

# How not to become a victim

Special Self Help & Educational Handout

August 2004

Following these guidelines will not guarantee your safety, but *will* minimize your availability to an assailant or from being a victim of fraud.

## *What is Block Watch*

Block Watch is a crime prevention program, which enlists the active participation of citizens in cooperation with law enforcement to reduce crime in their neighborhood and community within Maricopa County jurisdiction. It involves neighbors getting to know each other and working together in a program of mutual assistance. Citizens are trained to recognize and report suspicious activity in their neighborhood, and an implementation of crime prevention techniques, such as home security, operation identification and others. By cooperating with each other and the law enforcement officers, you can fight crime the most effective way: Before it happens! In as much as it is inappropriate for the Board to ensure safety, if you are interested in participating in a Block Watch contact neighbor Owen Dejanovich.

## *Child Identification / Fingerprinting*

The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office has a Child Identification Program, which allows individuals to call the Sheriff's Office and request a fingerprint packet. The packet contains everything needed to fingerprint a child. After the child's prints are transferred to a card it is stored in a cool dry place. Persons wishing to have large groups of children fingerprinted can contact the Sheriff's Office and request that one of the Posse groups come out and conduct the detail for you. This is something normally completed on the weekends. For more information, and to inquire about having fingerprinting for children at an event, please contact us at (602) 876-1895.

## *Operation Identification*

Operation Identification provides permanent, legal identity of property, and helps the total crime reduction efforts. The personal property serves as a deterrent to the thieves and a means of legally identifying stolen property. It involves marking valuables with an engraving tool and putting a warning decal on the participants home window. Valuables are engraved on an accessible, fixed part of the item and also on a more obscured spot. Valuables are then listed on a record and should be kept in a safe place. Engravers are available for use through the Sheriff's Office. To participate, contact (602) 876-1895.

## *Bicycle Registration*

The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office has a Bicycle Registration Program, which helps identify your bicycle, should it be stolen. The program starts with a registration form being filled out by the bicycle owner. These forms are available by calling (602) 876-1895. Once filled out, the form is sent to the address printed on the form, where the information is entered into a database. If the bicycle is stolen, a report should be filed with the local law enforcement agency. Finally, a call should be made to the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office with the stolen bicycle report number. If the bicycle is recovered, a records check will be conducted and the bicycle is traced back to its owner.

## *General Safety Tips*

## *Continued... General safety Tips*

### INTRODUCTION

It has been said about self defense training that fully half of what we learn is preventive, and we practice it in hopes of never having to use the other half.

--Joan Nelson,

**All activities (driving a car, filling the bathtub, walking through the parking lot at night) entail some risk. We all have different attitudes toward risk. At one end of the scale is refusing to engage in an activity by exaggerating the risk involved. At the other end is engaging in very risky activities while refusing to take any precautions. Neither of these attitudes are useful for living an empowered life. What is useful is to accurately assess the risks involved, take whatever precautions make sense, and live as fully as possible.**

- Create a safety plan.
- Listen to and act on your intuition. It's better to be safe and risk a little embarrassment, than stay in an uncomfortable situation that may be unsafe.
- If you are in danger or being attacked and want to get help, yell "Call 911!" or give specific directions to onlookers; for example: "You! Get the police!" or "Walk me to the store on the corner, I'm being followed."
- Have your keys ready when approaching your car or building.
- Vary your routine: drive or walk different routes every day.
- If you suspect that someone is following you, by foot or in a car, don't go home (or they will know where you live). Go to a trusted neighbor or to a public place to call police, or go directly to the police station.
- Do not label keys with your name or any identification.
- Don't talk about your social life or vacation plans where strangers can overhear you.
- Always carry enough change for a telephone call.

## *Keep Your Child Safe*

- Teach your children about **STRANGER DANGER**. Never talk to strangers and never accept candy, money or gifts from a stranger.
- Tell your children about ploys that strangers will use to get them into their vehicles, such as asking them to help them look for a lost pet.
- Teach them the **BUDDY SYSTEM**. Don't play outside or ride bikes alone.
- Teach them the **BOUNDARIES**. Establish where they are going to play and re-affirm never to play in the street.
- Teach them **TIME AND LOCATION NOTIFICATION**. Establish where they are going and a time when they will be home. If they change locations they must call home before they do so.
- Teach them never to play with or touch any guns. If they find one call an adult, don't touch it!
- Teach them that if they are ever home alone not to open the door to strangers.
- Teach them that if they feel threatened by a stranger to run away as fast as they can.
- Communicate with your children and let them know who can pick them up from school or other places other than you.

