Bowling Green Police Division Crime Prevention Tips

1) HOW TO GIVE A CAR THIEF A HARD TIME

The National Automobile Theft Bureau (NATB) recommends the following precautions:

Park in a well-lighted area

Close all windows, lock all doors

Activate any theft deterrent device you may have

Put packages or valuable out of sight: CB radios, tape and cassette decks and other expensive items in full view invite theft.

If you park in a commercial lot or garage, leave only the ignition key with the attendant.

Do not keep license, registration or title in car. If left in car, thieves can use these documents to sell your car if stolen, or to impersonate you when they are challenged by police. Owners who indiscriminately leave keys, registrations and other identifiable material in their vehicles may return to their residence only to find that they are the victims of a burglary.

If you have a garage, use it. Lock both the vehicle and the garage.

2) PERSONAL SAFETY

Proper maintenance of your vehicle will prevent routine breakdowns thereby avoiding vulnerable situations. A Civilian Band Radio (CB) offers a degree of protection in that it gives you outside contact in the event of an emergency.

Check the following items on a routine basis:

Tire pressure and wear;

Oil and brake fluid levels;

Battery fluid,,

Radiator water level; the following items should be in your vehicle at all times for emergency situations:

Screwdriver;

Pliers;

Flares;

Flashlight;

Jack/Spare tire;

Battery jumper cables and procedure for boosting;

Change for telephone;

Lubricant for locks;

Lock de-icer;

Lug wrench;

Auto insurance card;

First Aid Kit and Blanket;
Phone Numbers of 24 hour tow and repair service;
Sign: "PLEASE CALL POLICE" in light-reflecting letters approximately 12" high;
Emergency tire repair kit and air compressor.

3) PURSE SNATCHING:
DO NOT....
carry a bag that makes you a target. A bag that dangles from the shoulder can be easily yanked off your shoulder by someone coming up from behind.
DO NOT....
carry your bag in such a manner that you can't let it go if you have to. Many women have been injured because their own bags acted as handcuffs as a purse snatcher yanked it away.
DO....
be aware of your surroundings and carry your bag close to your body, tucked in the bend of your elbow.
DO....
minimize the amount of money and credit cards that you carry with you on a daily basis. Divide your money between pockets and bags.
IF...
you are the victim of a purse snatch do not fight to hold onto your bag, especially if there is a weapon involved.

4) COMING HOME LATE AT NIGHT:
Avoid shortcuts that are not well traveled or well lit.
Know what reputable stores are open in your neighborhood late at night. If you suspect that you are being followed stay away from lonely quiet blocks and head for the store you know to be open.
When walking to your car or on your way home, keep your keys in your hand until you are safely inside for added protection.
If someone drops you off at home by auto, ask the driver to wait until you are safely inside.
If a motorist bothers you while you are walking turn around and walk in the opposite direction of the car. Do this as often as necessary and he should get discouraged.

5) IF YOU ARE DRIVING:
Keep windows rolled up, except for a small. ventilation space and keep your doors locked.

If someone attempts to force you off the road, don't panic..... blow your horn constantly to attract attention. If you are forced over, as soon as you stop put your car in reverse and back away..... keep blowing the horn and moving the car as much as possible.
If you suspect that someone is following you make a few turns down active streets if possible. If the auto you suspect is following you makes the same turns as you then head for the nearest police station, fire house or open store. Don't try to make it to your own quiet residential area.
Try to park your car in a well lighted area, this is not only good from the standpoint of discouraging a personal attack on you but also for reducing the chance of auto theft. Look around before you get out of your car.
Before getting into your car, look inside first to make sure no one is hiding in the back seat. When leaving your car, make sure it is locked.

6) AT HOME YOU SHOULD:
Have your key ready before you get to the front door.
Make sure your entrance area is well lighted.
If you live in an apartment don't be polite and hold the lobby door open for a stranger who has been waiting.
List only your last name and first initial in your mailbox.
Don't buzz someone inside unless you know them.
If a stranger wants to use your phone for any kind of call from business to emergency ..... keep him out and you make the call for them! Any problems or in doubt? Call the police!
If you arrive home and find your door open DO NOT GO INSIDE call the police from a pay phone or neighbors house and ask them to meet you.
Don't get on the elevator with a stranger if your own good judgment warns you against it -- need an excuse to avoid embarrassment say something like; *"Oh I forgot my mail."*

7) IF YOU ARE THE VICTIM OF A RAPE:
Report crime immediately to Police. Call 911.
Do not wash or douche.
Have a medical exam and internal gynecological exam as soon as possible accompanied by a police officer preferably.
Inform doctor of exact acts committed upon you and have him note any medical evidence of them.
Semen smears must be taken by the doctor.
Doctor should note any bruises or injuries (bleeding, lacerations, etc.) external or internal.

