

**New York State  
Department of Health**

**PERSONAL SAFETY  
GUIDE**

**For Home, Office,  
and in the Field**

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## **Crime Prevention Techniques for the Majority**

### **Four Basic Rules**

1. Practice being alert and observant.

You may be able to avoid threatening situations, and if you are attacked, you will be able to accurately describe your assailant. Play the “what if” game (imaginary situation and response) whenever the opportunity presents itself, such as a lull in activities, waiting in line or on long drives, etc.

2. Stay alert.

Be aware of your surroundings, who is in front of you, who is behind you, and available escape routes. It is said that the best pilots are always looking for a place to land in an emergency during all segments of a flight. Distracted people (daydreamers), whose minds are somewhere else, by definition, will be subject to surprise and shock by random events and out of the ordinary occurrences. Remember, criminals are opportunists. Their main advantage is surprise.

3. Communicate the message that you are calm, confident and know where you are going.

Present an energetic deportment, stand erect, walk purposefully and make quick eye contact with people around you. As such, perpetrators of harm will know from your demeanor as they size you up as a victim that they have lost a key advantage of surprise in such situations. They will also know that you are aware of their physical position relative to yours.

4. Trust your instincts.

If you feel uncomfortable in a place or situation, take control of the situation and leave. In most cases, by taking the initiative and changing the time and distance requirements necessary for an attack to take place, you will cause perpetrators to alter or abandon their attack plans and search for easier victims. Remember, the majority of the criminal element are by their nature, lazy, if they were not, they would be working for a living. The more work involved in making you a victim, the less likely they will persist in the pursuit of their objective.

## **How To Avoid Becoming a Victim**

Most often an unknown assailant wants what you have - not you. Keep possessions you carry to a minimum:

- Purse – Carry a small purse under a shirt or blouse.
- Wallet - Keep money, credit card, key and license in your front pocket, not in your wallet (avoid rear pocket).
- Be alert. Being distracted can enable a pickpocket.
- Carry only one major credit card, license and traveler's checks. Carry only enough cash to get you where you're going and back safely. Don't carry your Social Security card.
- Separate keys from other things, don't carry in a purse.
- Photocopy your license and all credit cards and keep a copy at home. This will make it easier to replace.
- Jewelry - If you must wear jewelry while on street, turn your ring so the stone is not visible, put your necklace inside your blouse, etc.
- Be aware of other possessions that might increase the chance of robbery; leather or fur coats are valuables that may be targeted, specialty cars may be more attractive to a car thief.

## **SECTION 1 – Personal Safety at Home and During Daily Activities**

### **Safety Tips AT HOME**

- Do not open your door to strangers; install a peep hole in the entrance door.
- A chain lock is not designed to prevent forcible entry.
- Keep doors and windows locked even when taking out trash, gardening, etc.
- Close blinds/curtains at night to prevent criminals from window shopping.
- Don't leave notes on the door when going out.
- If you find a broken window or open door when you get home or any sign of a forced entry, do not go inside. Go to your neighbor's and call the police.
- Have your keys in your hand when returning home. Install an automatic garage opener.
- Do not leave keys in potted plants, under the doormat, in the mailbox, etc.
- Change the locks in your new apartment or house, or if you lose your keys.
- Leave lights on when you go out at night, or use a timer when going away for extended period of time. Use a timer for TV or radio also.
- Use exterior lighting around the building. Place light fixtures high enough so that the bulb cannot be unscrewed without using a ladder or step stool. Install motion detectors.
- Exit and enter in areas visible to neighbors.
- Only put your first initial and last name on your mailbox or in the telephone directory. Do not put your first name. Unlisted numbers are preferable for single women.
- Never give personal information over the phone.
- When on the phone with someone you don't know, don't say you are alone.
- Do not allow strangers inside to use the phone. Offer to make the call for them.
- Ask for ID of telephone repairmen, utility meter readers, etc.
- Do not allow strangers to walk around your house unaccompanied.
- Be wary of acquaintances who show up with strangers, especially if unannounced.
- When leaving for work or returning from work, vary your timetable.
- If in an apartment, do not stay in the laundry area. Return when the wash or dry cycle is close to completion.
- If an intruder enters, leave immediately if possible. Go to a neighbor and call police. Avoid confrontation with the intruder.
- Use an answering machine.
- Trim bushes near the entrances.
- Leave one hand free when carrying packages.
- Say good-by to an empty house.

