

KEEP SAFE PREVENT CRIME



Do It Yourself Crime Prevention:

**41% of all burglaries on Mercer Island occur due to unlocked entries.
Don't let criminals steal what's yours: LOCK IT or LOSE IT!**



Did you know? ...Your home is 67% more likely to be burglarized from 8am-6pm than any other time. Up to 80% of the time, no one is home. And in 88% of cases, no alarm was activated. You are twice as likely to be burglarized during the week as the weekend....

We may lose more than our possessions to the criminals who violate our homes and communities: we also lose our sense of security – the freedom to feel safe walking city streets after dark, going to a park alone, or letting our children walk home from school. We might even lose the ability to feel safe in our own homes. And the MIPD, no matter how effective, can't be everywhere at once.

We can't always get back what crime takes away. But we can take back our freedom to feel safe. This "Do It Yourself" handbook gives us the tools we need to ensure greater security for ourselves and our families. Do your part: Go over the checklists on burglary prevention, personal safety, and child safety, and make the recommended changes.

You can help prevent crime in other ways, as well. Start with your own kids, by supporting local schools and getting involved in activities. Teach your children to say "no" to drugs, and help them foster skills to lead productive, fulfilling lives.

You can also participate in programs and organizations such as Boy and Girl Scouts of America, Boys and Girls Clubs, Big Sisters, and Junior Achievement. Take part in anti-drug campaigns, set up a Block Watch in your neighborhood, and get to know your neighbors.

By working together, we can empower ourselves to make our streets safe for everyone.

CONTENTS

HOME SECURITY

Physical Security	4
Alarms	7
Block Watch	8
Map Your Neighborhood	10
Paws on Patrol	10
National Night Out	11
Crime Map	12
Burglary Prevention List	13

PERSONAL SAFETY

Personal Safety Checklist	15
In The Home	15
Telephone Answering/Internet Use	16
On The Go	16
In Your Car	16
If Attacked	17
Child Safety	18
Fire Safety	20
Domestic/Dating Violence Prevention	21

PERSONAL PROPERTY PROTECTION

Auto Theft Prevention	22
Identity Theft	22
Prevention Measures	23

RESOURCE PAGE

Medical Disposal Options	29
--------------------------	----

HOME SECURITY:

Burglary is a crime that threatens all homes, but especially those which provide criminals with the "opportunity" to intrude, steal and escape undetected. There are three primary strategies you can employ to minimize the burglar's opportunity:

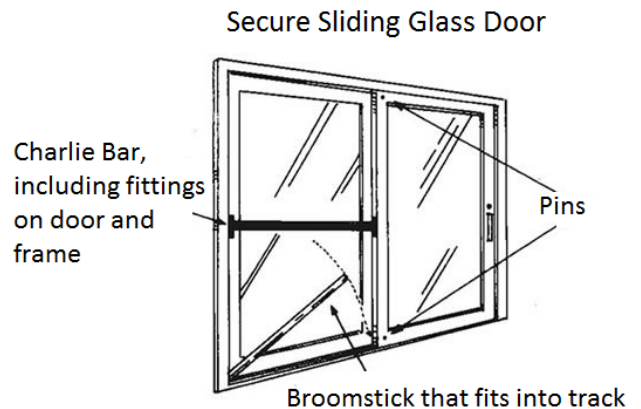
1. Lock All Doors
2. Physical Security
3. Alarms
4. Block Watch programs

Physical Security

Sliding Doors and Windows:

Exterior sliding doors and windows have a number of security problems in common. Many glass doors and sliding windows have flimsy locks that are easily pried or even jimmied open.

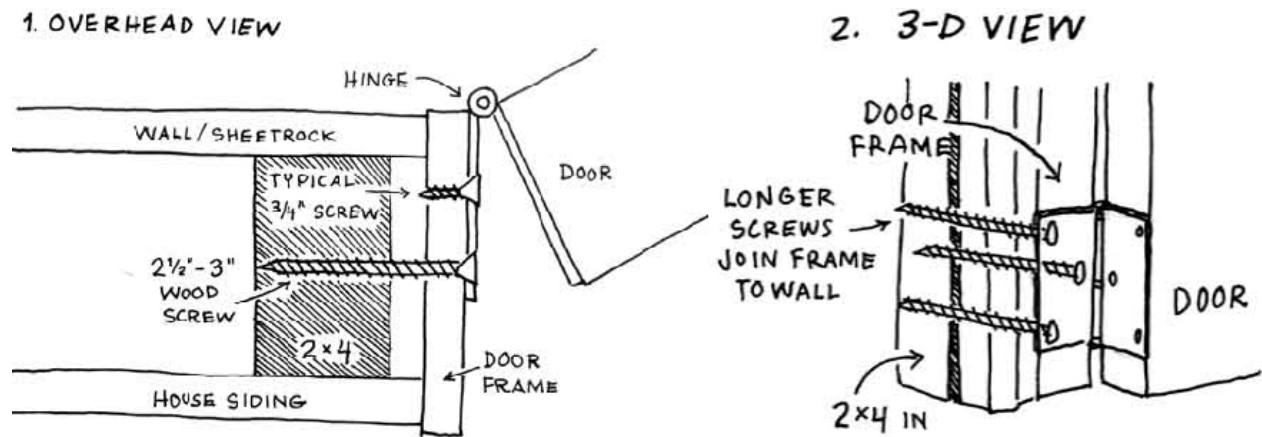
1. If the door or window slides on an inside track, you may use a metal rod or cut down a length of wooden dowel to fit snugly along the bottom track to prevent the door from being forced open.
2. A "Charlie Bar" is a more permanent and visible means of preventing lateral movement. Some models are designed to fit an outside sliding door panel.
3. Some doors and windows can be secured with a pin. Inspect your door or window in the fully-closed position. If the frame permits drilling, drill a hole through the outside frame and halfway through the sliding one. Slide into place a pin or sturdy nail that fits the hole snugly to prevent the door or window from being forced up or back. Be careful when drilling through the frame that you don't damage the thermal seal or the glass. Fire safety requires that pin locks be installed at the bottom of a window, not at the top. This is to avoid super-heated air near the ceiling of a home engulfed in flames.