Have the doctor test for venereal diseases (and pregnancy later if relevant).
Inform the police of all details of attack, however intimate, and of anything unusual you may have noted about the attacker. remember, what he said and how he said it may lead to his arrest.
Show police any external bruises or injuries however minor, resulting from the attack. Also show them to a friend or relative who might be available as a corroborative witness at the trial.
Give the undergarments to the police (for semen analysis).
Give any torn or stained clothing to the police.
When calm, make note of events of attack, unusual details, etc.

8) THE MIND OF A THIEF

For the property thief, the decision to commit a crime on an apartment property is a *risk* versus *reward* exercise. The risk of committing this crime is the chance of getting caught, losing the property, and possibly their freedom. The reward is the perceived benefit obtained upon successful completion of the crime. A good apartment security plan will address this concept by using crime prevention measures that will increase the perpetrator's *perception* of being caught (risk), while diminishing their *perceived* value of their target (reward).
Property criminals view an apartment community differently than a prospect looking for a new place to live. For property thieves, it's more like going shopping and looking at the various items available to steal. They have a choice where and when they will commit a crime. If the thieves don't like the merchandise or the shopping experience at your property, they will go elsewhere. For them, the available targets equate to money. The things they steal can be converted to money or can be used so they don't have to spend their money. Property crimes are usually one of *stealth*, where the criminal does <u>not</u> want a confrontation or be identified. However, sometimes the property criminal will become violent if the opportunity presents itself or if surprised, cornered, or captured.
Those arrested for property crimes and usually male and between 18-21 years old. The studies show that most property criminals live nearby their target areas and are familiar with the neighborhood. It is an important *comfort factor* for them to know the terrain and all the potential escape routes. They will usually work the property on foot, unless they need a vehicle to transport the stolen merchandise. Sometimes the property criminal will have lived in the target apartment community or have a friend who is a current resident.
For apartment communities, recognizing and addressing the lower levels of criminal motivation is the first key to successful deterrence. A good crime prevention program works best on moderately and poorly motivated criminals.

There are four key points to remember: (1) A criminal's motivation to commit a theft is at it's lowest level during the first visit to the property; (2) Criminal motivation increases with familiarity of the property; (3) Success, in committing crimes on a property, will increase the level of motivation to continue to commit more crimes; (4) It is three times more difficult to deter a criminal who has been successfully committing crimes on your property.
The best places to address lower levels of criminal motivation is at the entrances to the property, the perimeter of the buildings, and most importantly, in the leasing office. The property thief will view the lack of suitable escape routes as a trap and will simply choose another property to victimize. Good perimeter fencing and a reduced number of entrances after hours will often create that perception. Believe it or not, thieves read the signs that say, "Security Patrol" or "Neighborhood Watch" or "Crime Free Multi-Housing Program", even if we don't. Property thieves want to *blend* into a community, and they get uncomfortable when residents look suspiciously at them.

9) For the Apartment Manager, take a look at all your apartment units to see if they comply with these basic security rules:
1. Always rekey or replace deadbolt locks at resident turnover
2. Always use 3" screws for strike plates on wooden door jambs
3. Always use secondary blocking devices for sliding doors and windows
4. Always use anti-lift devices on sliding doors and windows
5. Always replace window screens if missing or damaged.
6. Always use 180-degree peepholes on entry doors
7. Always participate in and document a new resident walk-through
8. Always respond quickly to resident lock-repair requests

10) ATM SAFETY
Only use ATM machines in a well-lighted, open, high-traffic area If lights around the ATM are not working, don't use that machine Avoid ATM machines adjacent to obvious hiding places When you approach an ATM, scan the area first for loiterers Have your card ready and leave quickly, not counting your cash in public Walk, run, or drive away immediately if your instincts tell you so Beware of offers for help from strangers during an ATM transaction Tell any suspicious male in a loud, firm voice to back-off Don't argue with a robber, if confronted, and give up the cash Don't fight with or attempt to follow the robber Drive or walk to a safe place and immediately call the police

