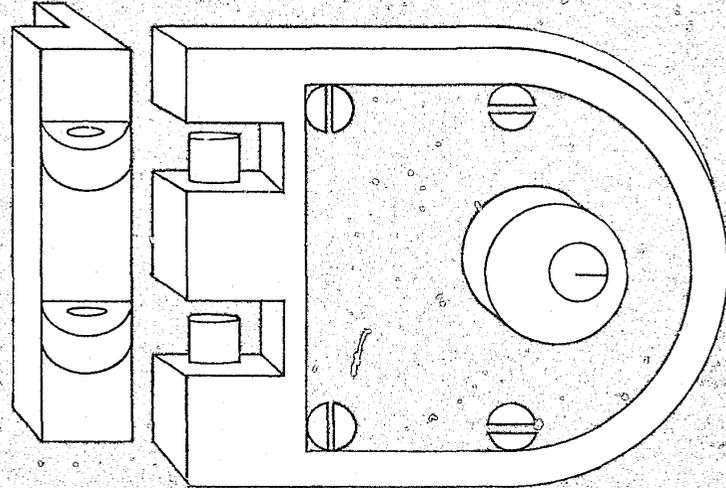


If you have issues viewing or accessing this file contact us at NCJRS.gov.

A REPORT ON SERVICES TO THE ELDERLY⁵ SECURITY

43639



National Association of Counties Research Foundation

A REPORT ON SERVICES TO THE ELDERLY⁵ SECURITY

Cuyahoga County's Senior Safety and Security Program

by Phil Jones and Elizabeth Rott

NCJRS

OCT 31 1977

ACQUISITIONS

This project was supported, in part, by a grant, number 90-A-714/01, from the Model Projects in Aging Program, Administration on Aging, Office of Human Development, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Washington, D. C. 20201.

This report is the fifth in a series on county efforts to help elderly citizens

Report 1. A Low-Cost, Fare-Free Transportation Program

Report 2. Dade County's Programs to House the Elderly

Report 3. Pima County's Continuum of Care

Report 4. Nassau County's Department of Senior Citizen Affairs

For copies of these and upcoming reports please write the Aging Program, National Association of Counties Research Foundation.

Contents	Page
A Serious Problem	1
A Solution	1
Getting an L.E.A.A Grant	2
The Program	2
Working with Police	4
Crime and the Elderly	5
Fear of Crime	5
A Survey	6
Opportunity and Intent	8
How to Stop Crime	8
Burglary	8
An Intruder	10
Con-Artists	10
Fraud	11
Self-Protection	11
Self-Defense	12
The Future	12

A Serious Problem

At a fast-food restaurant in the West Side of Cleveland a young man sits smoking and slowly sipping a cup of coffee. He seems to be waiting for somebody.

In this neighborhood the streets are almost empty. It is mid-morning; most people are busy at their jobs downtown.

Just before eleven o'clock a large elderly woman turns a corner and walks slowly down the street. The young man doesn't move, but watches her as she makes her way past several abandoned stores. When she enters the door of a small branch bank, he puts his cigarette out, finishes his coffee, and walks outside.

Five minutes later the woman comes out of the bank and heads toward a grocery store farther down the block. She doesn't notice the young man across the street who glances right and left, then quickly crosses the street. Suddenly her purse is wrenched from her grasp. When she turns, she barely gets a glimpse of the young man as he disappears around a building.

The woman realizes what has happened. She begins to scream—but stops. She knows it will do no good. Her purse, identification cards, housekeys, and \$200 in cash are gone.

A minute later, as she stands wondering how to replace her lost possessions, a police car approaches. The woman shouts. The car stops. Two young officers jump out.

"I've just been robbed," she says.

The officers ask her to describe her assailant.

"A worthless bum," she replies.

Is he tall? She isn't sure. How is he dressed? Maybe he's wearing a hat, maybe not. What color is his jacket or coat? She doesn't remember.

