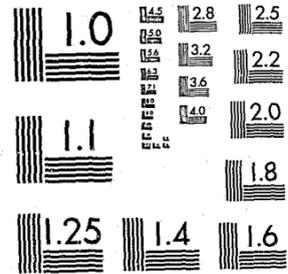


National Criminal Justice Reference Service



This microfiche was produced from documents received for inclusion in the NCJRS data base. Since NCJRS cannot exercise control over the physical condition of the documents submitted, the individual frame quality will vary. The resolution chart on this frame may be used to evaluate the document quality.



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS-1963-A

Microfilming procedures used to create this fiche comply with the standards set forth in 41CFR 101-11.504.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the author(s) and do not represent the official position or policies of the U. S. Department of Justice.

National Institute of Justice
United States Department of Justice
Washington, D. C. 20531

10/6/83

97th Congress }
1st Session }

COMMITTEE PRINT

CRIME AND THE ELDERLY—WHAT YOU CAN DO

AN INFORMATION PAPER

PREPARED BY THE STAFF OF THE
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING
UNITED STATES SENATE



SEPTEMBER 1981

ent has been printed for information purposes. It does not
er findings or recommendations by this committee

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON : 1981

the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C. 20402

89773

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

JOHN HEINZ, Pennsylvania, *Chairman*

PETE V. DOMENICI, New Mexico
CHARLES H. PERCY, Illinois
NANCY LANDON KASSEBAUM, Kansas
WILLIAM S. COHEN, Maine
LARRY PRESSLER, South Dakota
CHARLES E. GRASSLEY, Iowa
DAVID DURENBERGER, Minnesota

LAWTON CHILES, Florida
JOHN GLENN, Ohio
JOHN MELCHER, Montana
DAVID PRYOR, Arkansas
BILL BRADLEY, New Jersey
QUENTIN N. BURDICK, North Dakota
CHRISTOPHER J. DODD, Connecticut

JOHN C. ROTHER, *Staff Director and Chief Counsel*

E. BENTLEY LIPSCOMB, *Minority Staff Director*

ROBIN L. KROFF, *Chief Clerk*

(II)

U.S. Department of Justice
National Institute of Justice

This document has been reproduced exactly as received from the person or organization originating it. Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the National Institute of Justice.

Permission to reproduce this copyrighted material has been granted by

Public Domain

United States Senate

to the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS).

Further reproduction outside of the NCJRS system requires permission of the copyright owner.

PREFACE

Over the years, the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging has published information papers on subjects of particular interest to older Americans. The committee is issuing this publication, "Crime and the Elderly—What You Can Do," because fear of crime ranks as one of the two or three biggest concerns of the older person. Surveys show that some senior citizens are so afraid of crime that they shut themselves up in their homes and rarely go out. Many elderly worry because they may feel they are less able to defend themselves, may not be able to recover as quickly from an injury, or even if they are not hurt physically, cannot face the thought of losing money or sentimental possessions to a burglar. These are real concerns. And yet the committee is also aware that there are constructive steps that the elderly can take to protect themselves, their neighbors, and their communities. Unlike so many other issues, this is one where individual action can make a difference.

The committee is also acutely aware that because of the need to cut back Federal spending the majority of the special programs developed to assist the elderly in crime prevention and victim assistance will no longer operate unless steps are taken to integrate them into ongoing community services. Yet many of these community services are stretched thin as State and city budgets also shrink. So more than ever there is a need for the elderly to get involved. In addition to learning how to protect themselves, there are opportunities for older persons to assist the police by taking steps to be good neighbors or volunteers in a crime prevention or victim assistance program.

This publication highlights those crime problems which are, in fact, the most serious threats for the elderly. It also gives practical and tested advice on what an older person should do to take positive steps to reduce criminal opportunity so as to reduce the risks of becoming a victim. Finally, it highlights those actions that senior citizens can take to help prevent crime from occurring in their neighborhoods,

(III)

and what assistance, either as volunteers or paid workers, they might offer the police or crime victims.

The committee is grateful for the cooperation and assistance given in the preparation of this publication by the Office of Justice Assistance Research and Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, the American Association of Retired Persons/National Retired Teachers Association, and the National Council of Senior Citizens. These organizations have done extensive work in the area of crime and the elderly and the committee urges those interested to refer to page 21 of this publication for more information about these organizations.

JOHN HEINZ,
Chairman.

LAWTON CHILES,
Ranking Minority Member.