## **Safety Tips when ON FOOT**

- Plan your route out on a map before hand. Have a detailed map of the neighborhood. Fold the map into a manageable size. Do not look at the map while walking-this is a sure sign that you are unfamiliar with your surroundings.
- Take the shortest and most direct safe route.
- Avoid unlit, overgrown or unpopulated areas, alleyways, parks at night, vacant lots etc
- Go in groups or pairs if possible.
- Dress appropriately for the neighborhood you are in, if possible. Wear clothing and shoes that provide freedom of movement in case you have to run or fight. Avoid flashy clothes, expensive jewelry, high heels. Avoid scarves or necklaces that can be used to hurt you.
- Tell someone your destination, route, and time of arrival in case you encounter a problem.
- Carry a whistle, screamer, personal alarm, or other noise device. Carry a cell phone.
- Be alert, don't daydream. Walk confidently. Look determined.
- Look behind you occasionally, act suspicious. If being followed by a car let the driver know you are aware of his presence.
- Walk in the center of the sidewalk to avoid parked cars, dark doorways or shrubbery.
- Walk facing traffic in case a car stops.
- Carry a flashlight at night.
- Be suspicious of people bumping into you. Check for your wallet immediately after.
- Do not accept rides from strangers.
- Avoid walking through groups of people loitering.
- Cross the street – criss-cross if necessary or change direction. Go the wrong way on a one way street.
- Vary your pace- run if necessary. Try to catch up with other people walking.
- Take notice of where the emergency police call boxes are located. Take notice of what stores are open late, where are phone booths, etc. Where could you get help if you needed it?
- Carry a pad and pencil to record license numbers, etc.
- Do not carry valuables. Keep some emergency money in a safe place, such as a shoe.
- If being followed- go to the nearest open store, school, or public building and call the police or go to a private home that looks occupied and ring the doorbell. Dial 911 on your cell phone while continuing to walk. Do NOT go home. If you are near your home, knock on your neighbor's doors until you find one at home.
- When you do return home, have your key ready to enter without delay.

## **Safety Tips when using PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

- Know what time the public transportation arrives/leaves to minimize wait time.
- Stand with your back to a wall or pole while waiting for public transportation; stand with other people
- Sit near the driver or conductor, or other people (On subways, the conductor is usually located in the middle car. The engineer is usually located in the first car).
- Don't nap, stay alert.
- Try to use well-lit and frequently used stops.

- While on the platform awaiting the train, stand back from the edge of the platform.
- While aboard the train avoid sitting right next to the exit door. An attacker can reach in and grab a purse or jewelry as the train pulls away.
- Never agree to accept packages from another person.
- Never carry luggage or a package onto public transportation for someone else.
- Keep your briefcase/suitcase in view and as secure as possible at all times.
- Never leave anything of value unattended.
- Do not wear your stereo headphones.
- If you are verbally or physically harassed, get out of the situation by moving to the next car and get off the train at the next stop.
- Be alert to who gets off the bus or subway with you. If you feel uncomfortable, walk directly to a place where there are other people.
- Use only designated licensed taxis/limousines. Make sure the driver is the person pictured on the license. Inquire about the fare prior to leaving your destination

### **Safety Tips while SHOPPING**

- Keep cash at a minimum-use a charge card or check if possible.
- Keep your charge card account numbers secret. Observe the salesperson as they handle your card.
- Purse snatchings frequently occur in parking lots. Someone bumping into you may be how a pickpocket gets what he/she wants.
- Beware of strangers who offer to help you carry packages or open your car door.
- Don't let your purse dangle loosely or lay it on the counter.
- Don't leave your purse in a shopping cart.
- Don't display your money in a crowd.
- Carry your wallet in an inside coat pocket or side trouser pocket. Avoid rear pockets.
- Keep one arm free when carrying packages.

