



COMMUNITY POLICING in Snohomish County

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Personal Safety– *Some Perspective*

Fear of assault, robbery, or rape in your neighborhood takes away the safety and well being that we expect to have in our life. Nationwide though, the rate of victimization from murder, rape, robbery and assault is down– 1982– 52.3 per 1,000; 2004 21.1 per 1,000.

People ages 12 to 24 are the most likely to be victimized with an average of 83.7 per 1,000. People 65 and older are only victimized at a rate of 9.1 per 1,000.

Your local situation may be different though. The news may have publicized an assault in your neighborhood. You may have experienced a close call. Your fear increases despite the nationwide trend.

You can take practical steps to protect yourself from assault. Some basics to keep in mind include:

1. Have a calm, confident attitude that tells others that you know where you are and where you are going.
2. Trust your instincts. If a situation or a person makes you uncomfortable, leave the area.
3. Pay attention to your surroundings. Know the neighborhood where you live and the area where you work. Know where police and fire stations are located as well as where stores stay open late at night.
4. Do not flaunt your money. Keep

credit cards, keys, cell phones discreetly in your pocket or purse.

The following pages list practical personal safety suggestions for a variety of situations. The point is to go out into the world confidently and prepared. There should not be a need for paranoia or to feel like you cannot leave your house or apartment.

How Streetwise Are You?

Do you:

- stuff your backpack or purse with cash, keys, pager, cell phones, credit cards, checkbooks—and then leave it wide open at school or work, near your desk, or on the floor?
- pay attention to your surroundings or do you think about school or your friends when walking, driving, or riding the subway or bus?
- think it's a waste of time to use your locker for valuables or to lock your car when you'll be back in a few minutes?
- walk or jog by yourself early in the morning or late at night when the streets are quiet and deserted?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, you need to change a few habits.



On Your Person

- *Do not display money or credit cards.*
- *Unless absolutely necessary, never wear expensive jewelry or carry large amounts of cash.*
- *Keep your money and wallet in the inside pocket of your jacket or purse.*
- *Secure your purse or handbag under your arm so that it cannot be easily snatched.*

If Followed or Threatened:

- ***By someone in a car:** use your personal alarm or scream loud and long, cross the street and run in the opposite direction. This will force the driver to turn the car around to pursue you.*
- ***By someone walking:** use your personal alarm or scream loud and long, cross the street and run. Head for bright lights and people.*

Personal Safety– Walking on the Street

Traditionally in unincorporated parts of Snohomish County there are few areas that a person might walk. Now, with many parts of the county urbanizing with housing developments, and commercial areas popping up in many areas there are more opportunities to walk to the store or take a walk for your health.

Here are some common sense tips for anywhere that you walk:

- Avoid walking alone.
- Walk on streets where there are other people.
- Stay alert to your surroundings at all times. Observe people and activities around you. Look confident and purposeful when you walk.
- Plan and use the safest and most direct rout to your destination.
- Choose busy, well-lighted streets and avoid isolated areas, alleys, vacant lots, abandoned buildings and construction sites.
- Walk near the curb and do not pass too close to shrubbery, dark doorways and other places of concealment.
- Avoid shortcuts.
- Become familiar with stores and gas stations that stay open late at night, as well as police and fire department locations.
- Walk facing traffic so you can see approaching cars.
- Carry a flashlight during hours of darkness.
- Be aware that wearing earphones connected to iPods, portable radios, and CD players while walking can distract you and make you less able to sense potential danger.
- Always bring cash with you for cab fare, bus fare, or telephone calls. Keep some extra money separate from your wallet or purse for emergencies.
- Never hitchhike and do not accept rides from strangers.
- Carry a personal alarm (e.g. a whistle). Use the alarm to attract attention and to summon help if you feel you are in danger. Carry the alarm in your hand so that you can use it immediately.
- When being dropped off at home, request the driver to wait until you are inside the house safely.
- Have your key ready so you can open the door to your house as soon as possible.
- If anything is suspicious, do not go inside. Call 9-1-1 from a neighbor's house.