The two young policemen look at each other and shrug. "How can this crazy old woman expect us to do our job with a description like that," they think. The young man, only two blocks away, will not be captured today.

A Solution

The woman is obviously not "crazy." She simply does not know how to avoid such incidents nor how to provide police with certain kinds of information.

Since 1974, Cuyahoga County, Ohio, has operated a Senior Safety and Security Program to help educate this elderly woman and others like her about crime prevention. Through slide-shows and discussions with groups of elderly citizens, the program's staff demonstrates how the elderly can make themselves less vulnerable to crime and how to help the police catch criminals.

"Much of what we teach is common sense," says Fred Middleton, the program's director, "but the elderly often overlook basic precautions or are too proud to admit they don't know how to do something the rest of us assume they know."

For example, of six slide-shows prepared by Middleton and his two community safety organizers—Cathryn Robinson and Kathleen Broderick—one illustrates simple ways to avoid street attacks, another how to open and maintain a checking account. The hapless woman in the preceding incident, for example, could probably have avoided the confrontation with the young man entirely if

she had known how to open an account and pay bills by check. She could have had her social security check deposited directly in her account, thereby avoiding the visit to the bank, which attracted the young man's attention. She would not have carried—and lost—\$200 in cash, her entire income for the month.

The slide shows would have also advised her not to carry unneeded cards and identification. Without cards that provide her name and address, housekeys would have been useless to the young man. The victim would not have to buy new locks for her doors to protect herself from further thievery.

The woman would also have learned how to be more observant of her surroundings. Had she been aware of the young man, Middleton suggests, she might have had time to foil his robbery attempt by, say, dropping her purse into the nearest mailbox. The Post Office, he adds, is always happy to return a purse or wallet.

Finally, the woman would have learned how to observe and describe a thief for the police. The young man would not have gotten away.

Getting an L.E.A.A Grant

Cuyahoga County commissioners became interested in a crime prevention program for the elderly in 1972 when a survey conducted by the county welfare department revealed that crime was among the elderly's top concerns. At about the same time, a poll taken at a convention of senior citizens in Cleveland showed crime to be the delegates' number one concern. Therefore, in early 1973, when representatives of the convention appeared before

the board of county commissioners to outline the need for a senior safety and security program, they received a sympathetic hearing. Soon thereafter, the commissioners filed a pre-application with the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council of Greater Cleveland. Six months later the council advised the commissioners that their program would be entitled to a grant of about \$65,000 from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) for fiscal 1974.

The commissioners then submitted a formal application. In June, 1974, they received notification of the award of a five-year grant. The federal contribution for the first year was \$67,585. The Ohio Department of Economic and Community Development and the county each contributed \$3,755 to provide the local match for the federal funds.

Most of the grant was for the personnel costs of a director, two community safety organizers, and a secretary. About \$10,000 was for travel, telephone, office equipment and supplies, and consultant fees.

The Program

The program was launched in August, 1974, and was made one of three divisions of the county's office on aging. As stated in the grant application, the program's efforts were to be concentrated on six areas in the county with large numbers of elderly residents.

The areas range from two poverty-filled inner city neighborhoods in Cleveland—Woodland Hills and the Near West Side—to working-class and middle-income suburban towns—Parma, East Cleveland, and

Lakewood—to a relatively wealthy university community, Cleveland Heights. The number of people 60 or older in these areas ranges from 11 per cent in Parma to 21 per cent in Lakewood.

The program staff contacts all senior citizen clubs and organizations, nutrition centers, and even large apartment buildings in these areas. Other parts of the county are covered, but not as intensively. For the past three years, the staff and volunteers presented slide-shows, talks, and demonstrations of locks and other crime-fighting equipment about three times a week. The staff also offered to send teams to evaluate the safety of citizens' homes, but according to Kathleen Broderick, a program coordinator, this did not prove popular with the senior citizens until recently. Previously, the staff was too busy to follow up immediately on inquiries about home inspections. When the staff called, residents could no longer remember having requested an inspection. Recently, however, the staff has been responding more quickly, and Broderick reports that about seven inspections are made each month.