### **Safety Tips while BANKING**

- Use direct deposit. Many criminals know when checks arrive each month and will pick those days to act.
- Store valuables in a safety deposit box.
- Do not give your bank account or charge account numbers to anyone.
- Do your banking during daylight hours. Darkness gives the criminal an advantage.
- ATM: be aware of your surroundings.
- Be vigilant when entering or leaving the bank.
- Do not give money to anyone calling claiming to be a bank employee, or bank examiner.

## **SECTION 2 – Personal Safety While Driving**

### **Safety Tips when DRIVING**

- Know where you are going. Plan your route ahead of time. Call ahead or go online for specific directions. Have a detailed map of the neighborhood. Should you get lost, ask for directions at a brand name service station or convenience store.
- Once at location, check in with on site staff. Have facility staff accompany you (if appropriate). Know how to call for assistance on site if needed and means of escape.
- Talk to co-workers or other teams to obtain information on conditions in the area where you are planning to go.
- Contact local police in the area you are traveling to identify problem spots.
- Tell someone your route, destination and time of arrival. Check in periodically. Make arrangements for someone to meet you at the building entrance whenever possible.
- Avoid driving in unpopulated or unlit areas. Try to stay on main roads and highways. Stay out of high crime areas, especially at night.
- Always keep your seatbelt fastened. This may protect you in an accident. But may also keep someone from pulling you out of the car.
- If your car breaks down, raise your hood and stay in the car with the doors locked and windows up.
- Do not stop for unmarked cars.
- Consider a cellular phone or CB if you often travel alone.
- Carry a flashlight and emergency equipment. Carry a fire extinguisher and first aid kit, as well as a white cloth or other sign that would signify the need for help.
- Keep your vehicle well-maintained and have enough gas to get you to your destination and back.
- Keep windows closed enough to prevent entry when asking for directions or in stop and go traffic.
- Do not pick up hitchhikers under any circumstances. Do not open the door or window for strangers that may ask directions or approach your vehicle.
- Do not stop to aid a stranger in a stalled vehicle, report their location to the police.
- Keep valuables in the trunk, not on display.
- Keep one arm free when carrying packages.
- If being followed by a car- don't pull into a driveway- you may get blocked in.
- Take notice of what stores are open late, where are phone booths, etc. Where could you get help if you needed it?
- Always rent a vehicle from a company that provides 24 hour roadside assistance and write down the instructions on what to do if the vehicle breaks down.
- When stopping at a traffic light, try to leave space in front of you so you can drive away quickly if necessary.
- Notice people standing on corners at night as you approach a stop light or sign. If they approach your car and there is no danger of a collision, drive forward if necessary.
- Drive courteously. If you upset other motorists with unsafe, erratic or aggressive driving, they may want to get even with you. Do not get upset with other drivers, regardless of their behavior. You put yourself in danger when you lose your temper. Stay in control.

## **Safety Tips when PARKING**

- If your hotel uses a valet parking service, make sure you are giving your keys to a hotel employee rather than a car thief posing as one.
- Do not park in a hotel space that has your room number, you could be followed.
- Park in an area as close as possible to your destination to limit the distance you have to walk.
- When parking your car, try to park in a well-lit section, in case it gets dark before you return.
- When parking your car in an underground lot, try to park as close as possible to the elevator.
- Remove ignition keys, roll windows up tightly, set parking brake and lock all doors when leaving vehicle. Do not park where you are required to leave your keys. If you must leave your keys, only leave the car door/ignition keys.
- Be cautious of vans or vehicles with dark tinted windows when parking in a lot or garage. Someone may be waiting inside.
- Be alert whenever you are in a parking lot, covered garage or side street. Look around before getting into or out of your car. Check under the vehicle and the back seat of the car before entering.
- If someone seems to be following you when you are walking to your car, walk past it and find help.
- Have someone escort you or watch you enter your car and have your keys ready. Hold down the horn and drive away if someone tries to enter your car.
- Lock your doors immediately upon entry; always lock your doors when leaving your vehicle.
- Park under a street light.
- Avoid dark parking lots; be wary of parking ramps without security personnel.
- Park in the direction in which you intend to leave. Avoid parking in driveways or tightly between other cars.

