keys under doormats or in other obvious hiding places. A much better idea is to leave a spare key with a trusted neighbor.
- Let those same trusted neighbors know when you are going to be away so they can watch your home.
- Make sure that all outside doors are metal or solid 1 ¾" hardwood and have dead bolt locks with a 1" throw and reinforced strike plate with 3" screws.

- Always lock the door to an attached garage. Do not rely on your garage door opener for security.
- Put a metal rod or length of wood in the track of sliding glass doors to prevent them from being forced open.
- Keep the perimeter of your house well-lighted and keep trees and shrubs trimmed to ensure visibility.
- If you return home and see signs of forced entry (broken locks, windows, etc.) do not enter the home. Move to a safe distance and call the police.
- If someone breaks in, or attempts to, while you are home; call the police and lock yourself in a room or, if possible to do so safely, exit the home and retreat to a safe place (neighbor's home, nearby business, etc.).

If you live in an apartment make sure that:

- there is good lighting at all entrances, parking areas, hallways, stairways, laundry rooms, and any other common areas.
- street exits for fire stairs are closed and secured from the inside with an emergency release.
- laundry rooms and storage areas are kept locked unless they are being used by a fellow tenant.

Victory via Vigilance

Following these "common sense" rules and crime prevention tips will, hopefully, keep you safe from crime. Be vigilant for your family, your neighbors, and your friends. If we all remain vigilant we may be able to help lower the crime rate even further in Canada.

Additional Resources

Statistics Canada

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2011001/article/11523-eng.htm>

WebMD has expert advice on protecting yourself at

<http://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/features/how-protect-yourself-against-crime>

The Toronto Police Department "Crime Prevention Pamphlets" at

<http://www.torontopolice.on.ca/crimeprevention/>