Exterior Doors:

Install solid-core wood doors with rugged frames that cannot be spread apart with a pry bar. A single cylinder deadbolt with a one-inch throw, in addition to the key-in-the-knob lock, is essential. Use a wide angle viewer to observe visitors (see below).

Reinforce the hinges, frame, and doorstop strip with 3" to 4" wood screws. The door frame is strengthened when the screws go into the 2 x 4 wall stud. Without this reinforcement, pry bars can push the door and frame apart or break the frame altogether.



Through Door Viewers:

In order to avoid opening your door without knowing who is there, a viewing device is recommended. The best solution is to install a through-door viewer, a miniature telescope with a wide angle lens (220 degree) to let you see someone standing to one side of the door. This is relatively inexpensive and will adjust to varying door thickness.

Windows:

Windows should have auxiliary locking devices. Keep your windows closed and locked when you are away. Screens and storm windows should be securely fastened.

Exterior Lights:

Lighting is considered one of the best deterrents to burglary. Motion-activated LED floodlights are very effective in illuminating a wider and deeper range area than most common outdoor lights. They are excellent for enclosed backyards, sidewalks or driveways.

Exterior Lighting:

A LED A19 light at each entrance, including the garage, will provide you with both safety and security and will not be



wasting our nation's energy when used in conjunction with a timer or sensor. Time, noise and light are a burglar's worst enemy. With a little effort, you can set up deterrents against possible danger, injury to people or damage to property.

Interior Lighting:

When you are away from home, keep some interior lights on. This creates the appearance that someone is home. Use a timer to turn the lights off and on at normal hours. A radio playing adds to the illusion that the home is occupied.

Garages:

Keep the garage door locked at all times. There is no need to advertise your absence by showing the public your empty garage. Your garage also probably contains valuable items such as bicycles, tools and garden equipment. The burglar may drive right into your garage, close the door and load up



the goods, or break into your house from the garage by using your tools to force entry. The entrance door between a garage and the home should be a solid-core wooden or metal door with a single cylinder deadbolt. As most garage doors contain less than satisfactory locking devices, you may wish to have a better grade installed. In addition, if you have an overhead garage door, you can increase security by drilling a hole in one of the tracks or door or both and placing a hook or other device in the hole to stop the door from being opened.

Double, side-hinged garage doors can be made more secure by the installation of cane bolts. You may wish to consider installing an automatic garage door opener. This device allows you to stay in the safety of your vehicle until the garage door opens instead of having to get out of your vehicle to open it. It is best to purchase a dual frequency remote garage door opener with a worm drill or locking chain mechanism.

A positive point in favor of automatic garage door openers is that the arms and linkage on the door act as a barrier to forced entry. On the negative side, the door may open from a stray signal. Find out whether the unit you are considering purchasing will filter unwanted signals. This equipment can be disconnected from the power source if the house is not occupied for a period of time.

Ladders:

Step and/or extension ladders should not be left outside the house unless secured to an anchor point with a chain and padlock. Similarly, ladders left unsecured in an open garage will afford easy access to a burglar.

Landscaping:

Shrubs that provide you with privacy also give a burglar a place to hide. Prune bushes down to two feet or trim trees up at least four feet.

Good



Not Good



The house on the left can be seen by those walking or driving by, so suspicious activity is easy to spot. The house on the right is a great target for burglars because they can't be seen. Private—yes. Safe—no!

Alarms

Locking doors & windows are the first important steps in improving the security of your home. Once entry is made difficult, often times not much more is required to deter a burglar. But for additional protection, an electronic alarm system provides excellent back-up to these security devices. Homes that are left unoccupied for long periods of time or those situated in a location that prevents easy observation by neighbors are considered more vulnerable. An alarm system can provide valuable security and greater peace of mind for these homeowners.

No other security system is as efficient (well, maybe a large dog!) and practical for alerting neighbors and/or MIPD that a break-in has occurred. The intruder is scared off for fear of being apprehended. Alarm systems are offered in a variety of forms and the average homeowner may be somewhat confused when first exploring the alarm market. Some alarms are simple, self-contained units that are inexpensive and designed to suit a single door or window. These types of alarms alert someone who is home.

