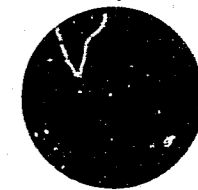


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# SENIOR CITIZEN PROTECTION

81199



GOVERNOR'S CRIME PREVENTION PROGRAM

ROBERT LIST  
Governor



*Dear Senior Citizen:*

*I am very concerned with the problems that face Senior Citizens in Nevada. Too often they are the victims of con men, crimes of force, burglary and theft.*

*Many citizens, as a result, let the fear of being victimized seriously alter their life styles.*

*Oftentimes, these offenses can be prevented by your being aware of a few simple facts and acting upon them.*

*In this booklet we try to give you some ideas on how you can personally protect yourself and your property. Emphasis is placed on personal and residential security, as well as on several fraudulent practices.*

*We in the Governor's Crime Prevention Program believe that you can help prevent crime by reducing the criminal's opportunities.*

*Sincerely,*

**ROBERT LIST**  
*Governor*

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## INTRODUCTION

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Most studies and polls on the concerns of older people show that the fear of crime is ever present in their minds.

This concern can be healthy if it leads to positive steps to reduce the chance that you will be victimized. This booklet is intended to help you to be aware . . . to be prepared to cope with today's crime problem.

At the same time, unreasonable fear can be a negative influence which restricts one's enjoyment of life.

By way of introduction, here are some facts we should all know about crime today.

Older people are **not** victimized to a greater extent than the rest of the population, with a few exceptions, such as purse snatching.

The crimes we all fear the most are crimes of violence, but those are the ones that happen the **least often**.

**Most** murders and assaults are committed by relatives or friends as the result of a dispute, and **not** by strangers.

Despite widespread fear, the crime of rape almost **never** happens to women over 65. In fact, only about one percent of all known rape victims are women over 50.

The most frequent crimes are property crimes, and they are most likely to happen when you are away. You can help reduce the risk by following the steps outlined in this booklet.

These facts are generally consistent in all research. They suggest that older persons need **not** live with a paralyzing fear of crime. They also suggest that each of us can deal with the situation intelligently by taking steps to **reduce the opportunity** for crime in our home and in the way we live.

**The possibility of being victimized can be reduced or even prevented by eliminating criminal opportunity. Remember your best defense is to be aware.**

U.S. Department of Justice  
National Institute of Justice

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## SENIOR CITIZEN PROTECTION

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### PERSONAL SECURITY

#### *Strongarm Robbery and Purse Snatching*

Robbery and purse snatching are crimes which can be easily prevented when you take away the irresistible opportunity for the thief. Most purse snatchers are youngsters under the age of 18, who may have discussed purse snatching with friends and who are waiting for the next opportunity. They don't want to take the risk, however, unless there is a prize to be had, so hide the prize and protect yourself!

If at all possible, do not carry a purse. However, if you do carry one, don't wrap the strap around your shoulder or neck. If your purse is grabbed, a strong strap will not yield easily and you may be injured. Some purse snatch victims have been thrown off balance and received concussions, broken hips, arms or legs. Don't carry more money than you need, and it's a good idea to hide your billfold somewhere other than in your purse. Always leave all unnecessary credit cards at home.

Most purse snatches occur during the day, simply because that's when most people are shopping and doing errands. The first precaution you can take is to go shopping with a friend. Man or woman, you are always safer when in the company of someone else. If you must be out at night alone, stay in well-lit areas. Walk close to street lights, staying well away from dark corners and alleys.

Make it a habit to carry your key chain in a pocket—not your purse. If your purse is stolen, you'll still have your keys. And you should never put your name and address on your house or car keys, as this simply tells the thief who you are and where you live.

If ever attacked, give up your purse—nothing is worth an injury.

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**Walking Alone**

If you have to go out and are walking alone, you should take certain precautions. Ignore anyone who bothers you—don't be polite or engage in conversation. If they persist, tell him or her to leave you alone. A loud voice and a show of anger will usually be effective. One of the first defenses against this sort of aggravation would be a loud whistle or a hand-held aerosol air horn used at athletic events or by boaters. If you are walking and are followed by someone in a car, simply turn and walk in the opposite direction. It's best to walk facing traffic in the first place. If the person persists or becomes obscene, write down his license number and report it to the police. If it is nighttime, walk in open and well-lighted areas. Avoid areas where assailants might hide such as shrubbery, dark passageways, and spaces between parked cars. If followed, run to the nearest place where you'll find people, and don't be afraid to knock on someone's door.