Middleton and his staff always try to have volunteers or the staff of a local club or organization make presentations. For example, at public housing sites guards employed by the Cleveland Metropolitan Housing Authority are given several hours training in both crime prevention techniques for the elderly and in how to handle the slide projector. Later the guards conduct the presentations and lead the conversations on how residents can effectively apply the information in the shows.

Usually nine presentations are made at a site, one each

week. In chronological order they are:

1. A discussion of crime problems
2. Demonstration of locks and how to mark valuable property
3. Slide-show: "How to Foil a Burglar — Part 1: The First Line of Defense"
4. Slide-show: "How to Foil a Burglar—Part 2: Behaviors"
5. Slide-show: "How to Foil a Burglar—Part 3: Confrontation"
6. Slide-show: "How to Avoid Street Attacks"
7. Slide-show: "Combatting the Con-Artist"
8. Slide-show: "Banking Services"
9. A quiz about crime and discussion of the answers

In most cases the program staff tries to use volunteers, rather than paid staff, to make presentations and perform other tasks. A volunteer coordinator has been hired as part of a Senior Community Services Employment project funded under Title IX of the Older Americans Act and sponsored by the local American Association of Retired Persons. The coordinator works 20 hours a week recruiting volunteers from local organizations and directing the efforts of volunteers.

One problem in keeping volunteers working for the program is that no money is available to reimburse them for travelling expenses. On the other hand, the slide-shows prove popular with people at the sites and this encourages volunteers to stay involved, according to a volunteer.



Above: A scene in "How to Avoid Street Attacks." A woman walking too close to buildings is within reach of lurking muggers.

"I think the seniors like the slide-shows because they are not frightening," she says. "Instead, they are educational and entertaining at the same time."

Volunteers not only run the projector and give the demonstrations, they appear in the shows as actors. They appear as victims and as informed citizens who take precautions that foil a variety of muggers, con-artists and pranksters—played, for the most part, by students. The pictures were taken by the program staff. Cathryn Robinson, who took many of the pictures, explains: "We just rented slide-shows on crime prevention, studied the scripts, rewrote them to make them relevant to Cuyahoga's senior citizens, got our volunteers together, and took the pictures."

The resulting slide-shows are inexpensive as well as "entertaining and educational." Accompanying recordings were made for two slide-shows, but usually the operator explains the pictures by reading a prepared script and answering audiences' questions.

Working with Police

The elderly are not the only people who need information about how senior citizens can avoid crime. The program staff works to educate local police as well as the elderly themselves. Middletown has presented slide-shows at several workshops with police officers and other professionals in the criminal justice field. The staff tries to coordinate the program with police programs as much as possible. For example, presentations in Cleveland are often made with representatives of the Cleveland Police Department's Community Relations staff who accom-

pany the Safety and Security Program staff to answer questions about police procedures.

Police cooperation in compiling data on the victimization of the elderly, however, has proven uneven. Lakewood Police Chief Charles Petro has been very helpful in assisting the program's attempt to obtain statistics on types of crimes that involve the elderly. On the other hand, the City of Cleveland Heights and the City of Parma do not include the age of victims on their records and, hence, can provide no information.

Crime and the Elderly

Are the elderly preyed on by criminals more than younger people? No. Studies consistently show that the elderly are the victims of less crime than the general population. For example, *Crime in Eight Cities*, a highly regarded study conducted by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) shows victimization rates for every thousand residents of Cleveland in each age category in 1972. (See the tables in column at right.)

Clearly the elderly are the victims of every kind of crime less often than the rest of the population. However, such statistics may not tell the whole story. For example, the elderly may not report crime to *anyone* because they fear retaliation by criminals. And fear of crime may have effects almost as bad as actual crimes.