11) MOTEL SECURITY TIPS

Always request a room on an upper floor, if possible
A solid door with a good deadbolt lock is best
Electronic card access locks help limit access
Make sure your door has a peephole and night latch and use it
Turn on the TV or radio just loud enough to hear through the door
Turn on a single light in the room if you plan to return after dark
Inspect the room hiding places upon entering and check all locks
Ask the bellman for an escort and use valet parking if alone

12) IDENTITY THEFT PREVENTATIVE STEPS

Run a credit report on yourself to see if there are any unknown credit inquiries or unauthorized accounts
Reconcile your check and credit card statements in a timely fashion and challenge any purchases that you did not make
Limit the number of credit cards you have to reduce exposure, and cancel any inactive accounts
Destroy all unused pre-approved credit card and loan applications. The mailbox thief only has to fill them out and redirect the return address to start using your credit
Never give any important number out like from your drivers license, credit card, bank account, date of birth, or social security number to anyone you don't know over the telephone
Minimize exposure of your drivers license number, date of birth, social security number , and credit card numbers. If the numbers are requested for check cashing purposes, ask if the business has alternative options such as such as using a check-cashing card
Safeguard your credit, debit, and ATM card receipts and shred them before disposing of them
Shred your bank statements and any tax documents when you dispose of them
Before disposal, shred paycheck stubs and W-2 forms that contain your social security number and often your name and address. This is a common way for dumpster divers to obtain important identification
Scrutinize your utility and subscription bills to make sure the charges are yours
Destroy all checks immediately when you close a checking account. Destroy or keep in a secure place, any courtesy checks that your bank or credit card company may mail to you
Memorize your passwords and personal identification (PIN) numbers. Keep your PIN numbers somewhere that only you know
Don't give out your PIN or write them on your credit cards or ATM cards

Keep a list of, or photocopy all credit and identification cards you carry with you, including front and back, so that you can quickly call the issuers to inform them about missing or stolen cards
Don't give away too much personal information on your family web site. Full names, date of births, and address is too much information to post. By obtaining your "place-of-birth," the identity thief can possibly get your duplicate birth certificate
Protect your mother's maiden name, especially when using family tree tracers and genealogy service web sites. Maiden names are often used as passwords to access accounts over the telephone
Never leave your purse or wallet unattended, at work, at restaurants, at health fitness clubs, in your shopping cart, at church, or at social gatherings. Never leave your purse or wallet in open view in your car, even when locked

13) IF YOU BECOME A VICTIM OF IDENTITY THEFT
Report the incident to the police immediately. If you know where your identification was stolen, that would be the correct police jurisdiction to report it to. Insist on being given a police report number a get a copy to encloses in correspondence with credit agencies
Report all stolen cards to the issuers immediately and request that new card numbers. Always respond to written credit card receipt notifications received in the mail
Notify your bank in the event that your checks are stolen and request that your account be closed
In order to prove your innocence, be prepared to fill out affidavits of forgeries for banks, credit grantors, and recipients of stolen checks. They are joint victims with you and may suffer a financial loss
Be prepared to work with retailers who have been victimized by someone using your name to help mitigate their losses, if necessary
Contact the social security office if someone is using your social security number to establish credit or new accounts. If SSN fraud is suspected, call the Office of the Inspector General Hotline: (800) 269-0271 or e-mail oig.hotline@ssa.org/
Obtain copies of your credit report periodically to see if there are any unknown credit lines in your name. Credit reports costs less than $10. All three major credit reporting agencies in the United States have toll free telephone numbers. Equifax (888) 532-0179; Experian (800) 311-4769; Trans Union (800) 680-7289. Each agency has a consumer fraud division. Call them.
Report suspected fraud to the credit reporting agencies and request that your account be red flagged with a fraud statement posted at the top of your report to all three credit reporting agencies. This will stop future credit from being issued until

you are contacted and will remain in place for seven years or until you cancel the request. These agencies will also help clear up negative information on the reports due to fraud.

