

# Crime Prevention Tips and Agency Referrals

## Recognizing the risks

In Alberta and across Canada, seniors are less likely to report themselves as victims of crime than younger age groups. A 2000 Environics Poll in Alberta showed that only seven per cent of respondents aged 65 or older reported being victims of crime in the past year, while among those aged 18-24, 43 per cent reported being victimized during the same period.

However, fear of crime or fear of being victimized is a concern of many seniors. Only 24 per cent of seniors in Alberta reported feeling very comfortable or somewhat comfortable walking alone at night in their neighborhoods, compared to 47 per cent of all other respondents.<sup>1</sup>

## Crime prevention tips for seniors

Personal safety and crime prevention tips apply to everyone regardless of age. However, there are some things seniors can do to further reduce their likelihood of being victimized.<sup>2</sup>

### In your community:

- Walk only in well-lit areas.
- Do not burden yourself with packages or a bulky purse.
- Never display large sums of money in public.
- Go shopping in pairs or in a group.
- Walk in the centre of the sidewalk, away from alleys and doorways.
- If you suspect you are being followed, cross the street, go to the nearest home, service station or business and call the police.

### In your home:

- Keep valuables in a safety deposit box at your bank. If this is not possible, keep them locked in a hiding place in your home.
- Mark valuable items for identification.
- Don't keep large amounts of cash at home.
- Get to know your neighbours.

### **Protect yourself from fraud:**

- Always inspect the credentials of anyone who contacts you or comes to your door.
- Contact the police and your bank if anyone claiming to be a bank examiner contacts you and asks for your assistance.
- Never leave strangers unattended in your home.
- Never sign a contract that you have not read or do not fully understand.
- Before investing money get a second opinion from a spouse, friend, financial advisor or lawyer.
- Be cautious of “just passing by” home repairmen offering repair work at a savings. Check the offer first with the Better Business Bureau, Consumer Information with the provincial government Service Alberta department or a reputable repair company.
- Avoid suspicious contests, travel club offers, retirement estates offered “site unseen” and telephone solicitation.

Some habits, such as carrying large amounts of cash, or cashing cheques at month end are no longer considered safe. It would be wise to explore options for “direct deposit” or “direct payment” with your financial institution. Carrying a credit card or a cheque is safer than carrying cash in case of emergency. <sup>3</sup> Contact the crime prevention section of your local police service to further **explore safety options**.

### **Ideas for crime prevention activities for seniors**

- Educate seniors about fraud and how to avoid becoming a victim.
- Identify protective measures in seniors’ homes.
- Help seniors arrange any needed modifications to lighting, locks and home security.
- Pair seniors and students in researching mutual concerns such as crime prevention or drug use.
- Create drama productions about seniors’ issues.

## For more information

- Alberta Seniors and Community Supports: [www.seniors.gov.ab.ca](http://www.seniors.gov.ab.ca)  
Toll-free: Alberta Seniors Information Line: 1-800-642-3853
- Wise Owls – “Heads Up” Fraud Prevention Association:  
[www.heads-up.ca/wise\\_owls.htm](http://www.heads-up.ca/wise_owls.htm) Toll-free: 1-877-877-4323
- Service Alberta: [www.servicealberta.ca](http://www.servicealberta.ca)  
Toll-free: Consumer Contact Centre: 1-877-427-4088
- Better Business Bureau:  
Central and Northern Alberta: [www.edmontonbbb.org](http://www.edmontonbbb.org) Toll-free: 1-800-232-7298  
Southern Alberta: [www.betterbusinessbureau.ca](http://www.betterbusinessbureau.ca) Phone: 403-517-4222 (Calgary)

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<sup>1</sup> Alberta Justice Public Survey. 2000

<sup>2</sup> Seniors Guidebook to Safety and Security, RCMP. 1994 and Theft Prevention for Seniors. Edmonton Police Service

<sup>3</sup> Theft Prevention for Seniors. Edmonton Police Service