Fear of Crime

In a 1975 poll conducted by Louis Harris and Associates, "fear of crime" is the most common "serious

Crimes Against the Person*
(per thousand persons)

Age of Person	Robbery	Assault	Personal Larceny
12-15	30	38	78
16-19	34	66	108
20-24	35	55	100
25-34	25	36	100
35-49	22	21	70
50 and over	15	8	36

Crimes Against Property**
(per thousand households)

Age of Head of Household	Burglary	Household Larceny	Auto Theft
12-19	154	136	—1
20-34	163	113	107
35-49	154	104	98
50-64	109	63	70
65 and over	63	32	26

1. Insufficient data.

problem" cited by the nation's elderly. Low victimization rates, therefore, may reflect only an intense fear of crime that keeps the elderly imprisoned in their homes. Fear of injury or theft may be forcing large numbers of elderly Americans to spend their "golden years" isolated from the activity and contact with other people that makes life worth living.

Isolation, in turn, can compound the elderly's fear.

* *Crime in Eight Cities*. U.S. Department of Justice Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, July, 1974, p. 14.

***Ibid.*, p. 23.

With no friends, family, or contact with the community, the elderly may feel—probably correctly—that injury or loss of property will be more serious for them than for others. Hence isolated elderly people become more cautious than others who can rely on family or friends for assistance.

Reasonable caution, however, may turn into irrational, frenzied fear when a person is isolated. Rumors and exaggerated newspaper headlines, unchecked by conversation with others, can change every shadow into a prowler, every stranger into a mugger, every teenager into a juvenile delinquent. Fear may become so constant that simple relaxation and enjoyment of life become impossible.

Besides inflicting such misery upon the isolated elderly, excessive fear of crime also poses a serious problem for police and other government officials. Responding to imagined threats is a time-consuming, exasperating, and ultimately expensive burden for police and other public officials.

“There is an urgent need,” says Anna Brown of the Cleveland Mayor’s Commission on Aging, “to reduce the level of fear among the elderly so that it accurately reflects only the actual danger present.”

A Survey

To help fill in gaps in information about crime and its effect on the elderly, the program staff developed a questionnaire. Using surveys developed by the National Opinion Research Center and the National Crime Panel

as models, the staff produced a two-page questionnaire that ranges over five areas:

- The person’s characteristics—age, sex, neighborhood, income, living arrangement;
- Victimization during the preceeding two years;
- Attitudes about the safety of their neighborhood, transportation facilities, and city;
- Past involvement with and opinion of the police and the courts;
- The importance of safety (people were asked to rank seven issues—inflation, health, safety, etc.).

This questionnaire was tested at an annual meeting of Seniors of Ohio, Inc. Analysis of results showed that questions and methods of interviewing had to be refined. Certain questions had been confusing or ambiguous. To overcome these problems the staff modified the questionnaire so that respondents usually chose an answer among several options—for example “very safe,” “somewhat safe,” “somewhat unsafe,” or “very unsafe,” to questions about how they felt in their neighborhoods or downtown. Multiple-choice answers offer another advantage besides clarity. More information can be obtained about attitudes. Instead of knowing only that a respondent feels unsafe, a researcher can determine whether the person feels “very unsafe” or just “somewhat unsafe.”

More instructions to the interviewer—including a sample of how one should introduce oneself—and more space for the interviewer to add details about answers were also added. The modified questionnaire is 13 pages;

most additional pages are simply blanks for the details.

The modified questionnaire was administered to residents of two census tracts—one in Cleveland, the other in Cleveland Heights, near Case Western Reserve University. Blocks within these tracts were selected randomly. From among the households on these blocks, 400 addresses were chosen. Interviewers visited these addresses to find out if people 60 or older lived in the homes. If so, they interviewed the elderly residents. Interviews were completed at 145 households. Another 39 elderly persons were located, but refused to be interviewed.

The results of the survey show that 19 per cent—about one out of five respondents—had been victims of crime in the preceding year. The most commonly cited crime was described earlier—purse snatching. The next most common crime was larceny (theft or attempted theft), followed by vandalism, breaking and entering, auto theft and swindles. One robbery and one rape were reported.