## *Shopping Safety*

- Avoid shopping alone.
- Park close to an entrance or populated area.
- Park in a well lighted area.
- Conceal valuables.
- Be alert to your surroundings.
- Carry your purse securely. Don't swing it or

### *Continued .. Shopping Safety*

- display it.
- Walk with confidence and have your keys in hand.
- Don't carry too many packages. Secure packages in the trunk or out of sight.
- Lock your doors and keep your windows up.
- If you become frightened for any reason, alert security or the police and get an escort to your vehicle.
- Never stop for strangers.

### *In Your Home*

- Have lights in all entrances.
- Have good locks on all doors and windows.
- Do not use your full name on your mailbox, in the phone directory, or on your answering machine.
- Do not leave a schedule of your times away from home on your answering machine.
- If you live alone, do not let strangers know. Invent a roommate or big dog.
- Know which of your neighbors you can trust in an emergency.
- Check who is at the door before opening it, and do not open the door to an unexpected visitor.
- Don't hide extra keys in easily accessible places. Criminals will find them.
- Ask for photo identification of all repair persons, etc. If you are still suspicious, call to verify employment.
- Never give personal information to telephone solicitors.
- Consider creating a "safe room" with a separate telephone line or cellular phone, and strong locks. If someone breaks in, you can

retreat there (with children) and call for help.

- Do not let strangers into your home to use the phone. Offer to make the call for them.

### *On the Street*

- Don't hitchhike.
- Be very careful using outside ATMs at night or in unfamiliar surroundings.
- When on the street, walk facing oncoming traffic. It will be harder for someone to pull you into a car and abduct you.
- Tell someone where you'll be and what time you're supposed to return, or if you will be with someone you don't know well.
- Try to not overload yourself with packages. If you must have your hands full, visualize how you would respond if approached, how you would get your hands free, etc.
- Do not wear music headphones while walking or jogging.
- Do not read while walking or standing on the street.
- If you wear a purse with a shoulder strap, be prepared to let it go if snatched. Otherwise you may be hurt if the mugger knocks you down and drags you while fleeing with your purse.
- If someone asks you for directions, and if you choose to reply, remain at least two arms lengths away.
- Clogs, high heels, and tight skirts are hard to run and fight in. Capes, scarves, and long necklaces are easy to grab. Modify your fashion style, or wear comfortable clothing when walking alone (change into dress-up clothes later), or think through how you would fight in your dress-up clothes (for example, kicking off your high heels or hiking your skirt up around your hips before starting to run or kick).
- Avoid being on the street alone if you are upset or under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or have someone go with you.

### *Continued .. On the Street*

- When dropping someone off at their home, make sure they are safely inside before driving away. Have them do the same for you.

## *In a Car / Carjacking*

- Check the inside and around your car before entering to insure that no one is hiding there.
- Check your surroundings before getting out of your car.
- Don't pick up hitchhikers.
- Keep doors locked and windows rolled up so that a hand can't reach in.
- If a group of suspicious people approaches you when you are stopped at a red light at a deserted intersection, run the light if your intuition tells you that the situation could get dangerous.
- Don't let gas indicator fall below 1/4.
- Plan your route and check a map before you start out.
- Park in well-lighted, heavily traveled areas if possible.
- Try not to park next to a van, as you can be pulled in through the sliding door.
- Whenever you have to stop your vehicle, leave enough room between your vehicle and other vehicles or things so you could drive off if any danger presented itself.
- Don't leave valuables in plain sight inside your car.
- If you think someone has run into your vehicle intentionally, keep your doors locked, activate your emergency lights and stay in your car until the police arrive.
- If you think you are being followed, drive to an area that has a lot of people or drive to the closest law enforcement office.
- Notify the appropriate law enforcement agency of any suspicious activity that you

observe.