Personal Safety– *Driving*

We do not always associate a need to be concerned about personal safety when we are driving, but with road rage, car jackings, car prowls, etc. we should. Here are some suggestions for more secure driving:

- Travel on busy, well-lighted streets.
- Keep your car in good running order.
- Keep your car in gear while waiting at traffic signals and stop signs. If you are approached and threatened, honk the horn and drive away.
- Plan your route in advance, particularly on unfamiliar trips. Have enough gasoline and money to get you there and back. Never allow your gasoline gauge to fall below the quarter tank level.
- Drive with all car doors locked.
- Keep the windows rolled up whenever possible.
- Keep your wallet, purse and other valuables out of sight while driving. Do not leave them on the seat next to you. Place personal items in the glove compartment, under a front seat or in the trunk.
- Do not store valuable items in your car.
- Never pick up hitchhikers.
- Try carpooling or sharing rides with others. This will save money and you will have help in case of an emergency.
- Keep spare money in your car for a taxi, bus fare or telephone calls in case of a breakdown.
- If you see another motorist in trouble, do not stop. As you drive by, signal the motorist that you are going to get help. Find a pay telephone or use your cellular telephone to call for assistance.
- If the driver of another car tries to force your car off the road, do not stop. Continue driving to an open business, police, sheriff, or fire station. Try to obtain license number and description of the car, driver and passengers. Report the incident to the police.
- If you are driving during late or odd hours, be aware that commuter routes congested during rush hours may be deserted. Use freeways and main thoroughfares and avoid alternate, less traveled roads as much as possible.
- If you travel a regular route to and from work, make yourself familiar with businesses on the route that stay open late in case you need emergency assistance.

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Personal Safety– *In a Parking Lot*

- *Choose well-lighted parking areas.*
- *Look around for loiterers before you get out of your car.*
- *Keep valuables and packages locked in the trunk.*
- *Always turn off the ignition, remove the key, and lock your car doors, no matter how soon you plan on returning.*
- *Do not park next to vans, trucks with campers or other vehicles whose size and structure can provide concealment for a potential assailant.*
- *Exercise caution and be extra alert when using underground or enclosed parking garages. Walk in the center aisle, rather than close to parked cars.*
- *If you have a choice, park in areas that have an attendant or in locations that have heavy pedestrian traffic.*

Personal Safety– Returning to Your Car

- *Have your key in hand before you get to your car.*
- *Be aware of occupied cars around you.*
- *If you are carrying packages, try to keep one hand free, even if it means making an extra trip.*
- *Check outside, under and inside your car before you unlock the door and get in. Criminals have been known to conceal themselves on the floorboards behind the front seats.*
- *Criminals have also been known to disable an engine or flatten a tire to strand a targeted victim. If your car is disabled in suspicious circumstances and a stranger offers to help you, use your personal alarm, scream loud and long and leave the area immediately. If there is no time to flee, get into your car, lock the doors and sound the horn to attract attention to the situation.*

Personal Safety– Driving cont.

(Continued from page 3)

- Be alert to your surroundings at all times while driving and when you are getting in and out of your car.
- Do not let yourself be distracted while driving. Do not apply cosmetics, read, or make a call on your cellular telephone.
- Drive in the lane closest to the center of the roadway when traveling in an unknown area, or areas you determine to be unsafe. Leave enough space between your car and the car in front of you to enable you to go around the car quickly if necessary.
- Keep your car keys and house keys on separate key rings.
- Minor car accidents are sometimes planned by criminals to set up a “bump and rob” or a “carjacking”. If you feel your car was bumped intentionally, remain in your locked car. Signal the other driver to follow you to a safe place.