Injury was involved in only one incident—a purse-snatching. (Details of the rape are not known.) According to the 1975 report on the survey, the injury was “slight,” the result of the victim being pushed to the ground.

The average cost of lost property was \$61.50. The largest loss was \$200.

About three out of four crimes were not reported to the police, reflecting, the report says, “the relatively minor nature of the incidents.”

Victims tended to be between the ages of 65 and 75. Men were victims more often than women, although more women than men were interviewed. The program staff believe mobility is the key factor: men leave their homes

more often than women.

Income seems to have a “slight” effect on victimization. Those with incomes between \$3,500 and \$7,500 a year formed the largest category of victims. (Most non-victims also fell in this income category. Perhaps this finding reflects only the fact that most elderly people have incomes in this range.)

Victims and non-victims differed somewhat in the degree of danger they felt in their neighborhoods in the daytime. Victims tended to feel “very unsafe” while non-victims tended to feel “somewhat unsafe.” Over two-thirds of both victims and non-victims, however, said they felt safe during daylight hours.

At night the situation changes dramatically: Less than 10 per cent of both groups said they felt safe. To make neighborhoods safer, respondents suggested, in order:

- Better police patrol,
- Better transportation,
- Removal of “hiding places,”
- Improved lighting.

The most common precaution against crime taken by respondents was “increased lighting.” About half as many respondents reported adding locks. Others said they had bought a dog or gun.

About 60 per cent of the victims and non-victims found the police did an “average” job preventing crime and catching criminals. Victims tended to stress the need for catching criminals more than non-victims did.

Half of the respondents said the courts were “not doing their job well at all.” Only 5 per cent ranked the courts’

performance as "excellent."

Finally, the Senior Safety and Security Program staff found that, as in earlier surveys, crime and safety were the number one concern of the respondents, again topping such problems as inflation and health.*

Opportunity and Intent

Middleton, formerly an attorney with the office of the Ohio attorney general, believes that about 40 per cent of the crime in this country can possibly be avoided if precautions are taken.

"FBI statistics show that 43 per cent of the people arrested for serious crime are 18 or younger," he observes. "They're kids, not professional criminals. So if we take away the opportunity for a crime, I think we'll eliminate most of those crimes."

However, even if professional criminals are involved, removing the opportunity for crime is the best tactic, according to Middleton, because "crime is composed of two elements—the intent and the opportunity. Our program tries to eliminate the opportunity because we can't do much about intent."

How to Stop Crime

Because many county officials share the elderly's concern about crime, the following crime-prevention procedures, taken from literature prepared by the Cuyahoga County Senior Safety Program are included. Suggestions range from ways to eliminate the opportunity for crime, to methods of dealing with assailants and in-

truders, to proper procedures of assisting the Police.

Burglary

Burglary is "the unlawful entry of a home or commercial establishment usually, but not necessarily, attended by theft."**

Contrary to many people's opinion, unlawful entry does not necessarily involve force. (If no unlawful entry is made, yet theft or attempted theft of property is involved, the crime is listed as "household larceny.")***

According to the Senior Safety Security Program staff, about 60 per cent of illegal entries are made through a door. Therefore, the best defense against burglary and unlawful entry is simply a good lock.

Experts on both sides of the law say that most door locks can be opened by any flat instrument—a knife or even a plastic card. The common key-in-the-knob may provide privacy, but will certainly provide no security. Only if a "dead bolt" lock is added can one be fairly assured that one is safe from burglars. The locks should be installed with long heavy-duty screws.

Door frames, hinges, and door themselves should also

*The Senior Safety and Security Program began a second study in 1976 which tries to measure not only victimization among the elderly, but also the effectiveness of the program's presentations. Those who attend presentations are asked if they have been a victim of crime in the previous year. One year later they are contacted again, and the same question is repeated. If those who had been victims the first time report no victimization in the second year, the difference may reflect the effectiveness of the program's educational efforts. Dr. Zev Harel of Cleveland State University is currently analyzing responses to this survey. Results will be published later in 1977.