CONTENTS

	Page
Preface.....	III
How to find out more about crimes that could affect you.....	1
Simple steps to reduce your risk . . . on the street.....	2
If you are a victim of street crime	3
Simple steps to reduce your risk . . . at home.....	3
Locks.....	4
Doors.....	4
Windows.....	6
Lighting.....	7
Taking a trip?.....	7
Insurance information.....	7
Outdoors.....	7
If you are a victim.....	8
Simple ways to reduce your risk . . . from the con artist.....	9
Buying by mail.....	10
Buying at the door.....	10
Home repairs.....	11
Signing your name.....	11
Buying on credit.....	12
Health "cures" and health machines.....	12
Health insurance.....	12
Glasses and hearing aids.....	12
Some special tips.....	13
If you do become a victim.....	13
Suggestions for seniors.....	14
Direct deposit program.....	14
Neighborhood actions to make your neighborhood safer.....	15
Security inspection.....	15
Operation Identification.....	15
Silent observers.....	16
Neighborhood watch.....	16
Buddy buzzer system.....	17
Citizen escort.....	17
Citizen patrol.....	17
Senior power—get involved as a volunteer.....	18
Help the police.....	18
Aid the courts.....	19
Assist the victim.....	20
Work with kids.....	20
How to get more information.....	21

CRIME AND THE ELDERLY—WHAT YOU CAN DO

HOW TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT CRIMES THAT COULD AFFECT YOU

The first step in preventing crime is knowing just what the risks are. You should check with your local police or sheriff's department to find out about specific crime problems in your area. Surveys by the Federal Government show that older persons are less likely to be victims of the most serious violent crimes—murder, rape, aggravated assault. Some experts believe this is because older people go out less often and are naturally more cautious than the young.

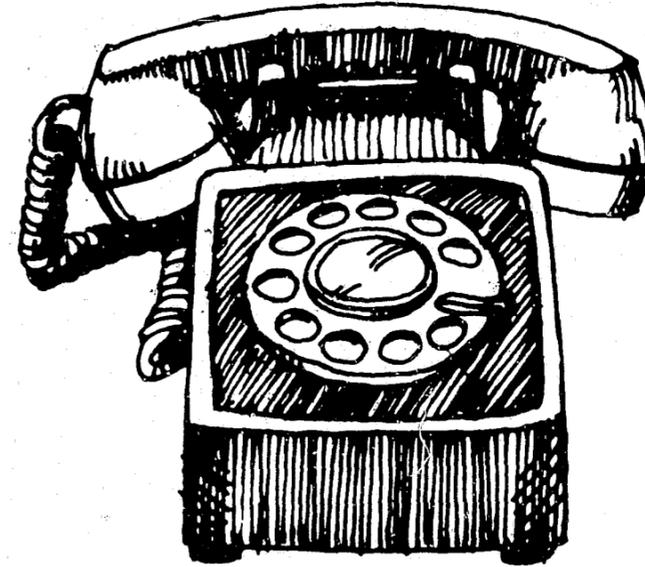
Yet these same surveys reveal that the older person is much **more** likely to be a victim of certain crimes—purse snatching, mugging, theft of checks from the mail, burglary, and fraud. These surveys also show that the risks are higher for those older persons who live in large urban areas than for their counterparts in rural communities. This is true for the entire population—cities and suburbs have higher crime rates than rural areas, although even this is changing as crime in rural and suburban areas rise.

Since the kinds of crime that affect the elderly vary from locality to locality, your first move is to get an analysis of the problem in your area. Your local law enforcement agency has the specifics. They write up offense reports and develop strategies for dealing with problems.

A good way to approach your local police could be through your local neighborhood association or senior citizen program. If your association does not have an active crime prevention program for your area, help organize one. In many cases the local police department will help the program get going by sending an officer who can discuss specific crime problems in your neighborhood and suggest crime prevention tips. And you can use this publication to learn about successful efforts in other cities.

IF YOU ARE A VICTIM OF STREET CRIME . . .

Don't attempt to resist. You might get injured. Sit down, even on the sidewalk, so you won't get knocked down. Make noise—call for help or carry a whistle and blow it repeatedly. **Never pursue your attacker . . . Call the police immediately.**



SIMPLE STEPS TO REDUCE YOUR RISK . . . AT HOME

Whether you live in a house or an apartment, there are some basic safety rules to follow. If you are handy with tools, you may be able to install your own security devices—locks and simple alarms. If you need assistance, contact your local law enforcement agency to find out if groups in your area lend a hand to seniors who want to bolster their security. In many areas, police will do a security survey of your home or apartment. Many departments have specially trained officers who can point out places where a burglar could get in. They can give you a checklist of things to do to make your home safer and mark your valuables with an identification number.

If you live in an apartment or retirement community, you may not be permitted to install certain security devices. A group of tenants might talk to your manager about installing special alarm systems, better lighting and locks, or

SIMPLE STEPS TO REDUCE YOUR RISK . . . ON THE STREET

Street criminals are opportunists, always looking for an easy way to commit a crime. Muggers look for lone victims in out-of-the-way places. Pickpockets like crowded, busy locations and careless people. And purse snatchers, most of whom are teenagers, like to pick on people who can't move as quickly as they can.