## **Safe WINTER DRIVING Tips:**

- Wear your seat belt – “buckle up for safety”.
- Maintain your car: Check battery, tire tread and windshield wipers, keep your windows clear, put no-freeze windshield washer fluid in the washer reservoir, and check your antifreeze.
- Have on hand: flashlight, jumper cables, abrasive material (sand, kitty litter) shovel, snow brush and ice scraper, warning devices (like flares) and blankets. For long trips, add food and water, medication and cell phone.
- Plan your trip: Allow plenty of time (check weather and leave early if necessary), be familiar with the maps/directions, and let others know your route and arrival time.
- Practice Cold Weather Driving:
  - During daylight, rehearse maneuvers slowly on the ice or snow in an empty lot.
  - Steer into a skid.
  - Know what your brakes will do: stomp on antilock brakes, pump non-antilock brakes.
  - Stopping distances are longer on water-covered roads and ice.
  - Don't idle for a long time with the windows up or in an enclosed space.

## **ERGONOMIC Driving Tips**

- Be sure the seat is adjusted to the most comfortable position for you to avoid stretching and reaching.
- Stop periodically (at least once an hour) to stretch.
- Think of the steering wheel as a clock and rotate your hands as you are driving to different positions on the “clock”.
- If you will be responsible for bringing supplies or heavy materials use a luggage cart.
- Keep money for tolls & maps close to the driver to avoid reaching.
- Consider using a small lumbar pillow or towel for extra back support.

## **IF FOLLOWED BY A CAR While Driving**

- Act suspicious; let the person know you are aware of them.
- Get the license number; dial 911 on your cell phone. There is a vehicle identification form at the end of this guide.
- Drive to a police station, firehouse or hospital or other public place that is open.
- If no safe areas are near, honk the horn repeatedly and turn on your emergency flashers.
- Get the attention of a police car if you should see one.
- Do not go home, the person following you will then know where you live.
- Do not pull into a driveway, you may get blocked in.
- Pull over to the side of the road, wait for the person to exit their car, and then drive off.
- Report the incident to the police as soon as possible
- If you are bumped by another car, think twice about getting out. If you are uncomfortable or suspicious, signal the other driver to follow you to the nearest police station or to a busy well-lighted area where it is safe to get out.

## **Resources**

- Thruway weather conditions and road and construction information 1-800-847-8929 (1-800-THRUWAY)
- To report a Thruway emergency- 1-800-842-2233 or dial 911.

## **SECTION 3 – Personal Safety in Buildings and Offices**

### **Safety Tips for BUILDINGS/OFFICE BUILDINGS**

#### **GENERAL**

- Be observant when entering a building. Be aware of places criminals can hide- underneath stairwells, dark corridors, etc. Avoid these areas when possible.
- Use a flashlight, if necessary, when entering the building, stairways or hallways.
- Avoid secluded or seldom used stairways. When using stairways, stop and listen before proceeding up each flight.
- If uneasy, leave the building and go to the nearest safe location. Request your client meet you at the entrance of the building or call your supervisor for instructions.

#### **OFFICE**

- Always let someone know where you'll be- even if it's just to the photocopier or mail room.
- Mark your personal items (radio, calculator) with your name or initials.
- Report broken or flickering lights, dimly lit corridors, doors that don't lock properly, broken windows, etc.
- Don't advertise your social life or vacation plans or those of your co-workers to visitors or callers.
- Challenge strangers by asking "Can I help you?" Inform security or management of any suspicious persons.
- Walk with a friend to the parking lot, or arrange for security to escort you.
- Keep your purse, wallet, keys or other valuables with you at all times or locked in a drawer or closet. Always have your picture ID with you.
- Avoid working late and alone whenever possible. Advise security when you work late.
- Report any unattended packages to police or security.

