

# Staying alert - *and alive*

## Plan ahead

- Ask about the risk assessment plan at your workplace.
- Read your local newspaper and be aware of the latest scams taking place – and avoid these!
- Plan emergency exits. Know about safe places and the location of public phones.
- Try to imagine appropriate responses to various situations and decide ahead of time how you will respond.
- If your work takes you to new or different settings, be alert and make mental notes of your surroundings when you arrive. The first time you go into a new setting, or if you are in a place where you feel uneasy, phone your own workplace when you arrive and again before you leave.
- When you enter an office or meeting place alone, be aware of your surroundings.
- Keep personal information private.
- Avoid having new work contacts walk you to the car or escort you to your home or hotel room.
- When entering an lift, stand next to the controls. Wait for the next elevator if you feel uneasy about any of the occupants. If someone makes you feel uncomfortable, push the button for the next floor or push the alarm and all buttons (except stop).
- Trust your instincts. If someone you work with makes you uncomfortable, discuss the situation with a co-worker you trust. Plan your response to potential problems.

## Be alert

- Know staff in other stores, offices and businesses. Be aware of their schedules.
- If you are suspicious of people hanging around or strange phone calls, notify the police and staff in neighbouring stores. Try to get a description of the person and the car (if there is one).
- Be assertive and confident. Look at and greet customers – look the in the eye

- If you feel uncomfortable after someone enters, trust your instincts. Look directly at the person. Make it clear you are in charge and cannot be intimidated. Phone for help.
- Make sure that back doors or secondary doors are locked.
- Check all lighting before it gets dark.

### **When you are working late**

- Let security or a friend know, and tell them when you expect to leave.
- While another co-worker is present, check that all doors are locked and that washrooms and storage rooms are empty.
- If you suspect someone is lurking outside, call police or security officers.
- If you enter a washroom and suspect someone is lurking in there, don't call out. Back out, go to a safe area with a lockable door and phone for help. (Plan ahead for safe places.)

### **Challenging strangers in the workplace**

- If you are alone or working late and you encounter someone unfamiliar, indicate that you are not alone. Say, "My supervisor will be right here and will be able to help you."
- Use assertive, but respectful, language.

### **Keep personal information private**

- Avoid discussing where you live, after-work plans, or vacation plans in front of, or with, customers or anyone who makes you feel uncomfortable.

### **Driving**

- Do not identify your keys with car plate numbers or name and address.
- Carry a personal safety alarm on your key chain. It will help attract attention if you are attacked.
- Keep your car in good repair. The gas tank should be at least half full and the tires in reliable condition at all times.
- Park in well-lit spaces. Walk with others after dark.
- If you park in underground parking areas, make sure you are near the attendant or an exit.
- Always lock your car, when it's parked and when you're driving it.

- Have your key ready when you approach your car. Make sure that no one is hiding there.
- Don't open your car window more than one inch to speak to someone approaching your car. Drive away if you feel uncomfortable.
- If you suspect another car is following yours, do not drive home directly – especially if you would not want your home address exposed, or, if you would be alone at home. Drive to a service, police, fire station, or brightly-lit convenience store, and stay in your car. Blow the hooter horn in short repeated blasts until someone comes out to help you.

### **Should your car breaks down**

- Carry a “Help! Call Police” sign in your vehicle emergency kit, and use it in an emergency. Do not raise the hood of your car as it blocks vision and prevents you from knowing if someone is approaching the car.
- Stay in the car with windows closed and doors locked.
- Open the window only one inch to speak to anyone other than the police.
- Consider obtaining a cellular phone to keep in your car for emergency use. Pre-program the phone to a local emergency number.
- Use your emergency lights or hooter to alert travellers of your problem.
- Do not travel alone at night. When travelling at night be armed and make sure that your cellular phone is working. Contact friend / family / police immediately when you suspect that a problem is emerging.