Other alarms take the form of more elaborate systems that can either be wired to a bell or horn. This sounds the alarm locally (in, or immediately outside the house) or it can alert a central monitoring station. When selecting an alarm system, choose at least three reputable companies to get bids from and the following questions may assist you in selecting the company that is right for you.

Questions to Ask an Alarm Company Salesperson:

1. Is the firm established, with a history of performance and service?
2. Does the alarm company have insurance to cover the cost of any damage to your property caused by the company during installation of the system?
3. Are the company and installers properly licensed and bonded? Is anything subcontracted (installation, service or monitoring)?
4. Is the system equipped with a battery back-up? Is the battery rechargeable?
5. Does the company offer a written guarantee? What is guaranteed and for how long? Are parts and labor covered?

Responses to false alarms draw from limited resources and can pose risks to the community when emergency vehicles are responding; therefore, the City of Mercer Island allows for one false alarm during a 6 month period - false alarms thereafter are fined. If you have questions regarding false alarms, call 206-275-7610.

Block Watch

You and your neighbors can prevent crime within your community and make it a safer, more secure place to live. Even though today's lifestyles sometimes make it difficult to be as neighborly as we'd like, being a good neighbor is one of the best ways to prevent crime. Neighbors can be your best protection when they band together to look out for each other's interests.



What is Block Watch?

Block Watch is simply a program of neighbors watching other neighbors' property. At all times when you are at home, be alert to what's going on in your neighborhood. A police officer patrolling your community may not recognize a stranger in your yard, but your neighbors would.

How Does It Work?

The program works through cooperation - *Neighbors Watching out for Neighbors*. Neighbors know who you are, and what type of car you own. They may be the first to notice a burglar at your window or door. Each neighbor can effectively watch those homes to each side, the front and back of his own home.

The Block Watch program is not intended to form citizen crime watch patrols or vigilante groups. You are only asked to report the situation to the police and let them handle it. It is not a good idea to confront any suspicious person(s) or attempt arrest yourself; your safety could be in jeopardy.

Activities to Watch for:

- A scream from anywhere
- Anyone removing valuables from homes or vehicles
- Sound of broken windows or shattered wood
- Persons going door-to-door
- Strange vehicles parked at your neighbor's house
- Vehicle passing by numerous times, or suspiciously parked
- Anyone being forced into a car
- Beam from flashlight or light inside neighbor's home
- Persons loitering around neighborhood

If you see something suspicious, CALL 9-1-1. If able, take a photo or video with phone of any suspicious persons/activities. Write down details that you feel are not shown adequately through photo or video, like the make, model, and license numbers of strange vehicles. Call the police and other members of your Block Watch group immediately. Don't assume someone else has called. Call the Police immediately.



How to Report a Crime:

Law enforcement needs your help reporting crimes. Be alert wherever you are and learn to recognize crime. When you see or hear something that might indicate a criminal act is being committed, don't hesitate to call the police.

When you are reporting a crime, stay calm and state the problem. Give the address where the emergency is occurring. Remember to give the full address and the nearest cross street.

It is important to be able to describe the offender to police after the offense has occurred. Police need to know the suspect's:

- Race
- Sex
- Age
- Height/Weight/Build
- Complexion/Hair/Eye color
- Clothing
- Miscellaneous identifying marks such as tattoos, scars, etc.

Let the police dispatcher control the conversation. Answer all questions to ensure the best response. If you wish to remain anonymous, give your name to the operator, and

then request anonymity.

What Else Can You Do?

Exchange work and vacation schedules with neighbors you trust so you can keep an eye on each other's homes. If you know that your neighbor is away and you see an obvious invitation to a burglar, correct it. Close the open garage door and remove the accumulation of newspapers from the doorstep. Make the effort to become acquainted with your neighbors. Don't advertise that your house will be empty on social media!

How to Develop a Block Watch in your neighborhood:

To develop a Block Watch program in your neighborhood, contact the Mercer Island Police Department at 206-275-7905. They will assist in developing a community plan. For the program to be totally effective, each resident must take an active role in both security improvement and observation.

Map Your Neighborhood (MYN):

When a disaster hits, first responders will not be able to help everyone – and that is where your neighbors can help! Map Your Neighborhood (MYN) is a program offered through the City of Mercer Island that helps local neighborhoods prepare for disasters.

What is MYN?

MYN is a group of usually 15-25 houses in the area that get together for a PARTY. If that is not tempting enough, you will also:

- Get to know your neighbors!
- Learn nine steps to follow immediately after a disaster strikes
- Identify the skills and equipment each neighbor has that could be useful in a disaster response
- Create a Neighborhood Map that shows the locations of each natural gas meter and propane tank, as well as households that may need extra help
- Pick locations for a Neighborhood Gathering Site and Neighborhood Care Center

Go to <http://www.mercergov.org/emergencyprep>
or call 206-275-7905 to get started.

Paws on Patrol:

Do you have a dog?

Do you walk your dog?

Do you want to take a **BITE** out of crime? ...

Mercer Island now has a *Paws on Patrol* program.