- Give only the ignition key to an attendant.
- If you see an accident or stranded motorist, report it from the nearest telephone instead of stopping.
- Carry in your car:
  - Flashlight, flares, fix-a-flat, maps, comfortable warm clothing, first aid kit, empty gas can, white cloth to tie to antenna to signal distress, cellular phone.
- Learn basic auto maintenance.

## *On Publication Transportation*

- Beware of overheard conversations. Do not tell anyone on the bus or subway where you are going.
- Stay awake and alert.
- Have the exact change ready.
- Try to sit near the driver.
- If you sense someone is following you when you get off, walk toward a populated area. Do not walk directly home.

## *At the Office*

- Don't leave your keys lying about.
- Notify security personnel if you notice suspicious persons or vehicles, especially after normal working hours.
- Be extra careful in stairwells and isolated or poorly-lighted restrooms.
- In an elevator, stand near the controls and locate the emergency button.
- Do not get in an elevator with someone who looks suspicious to you.
- Know your co-workers and look out for each other.

### *Continued .. at the Office*

- Have available at every phone: Emergency numbers for security, police, fire departments, and a list of employees who are trained in CPR or first aid.

## *Defense Against Dogs*

- When confronted by a threatening dog, our impulse is often to turn and run - the worst response, since movement triggers the chase instinct in dogs.
- Stand very still and try to be calm.
- Don't scream at the dog and run.
- Be aware of where the dog is. Look in its general direction, but don't stare into its eyes. This is considered an aggressive challenge.
- Let the dog sniff you.
- In a low voice say, "No! Go home!"
- Stay still until the dog leaves.
- Back away slowly until it's out of sight.
- If a dog does attack, try to "feed" it your workout jacket, bike equipment (briefcase, purse) to distract the dog while you back slowly away towards safety.
- If you are knocked down or fall, curl into a ball and keep your hands over your ears, face, and neck. Try not to scream or roll around.

## *Identity Theft- How to Protect Yourself*

Protecting yourself from identity theft takes proactive effort. You can't simply assume it's not going to happen to you and go on about your life -- it can happen to anyone. It even happens to celebrities. Oprah Winfrey, Tiger Woods, Robert De Niro and Martha Stewart have all had their identities stolen. While you can't ever totally protect yourself from these thieves, you can at least make yourself less attractive as a victim by doing what you can to make it more difficult for them to access your information. Here are some

things you can do to protect yourself:

- DON'T give out your Social Security number unless it is absolutely necessary. Many companies collect more information than they really need. Make sure that it's something they have to have and make sure they'll protect your privacy.
- DESTROY any unwanted credit card offers. This means rip, shred, burn, whatever you can do. These pre-approved offers come almost daily. If you don't want the three major credit bureaus to sell your name to these companies, you can "opt out" by either writing to the three major credit bureaus or by calling (888) 5OPTOUT (567-8688). This will remove your name, for two years, from mailing and telemarketing lists that come from TransUnion, Equifax, Experian, and INNOVIS.
- DON'T put any other information besides your name and address on your checks, and keep a close watch on your checkbook both when you're writing checks and when it is lying around. Someone can memorize your name, address and phone number during the short time it takes you to write a check.
- SHRED (cross-cut) any sensitive documents before you throw them into the trash. This may seem like an extreme measure, but dumpster diving happens all the time and turns up a lot more personal information than you may realize.
- DON'T carry your Social Security card, passport or birth certificate in your wallet or purse. Also, only carry as many credit cards as are absolutely necessary. It has also been suggested that you photocopy everything you carry in your wallet to make canceling things easier in the event that your wallet is stolen.
- REVIEW your credit report every year to make sure there haven't been any new credit cards or other accounts issued (to someone other than you) and to make sure there haven't been inquiries by people you haven't initiated business with. There are also services you can subscribe to that will alert you to any changes in your credit file.

