



Personal Safety Security for the Older Person

Believe it or not - older persons are less often the victims of crime than many of their younger neighbours. Older persons are, however, subjected to burglary and thefts as frequently as the rest of the population. A lifetime of experience coupled with the ageing process can make older persons feel vulnerable and more fearful of becoming a victim of crime.

Good neighbours are a vital component in crime prevention and reducing the fear of crime. This is particularly important for the older person. They will keep an eye on their neighbours' property and call regularly to make sure everything is OK.

You too can be a good neighbour, its all about awareness of what is happening around you and keeping a friendly lookout for the person near you. Consider joining a Community Alert or Neighbourhood Watch scheme if there is one in your area. These schemes may be able to assist in getting funding for various security systems available for qualifying older persons. Your local Garda station or Garda Crime Prevention Officer can provide more information on the setting up of such schemes.



An Garda Síochána
Garda National Crime Prevention Unit

Home Security

- Fit a door viewer and a door chain/limiter. These will allow you to safely check callers and retain control over security.
- Front and rear doors and windows should be kept locked day and night.
- Keep a list of emergency numbers that you can refer to quickly, if required, e.g. family, neighbours, Gardaí, medical or fire service.
- If you have a mobile phone, ensure that you have emergency contact numbers recorded under the ICE (In Case of Emergency) system.
- Keep a Personal Information Pack in your fridge (Age Action Ireland, tel: 01-4756989, for further information).
- Number your house clearly so that emergency services can find you quickly if necessary.

Distraction Burglary

A distraction burglary is where a bogus caller to your home gains entry on a pretext/lie or creates a diversion so that an accomplice can sneak in separately.

Unfortunately, older persons are frequently targeted with this crime. Bogus callers will say anything to get into your home -

"There's been an accident, can I call an ambulance?"

"I've broken down, can I use your phone?"

"I've had a fall, could I have a glass of water?"

"I'm from the council, there's a burst main, I need to turn off your supply"

Some will keep you talking at the front door while their accomplice sneaks in the back door. In all cases you need to be wary of strangers calling to your home. Take precautions -

- Do not open the door to anyone before you've checked who it is and what they want. Use your door viewer and chain/limiter.
- Check identification, where appropriate.
- Do not leave strangers unattended at your doorstep.
- Ensure your back door is locked when you answer a call at the front door.

**Remember
if in doubt, keep them out**

Cash/Financial Security

Thieves and burglars love nothing better than cash. It is therefore important to observe the following:

- Do not keep large amounts of cash in your home. Use banks, building societies, credit unions, post offices etc.
- Keep all credit/debit cards in a secure location as well as financial statements, records etc.
- Out-of-date cards should be destroyed.
- Do not give your credit/debit card passwords to anybody.
- When out and about, avoid carrying large sums of money.

Property

Mark your property and record serial numbers where appropriate. UV markers and/or special etching tools can be used. Use a unique reference number such as your initials and date of birth. Seek advice about marking high value property e.g. antiques, paintings etc.

It is also a good idea to photograph your property. Photograph items such as jewellery against a ruler or some other common household item (for size reference). If taking digital photos, keep copies of your property photographs elsewhere other than on your own computers.

Scams

Be alert to con artists. Don't fall for anything that sounds too good to be true.

- In general, do not give out personal information over the phone unless you know whom you are talking to. This also applies to internet communication.
- Do not give out your credit/debit card, bank account, social welfare numbers etc. to anyone over the phone.
- Do not leave old and no longer relevant financial statements lying around. Shred as appropriate.
- Be wary of bogus trades people calling to your door and advising you that your roof needs to be repaired, gutters are blocked and need to be cleared, trees need to be felled etc.

Out and About

- Avoid travelling alone, where possible. Go with family, friends or neighbours.
- If travelling by car, keep all doors locked. Be alert when parking and getting in/out of your vehicle.