PAWS ON PATROL

About the Program:

Beginning in 2015, this new program is available to anyone who routinely walks their dog(s) on Mercer Island. We are always recruiting individuals to be the “extra eyes and ears” for suspicious activity and to accurately report it to 9-1-1.

To register for training to become a part of the “pack”, please visit the City’s website www.mercergov.org/CrimePrevention , or pick up a paper registration form at the Mercer Island Police Records window.



National Night Out:

National Night Out is a community-crime prevention awareness event held the first Tuesday in August in cities around the country, including Mercer Island.

The event is designed to increase awareness about police programs in communities, such as emergency preparedness, citizen watch (Paws on Patrol), neighborhood watch and other anti-crime efforts.

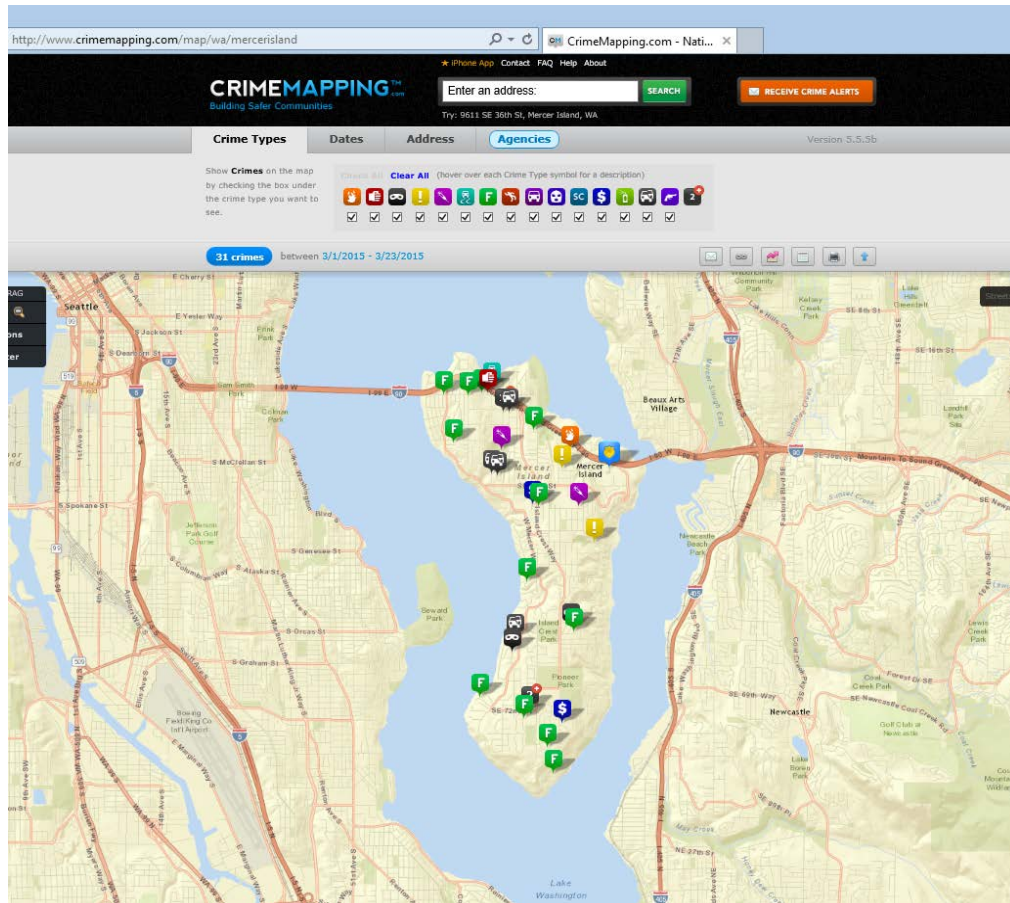
Neighborhood events can be as simple as backyard cookouts or full blown block parties, it is up to you!



Crime Map:

www.crimemapping.com/map/wa/mercerisland

This website will show you the reported crimes by location and time frame.



Burglary Prevention List:

Outside Perimeter:

- Y N Do you lock your porch and garage?
- Y N Do you lock your doors when away from home for short periods?
- Y N Do you lock the doors out of your view when working in the yard?
- Y N Do you avoid leaving keys hidden near access doors?
- Y N Do you leave notes on the door to indicate your absence?
- Y N Are your windows fitted with locks and do you lock them?
- Y N Are sliding doors and windows secured with a track pin or Charlie Bar?
- Y N Do you keep tools, ladders, etc., in places inaccessible to potential burglars?
- Y N Do you store lawn mowers, snow blowers, gas barbecues, etc., out of sight when not in use?
- Y N Do you light the outside of your home to discourage prowling or loitering?
- Y N When you move to a new residence do you hire a reliable locksmith to re-key all locks?
- Y N Do you change your locks immediately if your keys are lost or stolen?

Inside Security:

- Y N Do you refuse to provide personal information over the phone or internet?
- Y N Do you avoid leaving valuables or large amounts of cash at home?
- Y N Do you leave lights on and a radio playing when out for short periods?
- Y N Do you shred or burn all receipts or documents with personal information on them?