## *Continued .. Identity Theft*

- **NEVER** give out personal information on the phone to someone you don't know and who initiated the call. Often, scam artists phone unsuspecting victims pretending to be their financial services company and request information to be provided over the phone. Usually, the story is to "update records" or sell a product. Get their name, phone number and address, and then call them back at the number you have on file or that is printed on the statements you receive.
- **REVIEW** your monthly credit card statement each month to make sure there aren't any charges showing up that aren't yours. Also, make sure you *get* a monthly statement. If the statement is late, contact the credit card company. You never know when someone may have turned in a change-of-address form so they could make a few more weeks of purchases on your credit card without you noticing.
- **DON'T** mail bills or documents that contain personal data (like tax forms or checks) from your personal mailbox. Take them directly to the post office or an official postal service mailbox. It's too easy for someone to take mail out of your mailbox on the street. From there, they can dip your checks in special chemicals to remove the ink and then rewrite them to themselves!
- If you're ever denied credit, **FIND OUT WHY**, especially if you haven't reviewed your credit report lately. This may be the first indication you get that someone has stolen your identity and is racking up charges in your name.
- **REACT QUICKLY** if a creditor or merchant calls you about charges you didn't make. This too may be the first notice you get that someone has stolen your identity. Get as much information from them as you can and investigate immediately.
- **GUARD** deposit slips as closely as you do checks. Not only do they have your name, address and account number printed on them, but they can also be used to withdraw

money from your account. All a thief has to do is write a bad check, deposit it into your account and use the "less cash received" line to withdraw your money.

## *On-Line Prowlers*

### **Keep your personal information safe from online prowlers. Here's how:**

The Internet offers a convenient way to conduct business. To ensure you use it safely, *never* input your credit card or other financial account numbers at a Web site *unless* it offers a secure transaction. A secure (or "encrypted") transaction will have these two features:

1. An icon of a lock appears in the bottom strip of the Web browser page.
2. The URL address for the Web page changes from "http" to "https" for the page at which you input the personal data.
3. Report credit card fraud to one of the major credit reporting agencies, either online or by phone. (Due to a recent change designed to help consumers, you can report the incident to any of the three agencies, as they now share a common database.)

Equifax: 800-525-6285  
[www.equifax.com](http://www.equifax.com)

Experian: 888-397-3742  
[www.experian.com](http://www.experian.com)

TransUnion: 800-680-7289  
[www.transunion.com](http://www.transunion.com)

## *More Information...*

### **Visit these Web sites for more information on ID theft:**

U.S. Postal Inspection Service: [www.usps.com/postalinspectors](http://www.usps.com/postalinspectors)

Federal Trade Commission:  
[www.consumer.gov/idtheft](http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft)

U.S. Secret Service: [www.secretservice.gov](http://www.secretservice.gov)

Department of Justice: [www.usdoj.gov/criminal/fraud/idtheft](http://www.usdoj.gov/criminal/fraud/idtheft)

Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation:  
[www.fdic.gov/consumers](http://www.fdic.gov/consumers)

### **Web sites for credit card companies:**

American Express:  
[www10.americanexpress.com](http://www10.americanexpress.com)

Discover: [www.discovercard.com/discover/data/products](http://www.discovercard.com/discover/data/products)

MasterCard: [www.mastercard.com/education/fraud](http://www.mastercard.com/education/fraud)

Visa: [www.usa.visa.com/personal](http://www.usa.visa.com/personal)

### **Other publications with information on ID theft:**

ID Theft: When Bad Things Happen to Your Good Name

Federal Trade Commission  
1-877-ID-Theft

Identity Theft  
Federal Reserve Bank of Boston  
1-800-409-1333

## *Sources of Information*

Maricopa County Sheriffs Department

United States Post Office & Postal Inspectors

## *Auto Protection*

- Do not keep valuables inside your vehicle
- No briefcases, cell phones, C/D's, or even pocket change in the ashtray. Leave nothing in view.
- Lock all doors and windows.
- Use a club
- Add a security system
- Park in your garage.
- Add lighting around your home if needed.
- Install Lojack ( a vehicle tracking device)

## *Annual Insurance Review*

- Annually review all your home and auto policies with your insurance agent / carrier for proper and replacement values in the event of loss or theft.
- Inventory and check the items insured. many times new items have been added to your personal property but have not yet been added to your policies.
- Photograph or video tape your home and its contents.