#### **In ELEVATORS**

- Elevators should be used with discretion. Assess other passengers on the elevator and determine whether you should get off.
- Look in the elevator before entering to be sure no one is hiding.
- Stand near the controls.
- Get off if someone suspicious enters. If you are worried about someone who is waiting for the elevator with you, pretend you forgot something and do not get in.
- When you get off the elevator, check up and down the hall.
- If you are attacked, hit the alarm and press as many floor buttons as possible. Do **not** hit the emergency stop button.
- Look for disturbed ceiling panels

#### **REST ROOM Safety**

- Check the stalls- a criminal might be hiding there.
- Go with a friend
- Use before everyone leaves for the day

## **What to do if ATTACKED OUTSIDE a building**

Assaulted – placed in fear of harm

Robbed – forcibly relieved of valuables

Battery – an assault with physical contact

Menaced – threatened

- If the assailant wants your possessions, give them up. Do not resist. You do not want to escalate a property crime into a violent assault. Assure the attacker there is nothing to fear from you. Remember, robbers will want to reduce their exposure to capture by separating you from your valuables, as quickly as possible. If you give the perpetrator the perception that you are using delaying tactics, the risk of violence may increase.
- Observe the assailant and remember details to assist police with apprehension of the criminal and return of your goods.
- Remain calm; try not to panic or show signs of anger or confusion. Be deliberate and cooperative.
- If you are actually robbed, immediately begin to observe, in an unobvious manner, the assailant's features, mannerisms, accent, clothing and especially license plates numbers if car is used. A detailed description will not only aid the police in their apprehension of the suspect but also enable you to identify the individual later.
- Immediately report the incident to the police. Reporting the incident to police may prevent others from being attacked.
- The course of action changes however, **if the attacker wants to physically move you** to a different place. If the perpetrator wants to get you to a more secluded place or into a car, this may no longer be a property crime but rather a **crime against person**, so the following actions should be considered:
  - Look for a means of escape.
  - Pretend to faint, sit down, or fake a seizure or illness. The assailant will have a difficult time moving you to another location without attracting attention.
  - Yell “FIRE”. This gets better results than calling for help.
  - Do everything possible to avoid getting into the attacker’s vehicle.
  - Immediately report the incident to the police.

## **What to do if ATTACKED INSIDE a building**

- Yell “FIRE”
- Activate a fire alarm
- Pound on doors to apartments or offices that may be occupied
- Resist being forced into an office, room, or closet.

## **At the CLIENT'S RESIDENCE**

- Check carefully that you have the correct address.
- Knock loudly, identify yourself and stand to the side.
- Do not search for your client by knocking on strange doors.
- Carry envelope and paper to leave a note in the event your client does not answer. Be sure it is sealed and slip it under the door or into the mailbox. Do not leave notes loosely stuck on the door.
- Once inside, be aware of exits and position yourself near the door, if you feel uneasy.
- If you find several people at the address and feel uncomfortable entering, stay in the hallway and arrange for another appointment when you can assure the client's confidentiality and your own safety.
- Feel free to ask the owner to keep their pets in another room, if you are uncomfortable. You may request that clients secure all dangerous animals or pets.
- Before entering a yard look for signs that a dog may be in the area: "Beware of Dog" sign, dog house, scratch marks on the door, food or water bowls, chew toys, feces. Rattle the gate or whistle before entering property with fencing.
- If you feel uncertain of your safety, leave the area and contact your supervisor.

## **Safety Tips When Dealing With PERSONS WHO ARE UPSET OR ANGRY.**

- Give the individual your full attention. Use direct eye contact and stay out of arm's reach.
- Mentally establish an escape route. Be prepared to evacuate or isolate if needed.
- Involve witnesses and/or seek available assistance as needed.
- Remain calm through the encounter.
- Let the individual express his/her concerns (vent). Don't react to words with touching or reaching out.
- Restate/validate their concerns.
- Ask the individual for his/her suggestions on possible action for resolution.
- Let the individual know what you can do and when you can get back to him/her with a resolution (if applicable).
- Follow through on the concern/complaint.