**Driving Alone**

With more cars on the road, people are driving alone at night and driving longer distances. Night driving is the most dangerous. Headlights in good working condition can light up approximately 350 feet of dark roadway. At 50 mph on dry pavement, it takes 243 feet to stop, which is well within headlight's range. But step the speed up to 60 mph, and the stopping distance increases to 366 feet, surpassing the distance you can see ahead. When driving alone at night, you should take certain precautions. Drive with car windows rolled up and have car doors locked. Keep your car in good operating condition and never allow your gasoline level to get below half full. Do not pick up hitchhikers. Travel with someone you know and avoid being alone whenever possible. If you have car trouble, stay in your car with the doors locked and windows up. Turn on your emergency flashers or tie a white handkerchief to the antenna or door handle. Follow these tips and you should arrive at your destination safely.

**Living Alone**

If you live alone, put only your last name and initials on the mailbox. Put a strong lock on all doors; double cylinder

deadbolt locks are the best to use. Spring locks or any type with a button in the doorknob are easy to force. Install adequate locks on all windows and entryways. Have an optical viewer to see who is at your door before you open it. If you leave home and expect to return after dark, turn on the porch light and again have your keys ready before you get to the door. If you see a prowler on your property, call the police at once. Don't let the prowler see you, unless he tries to break in. If he does try to break in, scream as loud as you can and make enough noise so that your neighbors will hear you.

**Suspicious Persons**

How well do you know your neighborhood? Do you know how to identify suspicious persons or activity in your neighborhood? Law enforcement has, on numerous occasions, taken reports of burglaries, vandalism and thefts, and later discovered that citizens had witnessed these acts but did not report them. Witnesses fail to report suspicious acts to the police for reasons such as: not realizing a crime is being committed, they don't want to get involved, or they just hesitate to call the police for any reason. If you observe activity in your neighborhood and feel it might be criminal in nature, call the police at once. If the activity seems unusual to you, then that is suspicious, and should be reported. Help the police department make your neighborhood a safer place to live.

**Prowler**

A prowler can be discouraged or even apprehended if you follow some basic guidelines. At night, be sure shades in your home are drawn closed. Be sure to leave outside lights on. Have lights on in one or two rooms to indicate presence of persons in the home. If you see a prowler on your property, don't panic, try and stay calm. Don't turn on additional lighting. First, call the police department. Attempt to obtain a description of the prowler such as clothing worn, height, weight, age. Stay on the phone while police respond. If the prowler leaves, instruct the police as to the direction of travel. Try to observe whether the prowler leaves in a vehicle or on foot. Do not open your door until uniformed officers arrive and contact you.

**Obscene Phone Calls**

Eliminate the frightening experience of an obscene or threatening telephone call. Women who live alone should list only their last names and initials in telephone directories and on mailboxes. If you receive what sounds like a wrong number call, never reveal your name or address or admit you are alone. Do not give your phone number to an unknown caller, but ask what number he is calling. Do not prolong the conversation, hang up. If the calls persist, keep a whistle nearby and blow loudly into the receiver. You can also have the telephone company change your number and have it unlisted.

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## RESIDENTIAL SECURITY AND BURGLARY PREVENTION

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A fundamental of crime prevention is the installation of good security features at home. In many areas, the crime prevention unit of your local law enforcement agency will send someone out to do a "premise survey" to pinpoint the security strength and weaknesses of your home. If you follow the tips given here, you will be practicing the basics of sound residential security.

**Lock Up!**

Amazingly, the majority of home and apartment burglaries happen because someone didn't lock a door or window. In the case of windows, often they were even left open.

The practical advice which follows doesn't do any good if you don't learn to close and lock doors and windows as a matter of habit, even if you're going to be gone for a few minutes.

**Remember: A lock is not a lock unless you lock it.**

**Locks**

Many homes and apartments, particularly modern ones, have locks which burglars can open relatively easily. To make your doors harder to open, get a good lock. This is a technical subject and there are many different kinds of locks, but only one recommended by the majority of law enforcement experts: **the one-inch, deadbolt lock.**

The strike plate that the lock goes into should be fastened with screws at least two inches long. Short screws will not hold up under the pressure of a crowbar, for example.

Perhaps you've never thought of budgeting a few dollars to improve your security but a good lock for each exterior door is one of the best investments you can make! Your locksmith or hardware store should have a one-inch, deadbolt lock. Get one for each exterior door. Don't settle for anything less.

An inside chain guard is no substitute for a proper lock.

**Doors and Casings**

Several varieties of doors are good theft opportunities because they are easy to smash and open. The best exterior door for a home or apartment is solid-core wood. Fragile, hollow-core doors should never be used for the exterior of a home or apartment.

There are ways of strengthening less-than-adequate doors at modest expense. For example, if a door has a large piece of glass in it, you can install a metal grill.

Remember that a side or back door, being less visible, may be subjected to a stronger attack than your front door. Good security is important for all exterior doors on every home and apartment.

