

# Buxton Police Department

## Crime Prevention Tips



### Senior Citizens and Crime:

Crime prevention is everyone's responsibility, not just a job for the police. Crime can be reduced by simple measures like remembering to lock a door, knowing about common con games, and watching out for your neighborhood. Although surveys consistently show that persons over 65 are victims of crime far less frequently than young people, many senior citizens are so worried about crime that they shut themselves up in their homes and rarely go out. However, isolating ourselves behind locked doors and not getting together with our neighbors actually makes it easier for criminals to work in the neighborhood. Seniors are more vulnerable to certain crimes such as purse snatching, mugging, and fraud. You can reduce opportunities for criminals to strike by being careful, alert and a good neighbor.

### When You're Out:

- If you must carry a purse, hold it close to your body. Don't dangle it.
- Never carry a wallet in your back pocket. Put it in an inside jacket pocket or front pocket.
- Make sure someone knows where you're going and when you expect to return.
- Avoid dark, deserted routes, even if they're the shortest.
- Carry change for emergency telephone and transportation use.
- Whenever possible, travel with friends to stores, the bank, or the doctor. Check with your police or senior citizen center about escort services.
- When using the bus or other public transportation, sit near the driver if possible.
- Don't overburden yourself with packages and groceries that obstruct your view and make it hard to react.
- Have your car or house key in hand as you approach your vehicle or home.
- When you drive, keep doors locked and windows up. Park in well-lit, busy areas. If you have car trouble, be wary of strangers who offer help. Stay in your car and ask them to call a service truck or the police.
- If a friend or taxi takes you home, ask the driver to wait until you are safely inside.
- Communicate the message that you are calm, confident, and know where you are going. Trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable in a place or situation, leave.

### When You Are Home:

- Use deadbolt locks on all exterior doors. Keep your doors locked at all times, even when you're inside.
- Protect windows and sliding glass doors with good locks or other security devices.
- Make your home appear occupied when you go out by using a timer to turn on lights and a radio.

- Never let strangers in your home without checking their identification. Call their company if you're not sure. Install a peephole in your door and use it.
- If you live alone, don't advertise it. Use only your first initial in phone books, directories, and apartment lobbies.
- Get to know your neighbors and keep their phone numbers handy for emergencies.
- Work out a "buddy" system with a friend to check on each other daily.
- Engrave your valuables with a unique identification number. Keep bonds, stock certificates, seldom worn jewelry, and stamp and coin collections in a safe deposit box.
- Don't hide extra house keys under a doormat or in other obvious spots.

## **Protect Your Money**

- If you receive checks in the mail regularly, arrange for them to be sent directly to the bank for deposit instead.
- Avoid carrying large sums of money. If you must take a large sum, have a friend accompany you.
- Don't display large amounts of cash in stores or other public places.
- Don't sign a check or contract until you're sure it's legitimate and you know all the details. Check with a friend, lawyer or police officer if in doubt.
- Never put your purse or wallet on a counter while you examine merchandise in a store.

## **What if You Are Assaulted?**

- If the attacker is only after your purse or other valuables, don't resist. Your life and safety are worth more than your possessions.
- Make a conscious effort to get an accurate description of the attacker and call the police or sheriff immediately.

## **Don't Be Conned**

According to the American Association of retired persons, older citizens are victims of fraudulent schemes far out of proportion to their population numbers. Keep informed about the latest con schemes in your community by reading the newspaper. Be skeptical about any proposal that sounds too good to be true or has to be kept secret. Don't rush into anything. Check it out with friends, lawyers, and the police department, Better Business Bureau and your state or County Consumer Affairs department.

### **Be Especially Wary Of:**

- "Get-rich-quick" schemes for which you have to put up "good faith" money.
- "Good deals" on expensive repairs or home improvement jobs.
- Investments that promise unusually large returns.
- Someone claiming you owe money for an item ordered by a deceased spouse or relative.
- Work-at-home schemes, door-to-door sales, supplemental Medicare insurance, miracle cures, glasses and hearing aid bargain prices.

If you are the victim of fraud, call the police immediately. You may be embarrassed because you were tricked, but your information is vital in catching the con artist and preventing others from being victimized.

## **Vacation Safety Tips**

Vacation is a time for fun and relaxation. Don't let yours be ruined by crime. Follow the crime prevention tips below.