## **SECTION 4 – Personal Safety in Hotels and Motels**

### **HOTEL/MOTEL Safety Tips**

- When you arrive, watch for people hanging around in the lobby who may be listening as you check in.
- Be suspicious if a stranger volunteers to carry your luggage.
- Be sure you are not being followed whenever you go to your room.
- Do not accept a ground floor room; they are more accessible for a break-in.
- If someone overhears your room number, ask to have it changed.
- Store your valuables in the hotel safe. Do not leave even moderately valuable items lying around in your room.
- If someone bumps you in the elevator, immediately check for your wallet or purse.
- If a person knocks on your door, don't let them in – especially if you have not ordered anything. Always use the peephole to make sure you know who is out there. If someone claims to be a hotel employee call the front desk to ask for assistance if you are unsure who is at the door.
- Keep your doors locked and bolted (including the one to the balcony or fire escape), and the chain on. Draw the curtains and blinds at night.
- Do not leave room keys lying around when you are at the beach or pool, or on display while dining or in other places where they can be easily stolen.
- Consider buying a portable door alarm, available at specialty shops.
- Try not to establish a regular routine. If you go out for a while, leave a light and the TV on and the curtains closed.
- Do not put the sign on the door for the maid to clean up. If your room has been made up before you go out, hang the "DO NOT DISTURB" sign on the door.
- If you are a devoted jogger, check with the front desk or a security guard for a safe running course.
- Put the key in the same place every time you stay in a hotel.
- Basic fire safety rules should not be left at home or back in the office. Being prepared, keeping calm and remembering what to do, when a fire strikes, may save your life!
- Be prepared; remember most city fire apparatus can not reach levels above the 6th floor. You would be well advised to request a room between the second and sixth floors.
- Check the smoke detector in your room. If it is not working properly, ask to have it replaced or ask to be moved to another room. You may want to consider bringing your own since you can not test some smoke detectors easily.
- Plan an escape route when you check in. Find the closest exit to the room and an alternate in case the first is inaccessible. Make mental noted of exit locations. Is it right or left, around the corner, across hall? How many rooms, doors to the exit?
- Have hotel/motel personnel investigate any disturbance before going back to sleep.

## **In Case of a FIRE**

- If you wake up and smell smoke in your room or hear the fire alarm, grab your room key and car keys, roll out of bed, put on your shoes, and crawl towards door.
- gingerly touch the doorknob, if the doorknob or door is hot, do not open it.
- If the knob is not hot, peek into hallway. If you can clearly see the exit route, walk out, closing door behind you. DO NOT lock yourself out, you may have to return.
- NEVER use an elevator during a fire.
- If the corridor is smoke-filled, crawl under the smoke layer to the exit. Stay against the wall on the side of the hall nearest the exit.
- When you reach the exit route and begin walking down stairs, hold onto handrail firmly.
- Others may panic. Stay calm.
- If you encounter heavy smoke on the stairs, turn back and try another stairway. Unless the building is less than 6 stories going to the roof is not recommended as most city fire apparatus can not reach levels above the 6th floor.
- Prop open the roof door to vent smoke in the stairwell.
- If you can not clear the stairwell of smoke, stay on the windward side of the building. Wait for fire fighters to try returning to your room, if you can do so safely.

## **If TRAPPED IN YOUR HOTEL ROOM**

- If the phone works, let someone know you are in your room. Or use your cell phone.
- If the phone does not work, go to the window and make your presence known. Use furniture to break the window if necessary.
- Check the windows or patio doors. If your room is on the third floor or higher, your chance of survival if you jump is slim. It is better to stay in your room.
- Turn on the bathroom vent to remove incoming smoke.
- Fill the tub with water.
- Stuff wet sheets and towels in cracks of the door and vents to keep out smoke.
- Use the ice bucket to bail water out of the tub onto the door and walls to keep them cool.
- Tie a wet towel around your nose and mouth; hold the cover over your mouth to filter out some of the smoke.