***Crime in Eight Cities*, p. 7.

****Ibid*, p.7.

be checked. Rotted door frames can negate the value of a dead bolt lock and provide a thief with a crowbar easy access to a house. Frames should be repaired if rot is discovered. Door hinges, if possible, should be on the inside. If a door is very thin, plywood panels can be added as reinforcement.

For doors with glass panels a "double-cylinder dead bolt" is needed. This lock requires a key to open the door from both inside and outside. It prevents a burglar from breaking the glass and reaching inside to open the door.

A "drop bar" or a length of lumber can be used to prevent a sliding glass door from being opened.*

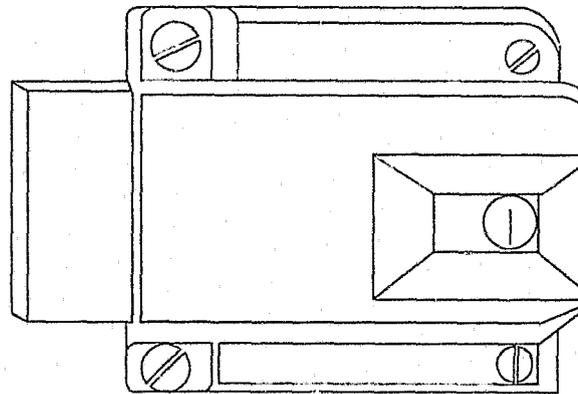
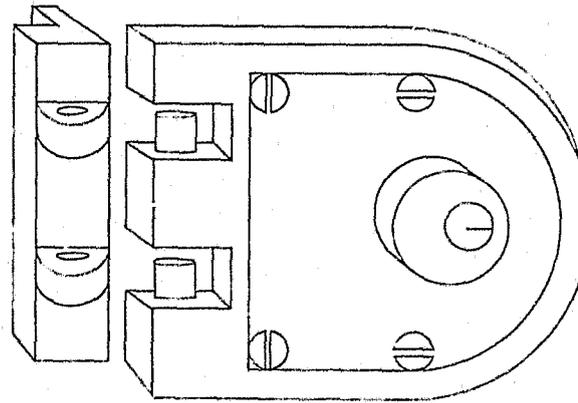
The security program advises the elderly never to rely on a locked screen door because screening can be cut easily and noiselessly.

Windows are another point of entry. Ground-level windows or windows next to fire escapes should have key locks—and the keys kept hidden. Shades or curtains should be drawn at night. Basement windows can be hidden from view by shrubbery. Therefore they should have key locks.

All valuable property in the house such as televisions and radios should be engraved with a name or driver's license number. (Social security number should not be used because the federal government will not release the

*Corporal Clifford Melton of the Montgomery County (Md.) Crime Prevention for Seniors Program advises against using a length of lumber to hold a sliding glass door closed. In demonstrations before senior citizen groups, Melton shows how a thief can slide a knife between the doors and into the wood, lift, and remove the board in less than 10 seconds.

Melton recommends drilling a hole through the sliding door's metal edge and into the door frame. A strong nail or bolt inserted in this hole should hold the door closed. Furthermore, the thief will not be able to see what is holding the door.



Above: Two kinds of double-cylinder dead bolt locks.

individual's name or address to anyone—including the police. Consequently police may have a thief and stolen property in custody, but be unable to contact the original owner. However, a name or license number engraved on a valuable will help the police find the owner and prove the property is stolen. Furthermore, thieves may be less likely to steal an object with this identification because they will find it more difficult to sell.)

Outside the home, shrubs and hedges should be trimmed so they cannot hide a burglar. Keys should not be hidden about the premises, nor should they be labeled "front door," or have a name and address attached. Lights are recommended. "The few pennies you spend for the extra electricity are well worth the protection you get," according to the script of one slide-show.

The program also reminds the elderly to secure the garage from intruders. Tools and ladders in a garage may be just what a burglar needs to enter a home.

The mailbox should not provide a burglar with information he can use.