A wideangle peephole will help you identify people who come to the door and, for that purpose, is far better than a chain guard. You also should have adequate lighting at all exterior entrances.

Sliding aluminum glass doors on homes and apartments are a particular security problem because they can be forced open easily. To prevent force-sliding, you can have special locks installed. Or you can place a broomstick or piece of

wood in the track and simply slip it out when you want to open the door from the inside.

It's not difficult to pry these doors out of their tracks. To prevent that, insert several sheet metal screws through the track into the frame at spaced intervals. Their heads should protrude far enough so that the door just clears.

### **Windows**

Most windows come equipped with locks. The most important tip we can give is: Remember to lock your windows, especially when you are leaving, even if only for a short time.

Because many window locks do not provide ideal security, it is a good idea to supplement them. Special locks are now available to provide extra security for various types of windows. In addition, here are two inexpensive techniques:

For windows that slide sideways, use the same dowel method as described for sliding doors.

For traditional, double-hung windows, drill a small hole at a slight downward angle through the first sash and into but not through the second (back) sash. Then slip a large nail into the hole.

### **Apartments**

If you live in an apartment or retirement facility, you may not be able to implement some of these suggestions. However, you can talk to the manager about a specific plan to upgrade the security in your building. It probably will be more effective if you get several tenants together when you approach the manager. Municipal building security standards have been enacted in some cities and should be of assistance to you.

### **Outside Factors**

Remembering that good visibility will discourage the potential burglar, you should have at least standard lighting at your doorways. Depending on your home and yard, you may wish to add some additional lighting around back, for example.

Heavy landscaping can provide a welcome screen for the intruder. You can control this factor by some additional pruning and, if necessary, transplanting.

Don't leave extra house keys "hidden" nearby; most of the hiding spots are pretty obvious and the burglar can discover them.

Get a mailbox which is large enough to totally conceal mail. Or install a mail slot in your door. Uncollected mail suggests that no one is home.

Don't leave ladders out that could be used to reach a high window.

### **Garages**

If your garage is attached to your home, the connecting entrance needs to be secured in the same way as your front and back doors. The garage door into the house often is the easiest entry for the burglar. You need a solid door with a one-inch, deadbolt lock.

### **When You Are Away**

When you leave your home for a prolonged period of time, discontinue milk, newspaper and other deliveries by phone or in person ahead of time. Do not leave notes.

Have the lawn tended, put some lights on timers inside and outside the house and have someone remove advertising circulars and other debris regularly. A trusted neighbor or friend can do this. He can also change the shades from time to time as you would do if you were home, and be on the lookout for suspicious activity.

Notify the post office to hold or forward your mail, or have this same trusted person pick it up daily.

Don't have the telephone temporarily disconnected—the disconnect message is growing in popularity as a dead giveaway that you're gone. But do turn the loudness of the ring down so it cannot be used as a cue that no one is at home.

Don't notify burglars of your absence and how long you'll be gone via social notes in the newspapers. Tell everybody about it after you return.

Contact your local police/sheriff division and inform them of your absence so they can have a patrol car swing by every

once in a while. They should know where you can be reached in an emergency.

If you're more worried about burglary than possible vandalism to your car, you can leave your second car locked and parked in the driveway instead of inside the garage. The garage door should, of course, be locked.

If you return and find a door or window has been forced or broken, do not enter. Use a neighbor's phone immediately to summon the police. If you get inside and find that a crime has occurred, do the same thing. The intruder may still be there. Don't touch anything or clean up until after the police have inspected for evidence. And do something immediately about the security lapse that allowed the break-in in the first place.

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## SECURING YOUR AUTOMOBILE

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Auto theft has been increasing at an alarming rate. Every 29 seconds a car is stolen in this country. And 80 percent of the time, it's because someone left it unlocked. Fifty percent of the cars stolen have the key left in the ignition! In Nevada over 4900 vehicles were stolen in 1979. This represents a loss of about 13½ million dollars!

Today's car thieves range from youthful joyriders to the professional international criminal. However, you can reduce the chances of having your car taken or even prevent it from being stolen.

### **Remember**

Never leave the engine of your car running when you get out of your car.

Never leave keys in you car, even while running quick errands or dropping things off.

Always roll up windows and lock your car when you leave it—even in your driveway.

Never leave purses, valuables or packages in plain view—put them under seats or in the trunk.

Don't mark your key chain with your name or license number—it could lead a thief to your car.

When having your car repaired, leave only your ignition key, never your trunk or house keys.

Be careful to remove credit cards or other important papers from the glove box—they could be used as identification to "fence" your car.

Always park in well-lighted and busy areas. This is important for your personal safety, as well as for the protection of your car.