14) SHOPPING/MALL SAFETY TIPS

Be aware and alert to predators in the parking lot Plan when to go and where to park Do not get out of the car if not safe to do so Scan the area around your car as you approach it Teach your family to enter and exit the car quickly Return to the store if anyone looks or acts suspicious Call the police and notify mall security of any criminal activity

15) Deadbolt Locks

A deadbolt lock can provide good protection. When you turn the key, the lock mechanism slides a strong metal bolt from the door into the frame. When you buy a deadbolt lock, make sure that the bolt extends at least one inch from the edge of the door, the connecting screws that hold the lock together are on the inside of the door, the strike plate is attached to the door frame with screws that measure at least three inches in length and that the cylinder has a steel guard around the key section. The cylinder guard should be tapered or rotate freely around the key section to prevent wrenching if it is twisted.

16) Hinges

Many homes have doors that open to the outside, exposing the hinge pins. Despite a good strong lock, the burglar can remove the pins and lift the door from the frame.

To prevent this, remove two opposing screws from each leaf of the hinge. Screw a long lag bolt into the frame side of the hinge leaf and saw off the head leaving about 1/2 inch protruding. Drill out the opposite hole to allow the bolt to enter when the door is closed. Do this to the top and bottom hinge plates.

The burglar can remove the hinge pins, but the door will remain firmly in place. This technique is good for any door, no matter how the hinges have been placed

17) Garage Doors

Standard locks on garage doors are easily pried, allowing a burglar access to your home without detection. Cane bolts and hasps are excellent protection. Make certain each side of the garage door is secured to prevent prying open a crawl space. Any door leading from the garage into the house should be securely locked. The more barriers you provide against the burglar, the better protected you are.

18) Door Viewers

To avoid opening your door without knowing who is there, install a door viewer. This device has a wide-angle lens to let you see someone standing outside your door without opening it.

19) Padlocks
When selecting padlocks to secure your garage door, storage shed, fence gate or toolbox, do not economize. Low-priced locks are made from low quality materials and easily pried open or cut with bolt cutters. Look for these features when purchasing a padlock:
Double locking shackle at the toe and heel
Hardened steel shackle, the larger the diameter the better
Five pin tumbler
Key retaining feature (prevents removal of the key when unlocked)
A strong steel hasp used with the padlock
20) Sliding Windows
Sliding glass windows should be given the same security treatment as arcadia doors. Use the same supplementary locks or screws in the frame. Screws installed in the track above the sliding window frame will prevent the window from being lifted out of the track.
Drill a pilot hole in the top track above each corner of the window frame and install a screw into each hole. Adjust the screws so that the head of the screw just barely clears the frame when it is moved back and forth.

21) Casement - Crank Windows
These windows are easily secured. The latch should close properly with the window tight. With the latch in a closed position, drill a small hole through the latch frame and handle. Insert a metal pin through the hole to lock the window. For additional security, a small padlock can be used in place of the pin. Key operated replacement latches are also available from a locksmith or hardware store. Keep the key handy in case of emergency.

22) Double Hung Windows
An easy, inexpensive way to secure your windows is to use the "pin" trick. Drill an angled hole through the top frame of the lower window partially into the frame of the upper window. Then insert the pin (a nail or an eyebolt that is slightly smaller in diameter than the hole). The window can't be opened until you remove the pin. Make a second set of holes with windows partially open so you can have ventilation without inviting intruders.
You also may purchase special key locks for windows at a hardware store.

23) Fire Escape Planning
Check smoke detectors.
Plan ahead. Know how to get children out of the bedrooms if the front or back doors are blocked by smoke or fire. Make sure you know in advance what all your escape options are.
Smoke kills. Shut doors to stop it from advancing.
Show children how to crawl under smoke to get better air near the floor.
If there's a fire, get everybody out and then call 9-1-1 from a neighbor's house.
Don't go back to the burning house. Many people are killed returning to a burning building.