Initials and last names are sufficient identification on mailboxes. Single people should add fictitious "room-mates" so that it appears that several people reside at the address. Titles such as "Miss" or "Dr." are unnecessary for the mailman, but very interesting to criminals.

When one is away from home, neighbors should be asked to collect newspapers and mail.

Finally, the program cautions all elderly people to verify the identification of any stranger who comes to the door. The identification can be checked by phoning the police or employer if there are doubts about it.

An Intruder

What should an elderly person do if, despite all precautionary efforts, someone has entered the home?

If one is returning to the home, do not enter. Go immediately to a neighbor's home and telephone the police.

If one hasn't noticed the entry and comes upon a burglar, the Cuyahoga County program staff recommends cooperation. Give the burglar anything he wants quietly and calmly. However, at the same time try to observe the burglar's physical features, clothing, and characteristics (left-handed? have a limp? whistles or hums?). After the burglar leaves try to observe his or her vehicle, if any, and a license number. Then the police should be called. Give the police one's name and address, the nature of crime (burglary in this case) and, if known, a description of the burglar's vehicle and license number.

While waiting for the police to arrive, avoid touching anything and try to compose the following information:

- Time of the crime,
- Method of entry and escape,
- Description of the burglar,
- Description of the vehicle and license number, if known.

Con-Artists

Some criminals are "con-artists" who try to pass themselves off as policemen, bank examiners, or someone who has just found a large amount of money in an envelope or satchel. Their intention is to swindle the unwary out of their money.

The key to preventing swindles, according to a slide-

show victim, is to "think prevention." If someone claims to have found some money "listen to your conscience" which tells you to contact the police.

Con-artists sometimes portray police officers or bank examiners. They claim they are investigating one or more employees at a person's bank. The phoney officer or examiner suggests that the person make a substantial withdrawal from the bank without telling any of the employees the reason for the withdrawal. Then, they say, the money should be turned over to the examiner or policeman so that "serial numbers can be checked." A receipt for the money will usually be offered. It is as phoney as the so-called police officer or bank examiner.

The program staff points out that no stranger requesting one to withdraw money should be trusted and that all credentials can be easily verified by telephoning the police department.

Fraud

Most businesses are operated by honest people who would never dream of cheating elderly people. Unfortunately not all. Some unscrupulous firms specialize in offering free house inspections in which they always find furnaces or water heaters about to explode, roofs about to collapse, plumbing about to burst, walls about to crumble, etc. In all cases they try to rush the elderly resident into signing a contract for very expensive—and often totally unnecessary—repairs.

The Cuyahoga County Senior Safety and Security Program advises the elderly to never sign a contract immediately. Always get other estimates and talk it over

with friends or relatives. Put the decision off for a few days when possible—and it usually is. Above all, never sign a contract without understanding the terms of the contract.

Self-Protection

Burglary may be the crime most commonly committed against the elderly in Cleveland. This does not necessarily make it the most threatening. Muggings, robberies, and assaults are usually what people—young and old—fear the most.

The key phrase in the Senior Safety and Security Program's campaign against such crime is—again—"think prevention." Taking precautions, rather than imprisoning oneself at home, should be the elderly person's defense.

Thinking prevention should include all the tactics suggested for the woman, described earlier, who was robbed after leaving the bank. Use a checking account; be more aware of people on the street;* use mailboxes as temporary safeguards for wallet and purses. These are all effective methods to forestall robbery.

Other program suggestions include: walking in the middle of sidewalks, away from parked cars or buildings where assailants may lurk; avoiding alleys, especially at night; carrying purses securely and unobtrusively, with

*Being aware of possible assailants means awareness of both men and women. At a presentation a Senior Safety and Security Program staffer was inadvertently speaking about "boys," when an elderly woman in the audience corrected her.

"How do you know it's just boys?" the elderly woman asked. "A lot of young girls are causing trouble for the elderly in this neighborhood."

the latch against the body.

Wallets should be carried in a front, not a hip, pocket.