Vacation Security:

- Y N Do you notify a neighbor of your travel plans and give a key with a request for a periodic house check?
- Y N Do you leave window shades in the normal position?
- Y N Do you cancel all deliveries?
- Y N Do you make arrangements for your yard to be kept up and any mail or brochures to be picked up?
- Y N Can you lock your mail box so it is inaccessible to others?
- Y N If you own a second car, do you park it in the driveway?
- Y N Do you use a light timer on interior and exterior lights?
- Y N Do you double check all doors and windows to be sure they are properly secured before leaving?

Apartment Security:

- Y N Do you refer unknown persons seeking entrance to the manager?
- Y N Do you report suspicious activities to the manager or police?
- Y N Do you advise the manager of any travel plans and request apartment checks and mail pick-up?
- Y N Do you store valuable property in your apartment locker?

**IF YOUR ANSWER IS NO TO ANY OF THE ABOVE,
YOU MAY WANT TO IMPROVE YOUR HOME SECURITY**

You may feel additional home security is an unnecessary financial burden, but consider that “peace of mind” may well be worth the additional expense, and it represents one of the few ways you can permanently improve the protection for your family, yourself, and your home. It also must be stressed that most homes’ security can be vastly improved by just locking doors, windows and keeping valuables out of sight.



PERSONAL SAFETY:

Most crimes are crimes of opportunity. The key to staying safe from assault or robbery is to avoid places or activities that provide a criminal the opportunity to commit a crime against you.

Likewise, the best way to avoid domestic assault is to take steps to limit the attacker's opportunity to get away with the crime.

Probably the least expensive measure you can take to protect yourself against crime is to incorporate certain habits into your daily routine that make you and your family less vulnerable. Adopt a security-conscious lifestyle. The best prevention is precaution. A basic rule is to stay alert to your surroundings. Trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable in a place or situation, leave!

Evaluate the extent to which you lead a security conscious lifestyle by taking the following survey:

The Personal Safety Checklist:

In the Home:

- Y N Do you keep doors and windows locked at all times?
- Y N Do out have a peephole so that you can see who is outside without having to open the door?
- Y N Do you always verify a person's identification before opening your door?
- Y N If a stranger asks to use your phone, do you refuse to let them into your home and offer to make the call yourself?
- Y N Do you use only your first initials for telephone directories, on mailboxes, etc.?
- Y N Do you refuse to reveal personal information to anyone on the phone, at your door, or on the internet?
- Y N Do you always have your keys ready when approaching your home?
- Y N Do you always have your keys ready when approaching your car?
- Y N If you return home to find windows and doors tampered with, would you avoid entering and go to a neighbor's house to call the police?
- Y N Is your mail box a locking mail box?
- Y N If your mail box is not locking, do you remove incoming mail immediately and always take outgoing mail to a secure mail drop?



Telephone Answering / Internet Use:

- Y N Do you teach family members not to give personal or family information to strangers over the phone or internet?
- Y N Do you record only non-specific messages on your answering machine and avoid messages like "we'll be back at 7 o'clock on Sunday"?
- Y N If you receive an obscene or threatening phone call or email message, would you call the police?
- Y N Do you monitor your child's computer and television use, only allowing computers and TV's in common areas, not bedrooms?

On the Go:

- Y N Do you plan in advance to use the safest route to your destination?
- Y N Do you choose busy, well-lit streets?
- Y N Do you avoid routes that pass by high-risk areas, i.e., vacant lots, alleys?
- Y N Do you avoid isolated bus stops?
- Y N Do you walk facing traffic so you can see approaching cars?
- Y N Do you walk near the curb to avoid the element of surprise or someone hiding between shrubs or in a doorway?
- Y N Do you stay out of reach if someone in a vehicle stops to ask directions?
- Y N Are you wary of approaching strangers?
- Y N If you continue to be followed, do you flee to the nearest safe place?
- Y N Do you try to get a description of the person and/or vehicle following you?
- Y N Do you avoid hitchhiking?
- Y N Do you avoid carrying large sums of money in your purse or wallet?
- Y N Do you carry your purse close to your body, without wrapping the straps around your arm or hand?
- Y N Do you avoid leaving a purse unattended, even for a moment?
- Y N Do you avoid displaying large amounts of cash in public?

In Your Car:

- Y N Do you lock your car doors and keep the windows rolled up while driving?
- Y N Do you avoid picking up hitchhikers?
- Y N Do you keep your car in good condition to avoid breaking down in dangerous areas?
- Y N Do you look for well-lit areas to park your car?
- Y N Do you always lock your car when it is parked and not leave valuables in it?
- Y N Do you look around the car before you get out, especially at night or in

deserted areas such as underground parking lots?

Y N When returning to your car, do you have your keys in hand?

Y N If you are being followed, do you avoid going home and go to the nearest place of safety instead?

IF ATTACKED:

When faced with danger, trust yourself. Stay as calm as possible. Try to not panic and evaluate your options. There is no one right way to respond to a confrontation. Every situation is different. The response depends upon the circumstances - location of the attack, your personal resources, the characteristics of the assailant, and the presence of weapons.