### **Before Leaving - Secure Your Home!**

- Have good locks on all doors and windows and USE THEM!
- Engrave your valuables with a unique identification number.
- Never leave your house key hidden outside under a doormat, in a flowerpot, or on the ledge of a door.
- Make your house appear "lived in". Use timers for lights and radios. Have a neighbor pick up mail, packages and newspapers, and keep the lawns mowed and watered.
- Leave your trip plans and an emergency phone number with trusted neighbors or friends.
- Call the Buxton Police Department and request a property check of your home while you are away.

### **On the Road**

- Never carry large amounts of cash: use traveler's checks. If you must carry large sums of money, do not display it openly.
- Keep a record of your traveler's check numbers and your credit card numbers in a safe place.
- Be aware of your surroundings and never advertise your plans to strangers; this includes travel routes and the amount of cash you're carrying.
- Do not stop to offer to help a stranded motorist. Go to the nearest phone booth and call for assistance.
- If you suspect that someone is following you, drive to the nearest service station, restaurant or business and call the police or sheriff's department. If you believe it is unsafe to get out of your car, honk your horn and flash your lights to draw attention.
- If your car breaks down, raise the hood and attach a white cloth to the car antenna. If someone stops to help, it is advisable that you stay in your locked car and ask them to call the police or garage. If you must abandon your car, keep all passengers together.

### **Car Security**

- Always lock your car when entering or leaving it.
- Park in well-lit, busy areas.
- Check the back seat before getting into your car.
- Mark your car radio and other removable equipment with a unique identification number.
- Always lock valuables out of sight, preferably in the trunk. Always carry wallets, check books and purses with you.
- Do not advertise that you are a tourist. Place maps and travel brochures in the glove compartment.

### **Sightseeing**

- Remember: planning reduces your chance of becoming the victim of a crime.
- Ask for directions at a hotel/motel on how to get to those attractions you want to visit.
- Select tour guides carefully.

- Ask if there are any areas in town you should avoid. Stick to well-lit main streets and public areas.
- Looking lost (stopping and looking at addresses or staring at street signs) may make you look like an easy target for crime. If you do get lost, find an open business and ask for directions.
- Only carry with you the cash you will need, and only in small denominations.
- If older children go off separately, be sure they understand the importance of keeping track of time and returning promptly at the appointed hours.

## Personal Safety Tips

### **Babysitting Safety**

- Always post emergency numbers and your address by the telephone for your babysitter.
- Leave a number where you can be reached and other information the sitter might need.

### **Sexual Assault**

- About one-third of sexual assaults occur in the victim's home.
- About 40 percent of sexual assaults are committed by persons known to the victims such as dates, acquaintances, neighbors, co-workers, or even spouses.
- rapes also occur in the street, in school yards, and in parking lots. Be alert to your surroundings and to the people around you.
- Call the local rape crisis center to sign up for prevention and self-defense classes.
- Many strategies are involved with rape avoidance. Studies show that a combination of screaming, physical resistance, and fleeing is most effective.

### **Car Safety**

- Always lock your car doors even when you will be gone only a few minutes.
- Lock your doors when driving.
- Park in well-lit areas, and observe your surroundings when you leave your car at night.
- Always have your car and house keys in hand so you will not have to fumble for them.
- always check the back seat before entering your car.
- keep your car in good working condition.
- If your car breaks down, use distress signals such as putting the hood up, putting a white flag on the aerial, and setting your emergency flashers. Remain in the car with the doors locked. Wait for the police or ask anyone who does stop to send a tow truck or the police. Be wary of accepting help from strangers.
- If you are followed by another car, honk your horn all the way to the nearest gas station, police station, fire station, or lighted home.
- If someone threatens you while you are in your car, lock all doors and blow the horn in short bursts to attract attention.
- Do not pick up hitchhikers.

### **On the Street**

- Walk confidently. Be alert. Notice who passes you and who is behind you.
- Walk in well-lit areas. Do not walk near bushes, alleys, etc.
- Wear clothes and shoes that give you freedom of movement.
- Do not overburden yourself with bags or packages that might make running difficult.

- Carry as little cash as possible.
- Hold your purse tightly, close to your body. Keep your wallet in a front pocket, buttoned hip pocket or inside coat pocket.
- Do not hitchhike.
- If someone in a car stops you for directions or information, always reply from a safe distance. Never get too close to the car.
- If an auto driver persists in bothering you, cross the street and walk or run in the opposite direction.
- If you feel someone is following you, turn around and check. Proceed to the nearest lighted house or place of business.
- If you feel you are in danger, do not be afraid to scream and run.