### **On foot**

- Wear comfortable shoes, such as runners.
- If you are using a staircase, be sure it is well lit and you can quickly exit to a safe place.
- Stay on well-lit streets, in the centre of the sidewalk, away from bushes, doorways and parked cars, anywhere an attacker could hide. Cross the road if necessary.
- If you think someone is following you, turn around and check. Let them know you are aware of their presence. Do not go to your car or your house. Cross the street and go to a safe place, such as a store or restaurant or to friends or the local police station

## **Hotel safety**

- Make sure your reservations are guaranteed if you're arriving late.
- Purchase a travel lock or an alarm/motion detector for hotel room doors. These items are available from locksmiths.
- Use a business card or first initials when you check in - **keep your name private.**
- Leave instructions not to give out your room number or your name.
- Get a room on an upper floor close to the elevator. Make sure you are away from staircases and fire stairs/exits.
- Do not enter the room if you suspect someone is in it, if you are being followed or if someone is lingering near your door.
- Check your room phone to ensure it is working properly. If you are in a motel, try to get a room next to the office or the manager's unit. Keep all windows locked.

## **When flying**

- Check for early and late shuttle bus service.
- Leave only your car key with trusted people.
- Do not accept rides from people you have met on the airplane. Be cautious about sharing taxis.

## **Leave clear instructions/information at your workplace**

- Tell staff, or friends/family members if you work alone, where you are going and when you expect to arrive and leave. Include dates you will be in various locations. Leave emergency contact numbers.
- Make sure anyone attending to your business, mail or phone machine does not give out information about your absence or travel plans.

## **What Employers Can Do**

- Employers can -- and must -- discuss a safety plan with employees.
- Where a worker is working alone under circumstances which may result in injury, health impairment, victimization through criminal violence or other adverse conditions, the employer shall provide and implement a plan as a means of ensuring, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare of that worker from risks arising out of, or in connection with, activities in that workplace.

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## **Install Extra Phones and Alarm Systems**

- Pre-program phones to the local police emergency number.
- Install phones in isolated areas such as storage rooms.
- Have an alarm installed that rings in the workplace and in a neighbouring business or household.
- Attackers expect alarm buttons to be at the desk. **Place them elsewhere**, where staff can reach them and customers cannot set them off accidentally.
- Install several alarm buttons. Put them by doors, store rooms and coolers.

## **Increase the Visibility In Work Areas**

- Install good outside lighting and train staff to check lights before dusk.
- Ensure the service desk is **well-lit and visible** through windows.
- Make sure windows are not obscured and passers-by can see in.
- Make sure there is a clear exit route from the service desk to the door.

## **In a Robbery or Other Property Crime**

- Never confront the robber.
  - Do not argue, fight, chase, or resist the robber in any way. This will only make the robber nervous.
- Co-operate with the robber.
  - Let the robber know you want to do what you are ordered to do.
  - Remember, the robber may be even more nervous than you are.
  - Respond only when spoken to by the robber.
  - Keep conversation as brief as possible.
  - Use “yes” responses rather than “no”; shake your head up and down indicating agreement rather than disagreement.
- Inform the robber ahead of time of any possible surprises, for example:
  - the door is about to open;
  - someone is expected to come in;
  - someone is in the back room or somewhere else on the premises.
- Help the robbery go as smoothly and quickly as possible.
  - Be concerned about the safety of other staff and customers.

*Remember: robbers seldom hurt people who co-operate with them.*

## Basic Prevention

Your risk of attack increases if you appear to be unaware of what's going on around you. Learn to be aware and recognize risk. Increase your personal awareness **everywhere**.

- Be observant and aware of your surroundings. Walk with a purpose. Keep your head up, look around and directly at people to assess them. Make eye contact, but don't stare.
- Trust your feelings when you feel something just isn't right.
- Be alert. Digging in a purse, wearing head-phones or struggling with a heavy briefcase, luggage or awkward clothing reduces your ability to be alert and thus prepared.
- Have your keys ready. As you approach your car or door, have the right key positioned to open the lock immediately.
- Report any suspicious incidents to employers or police.

*When you are out alone, you may also wish to consider carrying a personal safety alarm on your key ring, pinned to your clothing or worn around your neck.*

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