

PERSONAL SAFETY

Be aware, protect yourself.

CRIME PREVENTION

IT'S IN YOUR
NEIGHBOURHOOD

PERSONAL SAFETY

This brochure is designed to provide realistic, proactive techniques that you can apply in your life to enhance your personal safety.

The key to safety is being aware of places or situations that put you at risk.

IN YOUR HOME

- Get to know your neighbours. Make arrangements to keep an eye on each other's homes when away. If there is a Citizens on Patrol in your area, advise them if you will be away for an extended period.
- Draw drapes or close blinds after dark.
- Ensure that your outside doors and door frames are sturdy. This includes entry doors in attached garages.
- Install security-rated locks (i.e. deadbolts rather than bathroom door locks) on main doors and windows.
- Install a 180-degree peephole in your door. Identify visitors before opening your door and do not open your door to strangers.
- If a stranger asks to use your phone, offer to make the call yourself.
- List only your initials and last name on the mailbox or in the telephone book. Do not list your first name or indicate Mr., Mrs., Ms. or Miss.
- Never give personal information to telephone solicitors or wrong number callers.
- Have emergency telephone numbers on or near your phone.
- Make sure that all entrances are well lit. Install a light timer.
- Have your keys ready as you approach the door. Do not hide spare keys outside the home.
- Be aware of your surroundings and evaluate your situation so you can make decisions about your safety. Stay alert in laundry rooms, parking garages, elevators and avoid dark or secluded streets.

- Be aware of what security measures a website is using to protect your personal information when requested over the Internet.

IN YOUR VEHICLE

- Keep your vehicle locked when you are driving or when it is parked.
- Have your keys ready when approaching your parked car. Do a check of the inside of your car before entering.
- If you are being followed, drive to a police station or a busy public area such as a 24-hour convenience store or gas station. Try to note the licence plate number and make of the car.
- Park in well lit areas. Be observant so you can assess your surroundings and safety, especially in parking garages.
- Do not leave car registration and insurance documents in your vehicle. They show your address and other personal information.
- Keep your garage door opener out of sight until you need it. Thieves can use it to get into your home.
- Do not hide spare keys under the hood, the bumpers or anywhere else on the car.
- Have regular vehicle tune-ups to keep your vehicle in good working order.
- If your vehicle breaks down, raise the hood and switch on the hazard lights. Stay inside with the windows up and keep the doors locked. If somebody offers help, assess your situation to see if it is safe to accept assistance. Is the helper another motorist with a family or a lone driver? If you feel unsafe, ask the helper to call for assistance.
- If possible, carry a cell phone with you.
- You can help stranded motorists by phoning for assistance.

IN YOUR COMMUNITY

- Be assertive when walking. Attackers seek victims who appear intimidated or vulnerable.

- Plan your route ahead of time before going for a walk and let others know where you are going.

- Walk with a companion if you feel that being alone may put you at risk. Observe your surroundings. If you are hesitant about rounding a corner or walking down a certain street, follow your instincts.

- Stay on busier, well-lit streets. Avoid dark or concealed areas and never assume parked cars are empty.

- Do not overload yourself with parcels. These may block your view or reduce your mobility.

- If you are followed, quickly assess your options. Can you run or change directions? Are there people nearby, a house or an open business to run to? Is there a well-lit area to move towards?

- Never hitchhike.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

Sexual assault is a violent crime that is forced upon the victim. It is an unwanted attack that violates the sexual integrity of the victim. It can occur without warning, anywhere, anytime.

Assault means the intentional use of force against the victim's will. Examples of assault include touching, slapping, kicking, punching, pushing and threatening assault with force.

It is not always possible to fight back. A lack of resistance does not mean you consented to the assault.

If you did fight back, you will not be charged with assault provided you did not use more force than necessary to fight off an attacker.

IT'S A CRIME IF:

- Someone kisses you, fondles you, or has sexual intercourse with you, without your consent, even if there is no apparent injury or no other physical abuse is involved.

- You are sexually assaulted by someone who has a weapon or threatens to use one, whether the weapon is real or a method of intimidation.

- The offender threatens to hurt a third person if you do not consent to a sexual act (i.e. a child or friend).

- The offender causes you bodily harm.

- More than one person assaults you in the same incident.