There are many strategies that are effective, but you must rely on your own judgments. Various forms of response follow, but again, do whatever it takes to save yourself - the biggest goal is to get away and get safe.

- **Screaming to attract attention**
- **Distraction and then fleeing**
- **Verbal assertiveness**
- **Stalling for time**
- **Negotiating**

Once you are able to get away, call 9-1-1 immediately.



Child Safety:

Helpful Rules to Keep Young People Safe:

Most parents want to educate their children about sexual abuse, but they don't know how. These guidelines will help parents teach their children how to keep safe. Remember, you can't tell a child too much. Knowledge doesn't stimulate inappropriate behavior - ignorance does. Parents who talk openly with their children will be "approachable". Children will feel free to bring their worries and concerns to them in the future.

- RULE # 1 Never Touch Weapons – tell an adult if you see a weapon on the ground.
- RULE # 2 Call 9-1-1 if you have a people emergency – for pet emergencies call 296-PETS. Cell phones: push “on” button, press “9-1-1”, then press send or talk (the green button) to get help.
- RULE # 3 Never talk to strangers if you’re by yourself. A stranger is someone you don’t know. Never leave a store, get in a car, or go into a stranger's house. Tell an adult if a stranger contacts you. This includes the internet. [Children should not be talking to people over the internet that YOU -as the adult- don’t know. Additionally, computers and TV should only be in common areas and their use monitored by you.
- RULE # 4 Use the *Buddy System* – never go anywhere by yourself.
- RULE # 5 If lost in a store, go to someone that works there – someone who wears a uniform or nametag. If lost in the woods, stay put and yell for help. Don’t try to find the trail - you will get lost even more.
- RULE # 6 Don’t put anything in your mouth without asking for permission first.
- RULE # 7 Always ask for permission before going anywhere.
- RULE # 8 Tell someone you trust if someone gives you a bad touch – bad touch is when someone touches you in your private parts, where your bathing suit covers, by someone other than a doctor, nurse, or parents when you are sick.



Child Safety Checklist:

- Y N Does your child know what to do if lost?
- Y N Have you discussed with your children what should be done if they find themselves at a questionable party?
- Y N Do you know your child's friends and their parents?
- Y N Have you physically checked out the facilities your child attends such as day care or school, sports facilities or other play areas?
- Y N Can you account for your child's whereabouts hourly?
- Y N Have you discussed with your child who he/she can call if help is needed?
- Y N Have you ever done any public transportation training with your child?
- Y N Do you know specifically how much money your child has to spend?
- Y N In the presence of your child, do you display a positive attitude towards people in authority: police, school administrators, and teachers?
- Y N Is your home a gathering place for kids?
- Y N Do you really listen and spend time with your child?
- Y N Does your child know their 10-digit phone number, address, and other important names and phone numbers?



Fire Safety:



You can deny a burglar quick and silent entry, while leaving quick fire exits for your family. It is best to first call the Fire Department for advice on fire escape plans and then make security improvements with that escape plan in mind. Rehearse the escape plan, especially with children.



- Have a smoke detector on every level of the house and in or near sleep areas.
- Change batteries twice a year when you change clocks for daylight savings.
- Test the smoke detector once a month; vacuum the dust from it once a year.
- Do not remove batteries if it keeps going off. Move it to a different location.
- Test smoke detectors with children present so they know the sound, are less likely to sleep through it, and should know to leave immediately when they hear it.
- If you keep bedroom doors shut at night, then test the alarm that way.
- Show them how to check the door for heat and seek another exit if the door is hot.
- Let your children help design floor plans, escape routes, and a meeting place outside the house.
- Practice so everyone will remember what to do.
- NEVER go back into a burning building, even if your pet is inside.
- Have at least one collapsible ladder if you have a two-story house.
- Don't burn papers or trash in the fireplace.
- Make sure ashes are cold before removing from fireplace.
- Keep space heaters at least 3 feet from anything that will burn.
- Don't burn candles in the bedroom.
- In a public building always look for the exit signs.
- When cooking, turn pot handles so they are out of reach of children.
- Never store or use gasoline inside a house or garage.
- Have several fire extinguishers in the house and garage and check the gauges often.
- Keep an all-purpose extinguisher in the kitchen for grease and electrical fires.
- Install a carbon monoxide alarm on each level of the home.
- Teach them to crawl if there is smoke and to stop, drop, and roll if on fire.
- When you are together, draw a floor plan of the house and make an escape plan.



PERSONAL PROPERTY PROTECTION:

There is an alarming growth in the number of thefts of personal property, especially in relation to identity theft. Although many citizens are insured against theft of personal property, when someone takes our identity, it can be a lengthy and painful process to recover.

Auto Theft Prevention:

Auto theft is a widespread crime that affects the whole community. Higher insurance rates, property damage and possible injuries and loss of life from accidents are the results. It's a billion dollar a year crime nationwide. The thieves' motives are joy-riding, transportation or profit (either selling the vehicle or stripping the parts). You can reduce the risk of theft of your unattended car, its parts or contents by observing certain precautions.

The majority of stolen cars were left unlocked, often with the keys in the ignition. Whether you leave your car for a moment or for several hours, always lock it and take the keys with you. Never leave your vehicle with the engine running. Never leave valuables in your car. Don't make it easy for a thief!