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## THE CON ARTIST

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Con artists depend on their appearance to deceive you and succeed by gaining your trust. They are not the shifty-eyed, nervous men or women you might suspect; they are probably pleasant, easy-going and polite. Chances are, you'll like the con artist; but remember, they are masters of human psychology and behavior. They are just as intent on getting your money as an armed robber, except a con artist uses two weapons to deceive you out of your money: words and greed!

### ***The Phony Bank Examiner***

He will usually call you on the phone and use a title from a bank or police/sheriff department. He will tell you some accounts at the bank, even yours, show large withdrawals and he suspects a dishonest employee. Your cooperation is requested to trap the thief. The examiner will ask you to go to the bank and withdraw money from a certain window. You are told to put the money in an envelope and give it to the examiner or his partner when they approach you. They tell you the money will be redeposited by them, and you can



return to the bank in a few days to have your book adjusted. You make your withdrawal, give the envelope to the agent, who identifies himself to you in the bank.

In a few days, you return to the bank for adjustment of your bankbook and find that there are no irregularities in any of the accounts. You have given your money away.

**Seldom, if ever, will law enforcement, the bank or any legitimate authority ask you to withdraw any money from a bank or surrender your valuables.**

### ***The Home Repairman***

Beware of the phony "repairman" or "engineer" who offers to check your chimney, furnace or other installation.

Such a person might say that he has just completed a job in your area and has enough material left to fix your roof or black tar your driveway. He insists on being paid in cash. Beware of phony inspectors who check your chimney, heating, plumbing and find damage that must be repaired to save your house. He will offer a contract for a down payment, then never return.

If your auto is damaged and men come to you and offer to fix it for a low price, you may later find that the damage has been repaired with plaster and one coat of paint, which will fall off when riding over a bump.

The best investment you can make is to spend a little time investigating the credentials and reputation of the people with whom you are dealing. They should be reputable and have satisfied customers. It is often advisable to get estimates from several different firms so that you can compare home improvement costs.

### ***The Pigeon Drop***

The pigeon drop scheme, like the phony bank examiner, usually targets women as prime victims. An elderly person is approached by one member of the con team. As they talk, the second member of the team "finds" a package of money and then joins the conversation by inquiring whether it belongs to either of them. A note is pulled from the package of money and shown to the intended victim. The note induces the victim to think that the money has been gained by illicit means—

or will be used for illicit purposes—and to forget that finders are not legally keepers.

Then the con person holding the money will offer to consult his boss or lawyer to ask what to do with the money. He reports back that the three can split the money. However, they will have to withdraw money from the bank to show good faith and to prove they will not spend the money found until the "boss" has worked out some legal procedures. Then, the accomplice, pretending not to know the finder, produces money and urges the victim to do the same. The victim withdraws savings and shows the money to the con artists. They place it in an envelope, and in exchange give the victim one stuffed with nothing but paper.

### ***Remember***

Don't discuss your personal finances with strangers.

Don't expect to get something for nothing, especially from strangers.

Don't draw money from your bank at the suggestion of a stranger for any reason.

Call the police/sheriff and report any such approach as outlined above.

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## **MEDICAL SCHEMES**

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These can be downright dangerous because while you are fooling around with some bogus treatment or cure, your health may be worsening for lack of legitimate medical care.

"Fake laboratory tests" are always being offered somewhere. If you are susceptible, you lose 10, 15, 20 or more dollars, get an absolutely worthless report on whether or not you have cancer, arthritis or gallbladder trouble, and you may be misled and endanger your health.

"Miracle cures" often publicized in the backs of newspapers and magazines are not worth reading. They shouldn't

be there in the first place, no matter how hedged or discrete or fuzzy the language. If you bite, the quackery is usually consummated through the mail.

"Mail Order Clinic." In this seemingly legitimate offer, you are drawn into a free medical diagnosis or some other bait and trapped into expensive and useless treatments.

**Remember**

Legitimate doctors, clinics and hospitals do not give their services for free. Ever.

Obtain your diagnosis from a qualified physician only.

Don't fall for claims of absolute cure.

Any person who guarantees to be able to cure a disease is suspect.

A secret formula or special treatment known only to the practitioner should arouse suspicion.

Be certain of a physician's credentials.

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## IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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Police/Sheriff Department..... \_\_\_\_\_

Fire Department..... \_\_\_\_\_

Neighbor..... \_\_\_\_\_

Neighbor..... \_\_\_\_\_

Doctor..... \_\_\_\_\_

Doctor..... \_\_\_\_\_

Dentist..... \_\_\_\_\_

Pharmacy..... \_\_\_\_\_

Other..... \_\_\_\_\_

Other..... \_\_\_\_\_

Welfare Office..... \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security Office..... \_\_\_\_\_

Consumer Affairs (deceptive trade  
practices)

Northern Nevada ..... 885-4340

Southern Nevada ..... 386-5293

**END**