## **Home Security Tips**

- Secure all outside doors with deadbolt locks. Outer door should be solid core wood or metal.
- Place a metal or wooden rod in the track of sliding glass doors.
- Use secure locks on windows. Hardware is available that will allow windows to be partially opened during warm weather, yet maintain security.
- Have hood lighting at all entrances.
- Install a viewer in your door.
- Make sure you know who is at the door before you open it. Do not rely on chain locks. Insist on identification from repair and sales persons. If in doubt, call their company to verify their identity.
- Do not admit persons asking to use your telephone. Offer to make the call for them.
- Know your neighbors and work out a mutual watch and warning system to prevent burglaries and other break-ins.
- Identify your belongings by engraving your social security number on your possessions.
- Close and lock doors and windows when you leave your home.
- If you come home and find a door or window open or signs of forced entry, do not enter. Call the police for assistance.
- Use automatic timers to turn lights on and off to give the appearance that you are at home.
- Stop mail and other deliveries when you leave for vacation.
- Do not hide spare keys. Give your keys to trusted neighbors.
- If you live in an apartment, be attentive and careful if you are alone in the laundry room or garage.
- Have the locks re-keyed when you move into a new home.

## **Alarm Systems**

Alarm systems are a useful tool in the prevention of burglary. Individuals must weigh the advantages against the cost factor. There are many types of alarm systems available. The Buxton Police Department does not recommend any particular system or alarm company, and suggests that residents contact several licensed alarm contractors to provide a written estimate for the installation, maintenance and monthly carrying charges prior to signing a contract.

## **If You Are Burglarized**

If you arrive home and suspect that your house has been burglarized, and have not as yet entered the house, go to a neighbor's house and notify the Buxton Police Department by calling either *9-1-1* or *929-6612*. Advise the person answering the telephone as to your location and the address of your home. If requested, stay on the line to provide any additional information, which will assist the responding patrol units.

The responding officers will check your house first, and then will come to your location and advise you of their findings. If in fact your house was burglarized, the officers will conduct an investigation and will need your assistance in providing a list of the stolen items. They may also request you to submit to a set of fingerprints for elimination purposes if any fingerprints are located within the residence.

If you arrive home and have entered your residence, and then discover the house has been burglarized, call the Buxton Police Department at 9-1-1 or 929-6612. If you believe that the suspect may still be in the house, leave immediately and go to a neighbor's and follow the previously described directions.

If you are confident that the burglar has left, call from your home as directed above.

Do not touch anything! You could possibly destroy valuable evidence.

Stay calm, and you may be asked to stay on the line with the dispatcher until the responding officers arrive.

You will be asked to compile a list of the stolen items. Please include the make, model, serial numbers, color and value.

If a burglar confronts you in your home, remember that most burglars are not violent *unless cornered*. Once the burglar has fled, notify the Police Department immediately by calling 9-1-1, and advise the dispatcher of this information and the direction the burglar fled in, if available.

## **Types of Suspicious Incidents**

People knocking on your door for various reasons may actually be burglars attempting to check if your home is vacant.

Please contact the Buxton Police Department to check on these people, as it is important that we are made aware of strangers in the neighborhoods.

Utility workers often have to make calls to inspect or take meter readings inside or around your home. They are usually in some type of uniform, and have a photo ID with them. Do not be afraid to ask to see their identification, they are used to it. If you still feel uncomfortable, call the Buxton Police Department and request an officer to verify the person's identity.

Report unfamiliar vehicles parked or riding back and forth in the neighborhood.

When reporting a suspicious vehicle it is important to provide the dispatcher as much information as possible, such as; the license number, state or color of the plate, and the description of the vehicle. This information will allow the officers to search for the vehicle while in route to your neighborhood.

Gypsies!!!! Each year Buxton residents are the victims of gypsies. These people often come to your door offering to provide services, such as repairing your driveway, fixing your roof, and other yard maintenance tasks, at greatly reduced prices. They will advise you that they are doing a job in the neighborhood, and have some leftover material that they could use on your house at a greatly reduced price. **DO NOT BE TAKEN IN BY THESE PEOPLE!** The service they provide will be inferior, or not completed at all. Often they will distract you while an accomplice may slip away and steal valuable possessions. **DO NOT LET THESE PEOPLE INTO YOUR HOME UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES!** Call the Buxton Police Department immediately and request an officer to verify the identity of the individuals. If they are reputable contractors, they will be happy to wait for the officers to arrive.

**DON'T BE A VICTIM OF A SCAM!**