Never have an identification tag on your key ring - thieves may use it to access your residence. Never leave check books, credit cards or personal information in your car. Park in well-lit and busy areas. Do not keep your vehicle registration or driver's license inside your car - carry it with you.

Identity Theft:

In the course of the day, you may write a check at the drugstore, charge tickets to a concert, rent a car, call home on your cell phone, or apply for a credit card. Chances are you don't give these routine transactions a second thought - but others may. Identity theft is the fastest growing crime in America, affecting half a million new victims each year.

Identity theft, or identity fraud, is the taking of a victim's identity to obtain credit and credit cards from banks and retailers, steal money from a victim's existing accounts, apply for loans, establish accounts with utility companies, rent an apartment, file bankruptcy, or obtain a job using the victim's name. Thousands of dollars can be stolen without the victim knowing about it for months, or even years.

The imposter obtains your social security number, your birth date, and other identifying



information such as your address and phone number. With this information and a fake driver's license, they can apply in person for instant credit or through the mail posing as you. They often claim they have moved and provide their own address. Once the first account is opened, they can continue to add to their credibility.

They get the information from your doctor, lawyer, school, health insurance carrier, and many other places. "Dumpster divers" pick up information you may have thrown away, such as utility bills, credit card slips, and other documents.

To prevent this from happening to you:

- Do not give out personal information over the phone, through the mail, or over the Internet unless you have initiated the contact or know whom you're dealing with. Identity thieves will pose as bank representatives, Internet service providers, and even government officials to get you to reveal identifying information.
- Shred all documents, including pre-approved credit applications received in your name, insurance forms, bank checks and statements you are discarding, and other financial information.
- Do not use your mother's maiden name, your birth date, the last four digits of your social security number, or a similar series of numbers as a password for anything.
- Minimize the identification information and the number of cards you carry. Take what you'll actually need. Don't carry your social security card, birth certificate, or passport, unless necessary.
- Do not put your social security number on your checks or your credit receipts. If a business requests your social security number, give them an alternate number and explain why. If a government agency requests your social security number, there must be a privacy notice accompanying the request.
- Do not put your telephone number on checks.
- Be careful using ATMs and phone cards. Someone may look over your shoulder and get your PIN numbers, thereby gaining access to your accounts.
- Make a list of all your credit card account numbers and bank account numbers with customer service phone numbers, and keep it in a safe place.
- When you order new credit cards in the mail or previous ones have expired, watch the calendar to make sure you get the card within the appropriate time. If the card is not received within that time, call the credit card grantor immediately to find out if the card has been sent. If you don't receive the card, check to make sure a change of address was not filed.
- Do not put your credit card number on the Internet unless it is encrypted on a secured site.

- Pay attention to your billing cycles. Follow up with creditors if bills don't arrive on time. A missing credit card bill could mean an identity thief has taken over your credit card account and changed your billing address.
- Cancel all credit cards that you have not used in the last six months. Open credit is a prime target.
- Order your credit report at least twice a year. Reports should be obtained from all three major sources (Equifax, Experian, or TransUnion).

What else can you do?

Help yourself and the environment! Remove your name from direct mail lists by writing:
Direct Marketing Association, Mail Preference Service, PO Box 9008, Farmingdale, NY
11735

Where to go for more information:

Federal Trade Commission: Accepts complaints from ID theft victims:

<http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft>

- Identity Theft Hotline: 1-877-ID THEFT
- To request the booklet "ID theft, When Bad Things Happen to Your Good Name"
- Call 1-877-FTC-HELP or mail a request to:
FTC, Consumer Response Center
600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20580

Washington State Attorney General's Office: Posts detailed information about ID theft on-line at: <http://www.wa.gov/ago/consumer/idtheft>

Consumer Resource Centers: Provide statewide ID Theft experts who can refer you to the proper authorities and who can assist consumers and businesses regarding the new law. Call 1-800-551-4636.

Credit Reporting Agencies: It is important to include your social security number and current address when writing to the following three credit bureaus:

- **Equifax:** <http://www.equifax.com>
P.O. Box 740241
Atlanta, GA 30374
Order Credit Report: 1-800-685-1111
Report Fraud: 1-800-525-6285
- **Experian:** <http://www.experian.com>
National Consumer Assistance Center
P.O. Box 2002
Allen, TX 75013
Order Credit Report: 1-888-EXPERIAN
Report Fraud: 1-888-EXPERIAN
- **Trans Union:** <http://www.transunion.com>
P.O. Box 2000
Chester, PA 19022
Order Credit Report: 1-800-888-4213
Report Fraud: 1-800-680-7289

Social Security Administration

E-Mail: oig.hotline@ssa.gov
Fraud Hotline: -800-269-0271
FAX: 1-410-597-0118
Mail: P.O. Box 17768, Baltimore, MD 21235

U.S. Postal Service: If theft of U.S. Mail is involved, or a fraudulent change of address has been filed, contact the U.S. Postal Inspector in your area or on-line at:

<http://www.usps.com/postalinspectors>

Department of Motor Vehicles: If a false driver's license was obtained in your name, or someone is using your driver's license number, call 360-664-8885, or write:

Department of Licensing
Driver Responsibility Fraud Unit
P.O. Box 9030
Olympia, WA 98507-9030
E-Mail: drvfraud@dol.wa.gov
Or on-line at: <http://www.wa.gov/dol>

How the Law Applies to Victims of Identity Theft:

Court Orders to Correct Public Record: Upon a criminal conviction, the law authorizes the courts to issue an order for the victim to use in correcting public records that contain false information due to the theft of identity. For example - arrest records in the victim's name that was the result of the defendant using the victim's name at the time of arrest.