## **SECTION 5 – Personal Safety when Encountering Animals**

### **Precautions with ANIMALS**

- Take a neutral and non-interactive stance with household pets.
- Birds, such as parrots are unpredictable, but poultry, except for roosters, will be intimidated by your size and loud voice.
- Carry a briefcase or totebag. If a dog approaches, place one of these or another large object between you and the dog.
- Most animals will avoid you. Most will not become aggressive unless you corner them, invade their area or threaten their young.
- Never disturb a dog that is caring for puppies, eating, chewing on a toy, or sleeping.
- Allow friendly but curious dogs to check you out.
- Do not extend your hand above the animal's head.
- Respect the vicious snarls of an aggressive dog by backing away slowly; do not turn your back and run. Avoid eye contact. You are more likely to be attacked if you run, turn your back, or reveal your fear.
- Always move gently and carefully to reassure animals that you are not a threat to them.
- If a dog starts to attack, use an improvised dog repellent: a stick, a rolled up newspaper, a clipboard, etc. An expandable baton provides excellent protection in a variety of ways. The simple motions involved in opening the baton are threatening to most dogs. If the dog continues to approach, the tip of the baton can serve as a target to redirect the dog's bite away from the body, or to provide leverage to push the dog away. In the very rare instances when the dog continues to approach, it can be deterred by relatively gentle strikes to the bridge of the nose or sides.
- If you wish to use a spray repellent: Only Citronella spray is recommended:
  - It is the safest and the most humane spray repellent
  - Follow all manufacturer's instructions for use
  - Do not use if you are allergic to citronella
  - Make sure the spray is pointed away from you
  - Do not spray directly in the dog's eyes
  - Works due to taste and odor aversion to dogs. Animals are not disabled by the product but usually retreat to get away from odor/taste.
  - In general, Citronella sprays will repel **most** dogs, but no product can be guaranteed to work against all dogs, particularly those that are highly agitated and trained to attack. Remember, some dogs may not be affected by and may even become **more aggressive** after being sprayed.
- If you fall or are knocked to the ground by a vicious dog, curl into a ball with your hands over your head and neck. Protect your face.
- If you are bitten:
  - Control bleeding and wash the area with soap and warm water
  - Contact your physician for additional care and advice. Serious dog bites may require emergency room treatment.
  - Report the incident to Department of Health, animal control officer and other appropriate authorities. Provide an accurate description of the dog and owner's name if you know it.

## **SECTION 6 – Rape Prevention**

### **Rape Prevention**

Most women will never be a victim of rape. However, any female, whether at home, or traveling, may become a victim of rape, regardless of age, appearance, race, sex or economic status. By using prevention measures and common sense precautions to protect yourself, you can limit your vulnerability to attack. By being **AWARE** of yourself, your capabilities and your surroundings, you can prepare for a possible attack situation.

### **Commonly Held Misconceptions about Rape :**

- The rape victim asked for it
- Rape is an act of lust
- She secretly enjoys being raped
- Rapes only occurs in dark alleys by strangers
- Women invite rape by dressing seductively
- Men cannot be raped
- Most rape victims are voluptuous women
- Rape doesn't happen to decent women
- A healthy woman can prevent rape

### **Types of Rape**

- Rape by a stranger
- Acquaintance rape
- Date rape
- Intra-family rape

### **The Rapist**

Rapists may be very ordinary looking persons. They may pose as a delivery, repair or sales persons. They may be someone who offers to help you. They could be a blind date. They may even be someone you know.

In many cases of rape, the initial approach by the rapist is not hostile. It is often a socially acceptable question, such as asking for directions or the correct time. This is often intended as a “test” to determine if the victim can be easily intimidated. A confident, assertive response may decrease the chances of being victimized.