YOUR BEST DEFENCE:

Use common sense and good judgement to assess what course of action to take if faced by a would-be attacker. Form a plan of action in your head and rehearse your response so that you are less likely to "freeze up" if the situation arises.

Be aware of:

- Your personal strengths and weaknesses (what are you prepared to do?).

- The attacker's state of mind (what might the attacker do?).

- Options that are right for you and the situation.

There is no perfect answer that will prevent assault, but here are some options to consider:

- Be assertive with the assailant. Make direct eye contact, speak in a firm confident voice, and use short simple statements.

- Stay calm. Talk to your assailant to stall for time.

- Look for an opportunity to escape.

- Do not be afraid to be rude, cause a scene or yell loudly, anything that is likely to bring a response from others and confuse the attacker. Consider carrying a whistle. The noise will attract attention and scare most attackers.

- To confuse the attacker, you can faint, urinate, vomit or fake a heart attack.

- Sometimes physical resistance may be effective. Immediate and forceful resistance may throw the attacker off-guard and allow you time to escape. A self-defence course may help, but it should not be considered your only resource.

- Common items such as keys, umbrellas and bags can be used as weapons. Be aware however, that weapons may be used against you.

IF IT HAPPENS

If you are assaulted, you will face a number of painful emotions. Victims often feel fear, confusion, anger, embarrassment, disgust and guilt. It is important to remember that you are not to blame. The only guilty party is your assailant.

Here's what to do immediately after an assault:

Call the police

The first step is to call the police who can take you to the hospital. If you wish, ask a friend or relative to go with you.

To help the police gather and protect necessary evidence for their investigation, it is best not to clean or move any items at the scene, wash, change your clothes or even comb your hair.

You should not consume any alcohol, drugs or medication.

Go to the hospital

Once you are at the hospital, tell the person in charge exactly what happened to you.

Some hospitals have sexual assault units with specially trained people to help you.

Call for support services

Victim Service Units exist within many police services.

You will probably be asked to complete the **Suspect Identity Chart** which will ask what you remember about the suspect's

- ☐ Age
- ☐ Type of hair/color/cut
- ☐ Beard/mustache
- ☐ Complexion
- ☐ Weapon
- ☐ Shirt, coat, trousers
- ☐ Method of escape/direction
- ☐ Height/weight
- ☐ Eyes/eyeglasses
- ☐ Visible scars/tattoos/piercings
- ☐ Voice descriptions
- ☐ Shoes
- ☐ Licence plate
- ☐ and Vehicle description

Try to remember as many details as possible to assist with an investigation.

The **Protection Against Family Violence Act** is a law that protects all family members from family violence. If someone is abused or knows someone who is abused, this law can help.

The Act defines family violence as:

- Injuring or threatening to injure a family member
- Damaging or threatening to damage property in order to intimidate or harm a family member
- Not allowing a family member to leave the home
- Sexual abuse.

An **Emergency Protection Order** is a tool that police can obtain from the court to provide immediate protection to an "abused family member." This order can say that an abusive family member must temporarily leave the home, cannot contact other family members and cannot come near their home, workplace or school.

The police can, if authorized, also take away guns, knives and other weapons.

You are not alone

If you have been assaulted, family, friends and community resources are there to help. You do not have to deal with assault alone.

CRISIS NUMBERS

If you have been victimized or have any further questions regarding personal safety, contact your local police department or one of the numbers below:

Victim Service Unit, Calgary Police Service

Telephone: (403) 206-8398

Victim Services Unit, Edmonton Police Service

Telephone: (780) 421-2218

Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse

Telephone: (403) 237-5888

Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton

Telephone: (780) 423-4121

University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre

(Edmonton) Telephone: (780) 492-9771

Safetalk Sexual Assault Program (Sherwood Park)

Telephone: (780) 449-0900

PACE Grande Prairie

Telephone: (780) 539-6666

Lethbridge Family Services

Telephone: (403) 327-5724

Lloydminster Sexual Assault and Information Centre

Telephone: (306) 825-8255

Central Alberta Sexual Assault Centre

Telephone: (403) 340-1120

Fort McMurray Unity House

Telephone: (780) 743-1190

Fort McMurray Sexual Assault Line

Telephone: (780) 791-6708

Contact your local police service for further information.

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