Personal Safety– On the Bus

- Locate convenient, well-lighted, frequently used bus stops.
- Check public transportation schedules in advance, especially if traveling at odd hours.
- Do not wait alone at a bus stop.
- Know where you are going and how to get back.
- When you board a bus, sit near the driver.
- If you are verbally or physically harassed, report the incident to the bus driver immediately.
- Be alert who gets off the bus with you.
- Trust your instincts. If you feel you are being followed, inform other passengers getting off with you or walk to a place where there are other people for assistance. Report the incident to police as soon as possible.





Personal Safety– At an ATM

Using an ATM is convenient, but you are vulnerable to robbery. Here is how to protect yourself:

- Memorize your personal identification number (PIN). Do not carry your PIN anywhere on your person or in your wallet.
- Never give your PIN to anyone else.
- When using an automated teller machine (ATM) have your paperwork and ATM card ready before you arrive at the ATM.
- Be aware of people around the ATM and in parked cars who seem to be loitering or subtly watching customers transact business. If you feel uncomfortable, leave the location and find another ATM where you can safely transact your business.
- Report suspicious persons to bank personnel.
- When using a drive-up ATM always keep alert to your surroundings. Be sure your car doors are locked and the windows are closed. Look around and check the area before you open your car window to make sure no one is loitering around the ATM. Open the window only when you are sure it is safe to do so. Open the window long enough to conduct your transaction and leave the location promptly.
- Do not sit in the car at the ATM and do your personal accounting.
- Never use an ATM after dark.
- When using a walk-up ATM always keep alert to your surroundings. Choose an ATM in a shopping mall, market or an ATM that is in a bank or located near a busy street.
- Make sure the ATM is not obscured by landscaping or walls.
- Always take someone with you.
- Shield the screen with your body to prevent others from seeing your PIN.
- Place your money in your pocket, purse, or wallet before you turn away from the ATM.
- Take the receipt with you.

Apartments & Condos

- Always lock the doors to common areas and garages.
- When leaving or entering a garage, be sure the door closes and locks behind you before moving on.
- Do not leave the garage door opener in your car. If stolen, it provides easy access to your building.
- Never use a laundry room alone or late at night. Do your laundry during the day. Invite a friend to be with you.

Outdoor Activities

When biking, jogging, or participating in other outdoor activities, remember the following:

- Choose a route in advance that is safe and populated.
- Always carry proper identification.
- Advise a loved one or a friend the route you will be taking so they will know where to look for you in an emergency.
- Vary your route and activity schedule so that your behavior is not predictable.
- Avoid pursuing outdoor activities after dark.
- Keep your exercise gear in good repair and carry the necessary tools in case of an emergency.
- Consider carrying a personal alarm.



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Snohomish County Sheriff
M/S 606 - 3000 Rockefeller Ave.
Everett, WA 98201

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Rick Bart, Sheriff
Snohomish County
3000 Rockefeller Ave.
M/S 606
Fourth Floor County
Courthouse
Everett, WA 98201
(425) 388-3393

[www1.co.snohomish.wa.us/
Departments/Sheriff/](http://www1.co.snohomish.wa.us/Departments/Sheriff/)

Steve Moller– Editor



1-800-
CRIME-13

Tip Lines:

- Phone:
425-388-3845
- Sheriff's Website:
[www.co.snohomish.wa.us/SheriffRpts/
AnonymousTips/
default.htm](http://www.co.snohomish.wa.us/SheriffRpts/AnonymousTips/default.htm)

Personal Safety– *Returning Home/Stranger at the Door*

Returning Home

- Have your door key in your hand when approaching your entry-way.
- At night, keep car headlights on and doors locked until you have looked around to check your garage and parking area.
- If someone else drives you home, ask him or her to wait until you are safely inside.
- Never go into your home if anything seems unusual, such as an open door or a broken window. Leave immediately to a place where you can call the police.

- Do not go into your home until the police have advised it is safe.

Stranger at the Door

- Never indicate you are home alone.
- When home alone, never open your door to a stranger.
- Use your wide-angle viewer to see who is at your door.
- Do not open the door to anyone you do not know without first verifying the person's identity. This includes police officers, repair, delivery or salespersons, and political or charity volunteers.