## *Around the Home*

- Alarms are effective when used with other securities and when they are designed to detect an attempted intrusion.
- Trim shrubs. This denies intruders a place to hide and provides a better visibility.
- Garage doors and sheds should be closed and locked at all times.
- Sliding glass doors and windows should be secured with wooden or metal dowels in the tracks to prevent from being slid open.
- Place screws in the top of the window frames to prevent them from being lifted out of their tracks.
- Lights & timers should be used to give the appearance of the home being occupied.
- Install wide angle viewer at the front door.
- Do not hide keys under mats or common areas.
- Display house numbers for emergency vehicles.
- Maintain good exterior lighting. A good location is under eaves and high out of reach. Motion lights are also effective.
- Draw shades at night.
- Use initials on mailboxes.
- DO NOT suspend all deliveries. (When you call to stop deliveries you do not really know who is on the other end of the phone, and now they know your away.)
- Have a friend or relative pick up your newspaper or mail.
- Give a friend or relative a key to your home so they can check on the contents daily.
- Advise them how long you will be away and how to contact you in the event of an emergency.
- Ask them to turn on an interior light to give the appearance that someone is home.
- Call the Sheriff's Office to request a vacation watch on your home.

## *Suspicious Activity*

- Look for suspicious vehicles parked in or circulating the neighborhood.
- Look for unknown or suspicious persons walking or circulating the neighborhood.
- You will need to describe the person(s), vehicle or activity going on.
  - **Describe the activity:**
    - What is taking place?
    - How many are involved?
  - **Describe the person(s)**
    - Height, weight, race
    - Clothing description
    - Location last seen
    - Direction of travel
  - **Describe the vehicle(s)**
    - License Plate number & state
    - Color
    - Make, model & year
    - Location of vehicle and / or direction of travel

## *When on vacation...*

When a way from home all day, a weekend or extended trip...



## *Suspicious People*

### **Who is a suspicious person:**

A suspicious person is either one who is exhibiting suspicious behavior, or who is in an area of doing something that is not normal.

### **What is suspicious behavior**

Suspicious behavior is sometimes difficult to define, but it is one of those things that most people "know when they see it." It is something that is out of place, not quite right, or just makes you feel "weird" about it. The following is a partial list of behavior that may be suspicious:

- Wearing heavy clothing in warm weather (a trench coat when its 90 degrees outside).
- Asking questions that are not common about the location of something, like security measures.
- Attempts to conceal the face; turning away when somebody approaches (like rapidly turning head and pretending to read something on a bulletin board).
- Hiding in shadows or behind objects in an apparent attempt to keep from being clearly seen.
- Being evasive when asked a direct question, attempts to change the subject.
- Giving too many details that are unrelated to the conversation.
- Carrying items that do not fit in with what they are doing.

## *What to do if your see a Suspicious Person(s)*

If you see someone that is suspicious, note the following:

- What are they wearing?
- What they look like

Height, build, weight, hair color, skin complexion, markings such as tattoos, clothing description, race etc.

- The direction they were heading (if they are moving.)
- Description of any vehicles they are using. Vehicle description, make, model year, color etc.
- What they were doing.

## *What to do if your come home and find a window or door open...*

- **DO NOT GO INSIDE.**
- Go to the nearest telephone and call authorities. 911
- If you should surprise a burglar:

Remain calm do not resist or attack the burglar. Your safety is the number one priority.

Stay out of the way and do not put yourself between them and the nearest exit.

Once they have left, call authorities.

Do not touch anything or disturb the scene.

Write down as much detail about the incident and describe the burglar as best you can:

Approximate age,

Height, Weight,

Race, Physical marks, tattoos, glasses etc...

## *Outdoor Valuables and Personal Property.*

Gate latches, garage doors, and shed doors are locked with high security, waterproofed locks.

Gates, garage doors, and shed doors are locked after each use.

Grills, lawn mowers, and other valuables are stored in a locked area, and NOT left out in the open. Larger items are covered with a tarp and securely locked to a stationary point.

Every bicycle is secured with a U-bar lock or quality padlock and chain.

Bikes are always locked even when away from them for just a minute.

Firearms are stored unloaded and locked in stor-

age boxes and secured with trigger locks.

Children's toys, skateboards, and razors / scooters are either inscribed with identifying marks or serial numbers, are recorded and kept in a safe place.

*Take the time to review these suggestions with the entire family.*

I hope you have found this booklet helpful. Please be sure to review with the entire family. Sometimes, just a simple reminder needs to be given to those we love to be extra careful. In, today's day and age, we have to take the few extra steps to protect our families and our property.

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## *Clearwater Farms Unit III Property Owner's Association*

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Waddell, Arizona 85355