24) What Should You Do To Prevent Sexual Assault?
Always be aware of your surroundings. Stay in well-lit areas as much as possible. Walk confidently, directly, at a steady pace. A rapist looks for someone who appears vulnerable. Walk on the side of the street facing traffic. Walk close to the curb. Avoid doorways, bushes and alleys where rapists can hide. If you think you are being followed, walk quickly to areas where there are people and lights. If a car appears to be following you, turn and walk in the opposite direction or walk on the other side of the street. Be careful when people stop you for directions or money. Always reply from a distance and never get too close to the car. If you are in trouble or feel you are in danger, don't be afraid to attract help any way you can. Scream, yell or run away to safety. Always lock your car. Keep your car locked when you are away from it to keep someone from hiding and waiting inside. When you are inside the car, lock the doors for safety. Look inside and around your car before you get in. Be aware of other people in parking areas, especially those close to your vehicle. If you think you are being followed, drive to a public place or a police station to get help. If your car breaks down, open the hood or attach a white cloth to the antenna. If someone stops to help, stay inside your locked vehicle and ask them to call the police. If you choose to carry any type of weapon for self-protection, give careful consideration to your ability and willingness to use it. Remember there is always the chance that it could be taken away and used against you.

25) You Are Going On Vacation - Help Burglars Take One Too!
An empty house is a tempting target for a burglar. Use this checklist of tips to help safeguard your home while you're away.
Have good locks on all doors and windows and USE THEM!
Ask a neighbor to watch the house while you're away. It's a good idea to leave your vacation address and telephone number with a neighbor so you can be reached in case of an emergency.

Never leave your house key hidden outside your home.
Stop all deliveries, or arrange for a neighbor to pick up your mail, newspapers and packages.
Arrange for someone to mow your lawn, rake leaves and maintain the yard to give the home a lived-in look.
Plug in timers to turn lights, a radio or television on and off at appropriate times. This helps to disguise the fact that you are away.
Turn the bell or ringer on your telephone down low. If a burglar is around, he won't be alerted to your absence by a ringing phone.
Don't announce your absence on answering machine messages.
Leave your blinds, shades and curtains in a normal position. Don't close them unless that is what you do when you are home.
Close and lock garage doors and windows. Ask a neighbor to occasionally park in your driveway. If you leave your car at home, park it as you normally would. Vehicles parked outside should be moved occasionally to appear that they are being used.
Secure storage sheds, attic entrances and gates.
Tell your local police you plan to be away. Patrol officers may have the opportunity to periodically check your home.
Engrave your valuables as recommended in Operation I.D. This simple step will allow your stolen property to be identified and returned to you if recovered by the police.

26) Travel Safely!

At home or away, staying alert can save the day!
If you are driving, make sure your vehicle has been properly serviced and is in suitable condition for the journey.
Try to have specific directions and routes to your destination.
If you get lost, call the local police for directions or assistance.
Always keep your vehicle doors and windows locked.
At stop lights and other traffic delays, leave enough space in front of your vehicle so that you have an escape option in case of an emergency.
Let someone know the route you intend to travel and your itinerary. This will help authorities in locating you if there is a need to do so.
Plan your trip carefully and allow for factors such as weather, fatigue, facilities for lodging, food and fuel. Be sure you have sufficient finances, either cash, travelers checks or credit cards.
Ask the hotel or motel staff about their security measures so you know what to expect.

Use the hotel safe to store your valuables during your stay

ROBBERY

You've heard it before and now here it is again: Never resist if you are the victim of a robbery. Do exactly as you are told to do in order to minimize your chances of being injured and to speed the departure of your assailant before he gets other ideas. The assailant, in most cases, doesn't want to hang around much longer than you want him to.

Your money and other valuables can hopefully be replaced. If they can't be replaced don't let that thought cause you to hesitate. You certainly cannot be replaced. Try to obtain a good description of the suspect(s) and the direction and mode (on foot, vehicle) of escape.

It's always a good idea to have a second billfold with a few dollars and a few important looking cards in it to give to an attacker should the need arise. Keep your real cash and cards in an interior pocket not easily accessible by the robber. Do not resist any attempt the attacker may make to search your pockets, however. CON GAMES

The object of any con game is to cause you to part with your money or other thing of value. Most con games are initiated by people who approach you on the street or call on you at your home. Be suspicious of ANY plan, idea, scheme, business deal or whatever that requires you to part with your money on short notice. If you feel you have been the victim of a con game or an illegal business practice, notify the police. Do not be embarrassed or hesitant to tell the authorities for fear of ridicule. The sooner you notify the police the greater your chances of recovering your property. You may not be the only victim of whatever group is operating, and your statements and those of other victims may help in apprehending the suspects.