It is important to recognize potentially dangerous situations and know how you may respond if confronted by a rapist. What you choose to try will largely be determined by the kind of person you are, your assailant and the situation.

So remember, the best prevention is to be **ALERT**.

## **Tactics to Consider**

In considering your abilities and normal coping style, select tactics suitable for you. Possible responses are described below. Depending on the situation, each can be effective by itself. Remember that if talking or stalling fails, active resistance is still an option to consider. This will be a personal decision. Each assailant, as well as each victim and situation, is different. Whatever you choose to do to survive is the right choice for you. Trust your instincts.

**Talking** - Trying to communicate is, for some, the most natural reaction. Speak calmly, not crying, pleading or moralizing.

**Stalling** - This is an intermediate tactic to give you time to recover from the initial shock and to survey your predicament. Do the unexpected convincingly, to make the assailant stop what they are doing. Stalling can take many forms, such as going limp and falling to the ground or pretending to have developed abdominal or chest pains.

**Running** - This tactic will work if you are sure you can reach safety.

**Screaming** - Before you start to scream, think what the rapist's reaction might be. They may be frightened off, but the attacker may react violently in order to silence you. Screaming can work if you are sure help is within hearing distance. A whistle, personal alarm or other noise device can be used if it is readily available.

**Fighting** - Fighting might make sense if you are sure the attacker has no weapon and you know the attacker is alone. By this action, you have committed yourself. Before you make this choice, ask yourself if you are willing to fight hard enough to stop the attacker and if you are really willing to hurt someone. If you think your natural reaction would be to fight, then consider making sure you know how. Self-defense classes are available in every community.

**Weapons** - Many items can be used as weapons, such as combs, keys, pens, high heels or pins. Consider the possibility that a weapon can be taken away and used against you or may stimulate your assailant to higher levels of violence. **Your best weapon is the ability to think quickly and clearly.**

**You** - The most important element to consider is yourself. The strategy is survival and preservation of self-esteem. Use your imagination. There are as many responses as there are situations. Use your creative talents to devise tactics that fit you and your abilities. Keep assessing the situation as it is happening. If one tactic does not work, try another.

## **What to do if YOU ARE RAPED**

The important thing to remember is **you survived**. Now, it is important to seek help. Get to a safe place.

- Call a rape crisis center. Rape crisis counselors are on call 24 hours and can accompany you when you seek medical care.
- **DO NOT WASH, CHANGE CLOTHES OR DISTURB ANY EVIDENCE BEFORE GOING TO THE POLICE OR HOSPITAL.**
- Seek medical attention. Medical care following an assault will treat any injuries you may have received; help protect you against sexually transmitted diseases (STD), deal with the possibility of pregnancy; and gather and preserve evidence.
- Do not throw anything away or use any medication.

Many rape survivors report feeling ashamed, humiliated - even guilty for not preventing the assault. These feelings may be increased by the misinformation and lack of understanding often encountered by survivors. Remember, the attack was not your fault. It was not caused by something you said or did. The blame rests with the person who assaulted you.

Some rape survivors choose not to report to the police. Others involve law enforcement immediately. Whether or not to report is your decision. A rape crisis counselor can provide you with information and support throughout the legal process.

Often, the only witness in a rape case is the victim, so it is important that she remember as much as she can about her assailant. Information most needed by the police includes:

- race of assailant
- approximate age, weight, and height
- color and length of hair
- color of eyes
- clothing
- any unusual marks, scars, tattoos, rings, etc.
- any belongings the victim or rapist may have left at the scene
- what the rapist said and what his voice sounded like
- car license number, make and color

The New York State Crime Victims Board is a government agency set up to help cover the expenses of crime victims. You may be able to receive money to cover any or all of the following:

- medical expenses not covered by insurance
- counseling services
- the cost of any clothing taken as evidence
- transportation expenses for court appearances
- lost wages if you lost time from work because of the assault

Currently, to receive these benefits, cooperation with law enforcement is required. Your local police department, district attorney or rape crisis center can put you in touch with the crime victim's assistance program in your area.