When taking a bus have change ready. Do not open a purse and fumble for the fare on the street. That attracts attention.

When getting into an automobile, have the keys ready beforehand. Do not stand next to the car going through pockets or purse searching for keys.

When driving, avoid the curb lane, unlighted streets, and untravelled roads—especially at night. Keep doors locked and windows raised high enough so that no-one can slip a hand in and open the door.

Never pick up hitchhikers.

If you feel a car is following you, blow your horn. If that doesn't discourage the other driver, pull into a service station or police station.

Be careful where you park. Choose well-lighted places as close to your destination as possible. Give a parking lot attendant only the ignition key. Never leave packages in view. Avoid unattended basement garages if possible. If not, arrange to have someone meet you.

It's always best to visit city parks with a few friends. Avoid parks at night.

Self-Defense

The elderly's best defense against crime is to avoid situations that invite crime. As Middleton points out, many criminals are teenagers who see an opportunity to get away with something and act before thinking. Taking a few simple precautions removes most of the threat of such crime.

Nevertheless, there are times when, despite precautions, one is face-to-face with an assailant.

In most cases, the assailant is a thief. If one cooperates and gives the thief whatever he or she demands, a victim usually has nothing more to fear.

Sometimes, however, one is still threatened after giving up one's possessions. In this situation the best weapon, according to the program staff is screaming. "Scream as loud and long as you can," they advise.

Weapons are not recommended because they can be taken away and used against the victim. Rather, the staff says, one should try to set off emergency alarms that might be within reach (especially in an elevator) and make as much noise as possible.

The program staff tells elderly audiences that they should fight back against an assailant only as a last, desperate resort. Biting, stomping hard on an assailant's instep, or using a purse or cane to hit the assailant are mentioned. Another strategy, however, calls for an elderly person simply to sit down. The maneuver may confuse the assailant and, at the same time, reduces the serious risks of being knocked down.

The Future

Since 1974 the level of funding for the Senior Safety and Security Program has been decreasing. In 1974 the federal government contributed \$67,585. By 1977 the federal contribution had fallen to \$41,119 and in 1978 it will be \$20,557. Although the purpose of decreasing federal assistance is to induce local and state governments to step up their funding, more local dollars have

not been located. By 1978 the state and local contribution will dip to \$1,142.

Can the county continue the program in the future without federal money? County Commissioner Seth Taft answers: "It's clear that Cuyahoga County does not have the funds to continue all the 50-odd LEAA programs now in operation in the county. We [the commissioners] are going to have to look at these programs one at a time. Right now I just can't say what will happen to that program."

If the county can't afford to pay for the Senior Safety and Security Program, Susan Lennox, director of the county's office on aging, says funds may be obtained from Ohio Commission on Aging, which is receiving funding from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration. "I may have to change the funding around. I may have to pool money from several sources, but we definitely plan to keep the program," she says.

The program staff, however, may be somewhat different in the future. In January, 1977, Fred Middleton, the program director, took a job with the county attorney's office. Lennox decided not to hire a replacement. "The program needed a director in the beginning to make contact throughout the county," she says, "but now the program's established. I think all we need is a coordinator to keep things moving."

However, Lennox plans to expand the staff by at least one employee. The county's Office on Aging just received funding under Title III of the Older Americans Act for a "postal alert" project that will work with the Senior Safety and Security Division.

Postal alert is a program that involves the cooperation of the Post Office. The program gives elderly people who register for the program a decal to put inside their mailboxes. If mail begins to accumulate in a box with a decal, the mailman notifies the Senior Safety and Security staff. They, in turn, notify relatives or friends listed on a card that the elderly registrant has filled out and sent to the division's office.

"We've already gotten cooperation from the letter-carriers union," says Lennox, "so a coordinator for that project will be hired." In other words, the Senior Safety and Security Program will be expanding in the future to fill the needs of the county's elderly.

Commissioner Taft adds, "We have increased the sense of security of our seniors with this program. We know they now feel safer—and probably they are."



END