Consumer Protection Remedies: The criminal provisions also constitute violations of the Consumer Protection Act (CPA), and victims and the Attorney General's Office (AGO) can pursue civil actions against the perpetrators using the protections of the CPA (RCW 9.35.800). Also, the following civil provisions all contain CPA remedies whereby the victims and/or the AGO can enforce compliance.

Businesses Required to Provide Information to Victims (RCW 9.35.050): The law requires businesses that have information relevant to the identity theft to provide that information to a victim once the victim provides positive proof of their identity and a copy of their police report. For example, the victim now has the legal right to require a business to hand over their records about the credit account the ID thief opened in the victim's name. Those records often contain critical information the victim needs in order to prove they were not the person who is responsible for that account. It is also information the victim can then provide to law enforcement to assist them in their investigation. The business may require the victim to provide all or some of the following items before complying with this section:

- A copy of a government-issued photo
- Identification card
- A copy of a filed police report evidencing the victim's claim; and a written statement from the State Patrol verifying the victim has completed the fingerprint verification program under RCW 43.43.760.

Blocking Bad Information from Credit Reports (RCW 19.182.160): Under the law, a victim of identity theft can block any adverse credit reports resulting from the crime by filing the police report of the crime with the credit-reporting agency and supplying the agency with other proof of identification similar to those above. Provisions are made for denial and removal of the block in cases of fraud or error. The effect is that the victim's credit record is restored to reflect only the victim's true credit history.

Limitations Imposed on Collection Agencies (RCW 19.16.250): A collection agency may not call a debtor (victim) more than one time in 180 days in order to collect on debts associated with fraudulent checks as long as the victim forwards information regarding the alleged theft to the collection agency. The victim must provide the collection agency with the relevant police report and proof of the victim's identity similar to the provisions above.

The Stop Fraud Network:

The Stop Fraud Network is a fraud prevention program designed to teach senior citizens how to protect themselves from con artists. Sponsored by the Washington State Attorney General's Office, this program also encourages senior citizens to call a toll-free fraud hot-line when they become aware of fraudulent activity. This enables law enforcement to identify fraud and act quickly. For more information about the Stop Fraud Network, call the Stop Fraud Hot-line at (800) 622-0033.



CITY RESOURCE PAGE

Emergency – Police / Fire / Medical	9-1-1
MI Police Non-Emergency	425-577-5656
MI Fire Dept Business	206-275-7607
MI Police Dept Business / Records	206-275-7610
MI Emergency Management / Crime Prevention	206-275-7905
MI City Hall Reception	206-275-7600
Mercer Island Municipal Court	206-275-7604
MI Maintenance / Streets / Garbage	206-275-7608
MI Utilities /Business Licenses	206-275-7606
MI Building Dept.	206-275-7605
MI Parks & Recreation	206-275-7609
MI Youth & Family Services	206-275-7611
Eastside Domestic Violence Crisis Line	425-746-1940 or 1-800-827-8840
Animal Control	206-296-7387
Animal Poison Control (ASPCA)	1-888-426-4435

**Mercer Island City Hall / Police / Court are located at:
9611 SE 36th Street, Mercer Island, WA 98040**

City Hall is open:	Mon – Fri	8:30 am – 5 pm
Police Records is open:	Mon – Thurs Friday	9 am – 4 pm 9 am – Noon
Mercer Island Court is open:	Mon – Thurs	9 am – 4 pm

MIPD Social Media

Follow us on Facebook or Twitter:

<https://www.facebook.com/MercerIslandEmergencyPreparedness>

https://twitter.com/mi_emergprep

www.NextDoor.com

Rx MEDICATION DISPOSAL OPTIONS

Drop-Off Locations

Bartell Drugs – Bellevue Village Pharmacy

10116 NE 8th St

Bellevue, WA 98004

425-454-3111

Does **NOT** accept controlled substances

Bartell Drugs – Factoria

3620 Factoria Blvd SE

Bellevue, WA 98006

425-644-7529

Does **NOT** accept controlled substances

Bothell Police Department

18410 101st Ave NE

Bothell, WA 98011

425-388-3199

DOES accept controlled substances

Note: All Snohomish County Police Department locations accept controlled substances/narcotic medication. Please call to confirm with individual department location prior to drop off

Mail – Away Programs

Rite Aid Safeway Walgreens

A pre-addressed mailer can be purchased at participating locations. Medication is placed in the envelope and is sent to an environmental returns program that properly disposes of the medicines. Controlled substances **CANNOT** be sent in these mailers, due to current federal regulations.