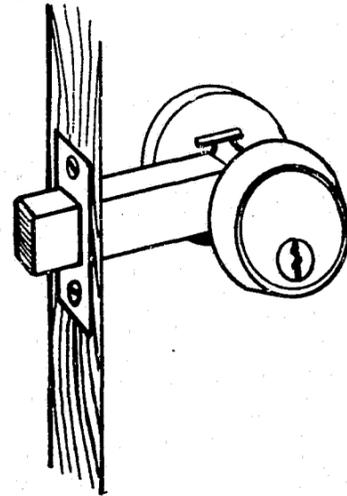
Make it harder for the criminal to make you a victim by following a few rules:

- Never carry a wallet in your back pocket. Even an amateur pickpocket can lift it before you realize what happened.
- Don't dangle your purse at your side or leave it sitting unattended on store counters. **Don't carry a purse if you can avoid it**—instead tuck money or credit cards in an inside pocket. If you sew, stitch a small cloth pocket inside your coat.
- Avoid flashing your cash. This is a signal to potential robbers. They might follow you to a location where it's easier to rob you.
- Arrange your schedule so you don't have to walk alone on dark, deserted streets. Stay clear of shrubbery and parked cars, which are convenient hiding places for criminals. Try to have a friend accompany you on errands, particularly in high-risk neighborhoods.
- Don't wait alone at deserted bus stops. If you can, walk to the next stop where others may be waiting, too. Or take the lead from one organization in a public housing area which got a bus stop changed to a safer location and thereby greatly reduced a problem.
- Don't enter dark parking lots or deserted garages alone. Be cautious about riding alone in an elevator with a stranger, even in your own apartment building.
- Forget about carrying a lethal weapon. An attacker might use it against you.

closed-circuit television cameras to watch hallways and entrances.

LOCKS

A basic rule of crime prevention is—LOCK UP! Surprisingly, in almost 50 percent of home and apartment burglaries, someone didn't lock a door or a window, or left a key in an obvious hiding place. Learn to lock as a matter of habit, even if you'll only be away for a few minutes. A good lock for each exterior door is the best investment you can make. Most law enforcement experts agree that the best kind of lock is a DEADBOLT LOCK WITH A 1-INCH THROW. Don't settle for anything less! And don't rely on a chain lock—even one with a key. Many chain locks can easily be broken by a strong push against the door.

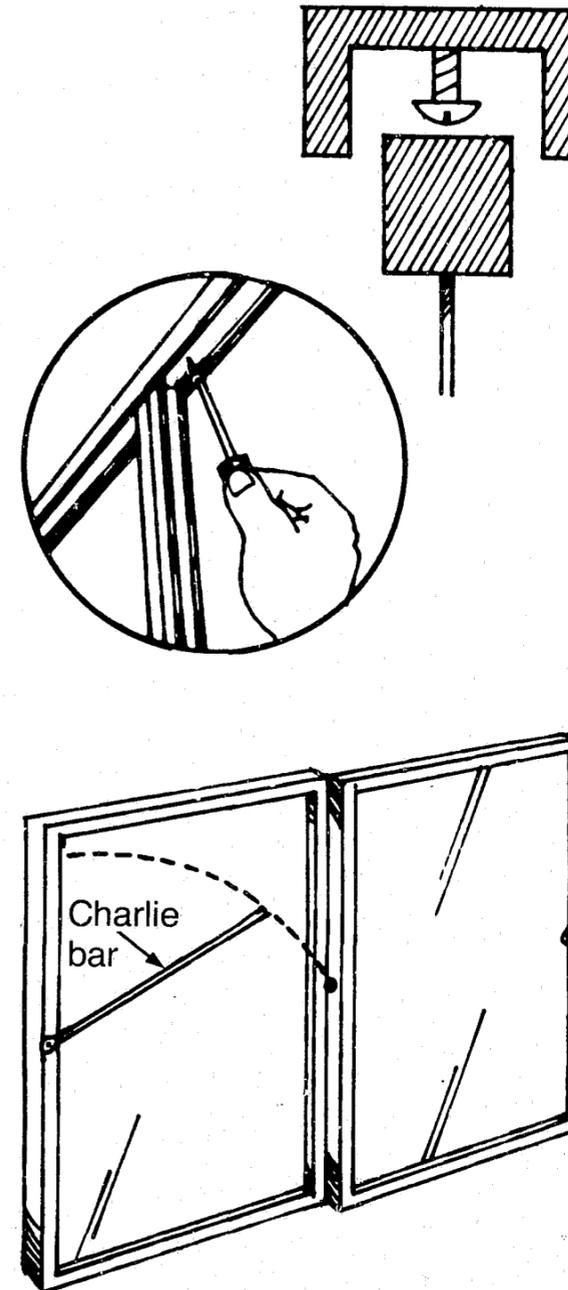


DOUBLE CYLINDER DEAD BOLT

DOORS

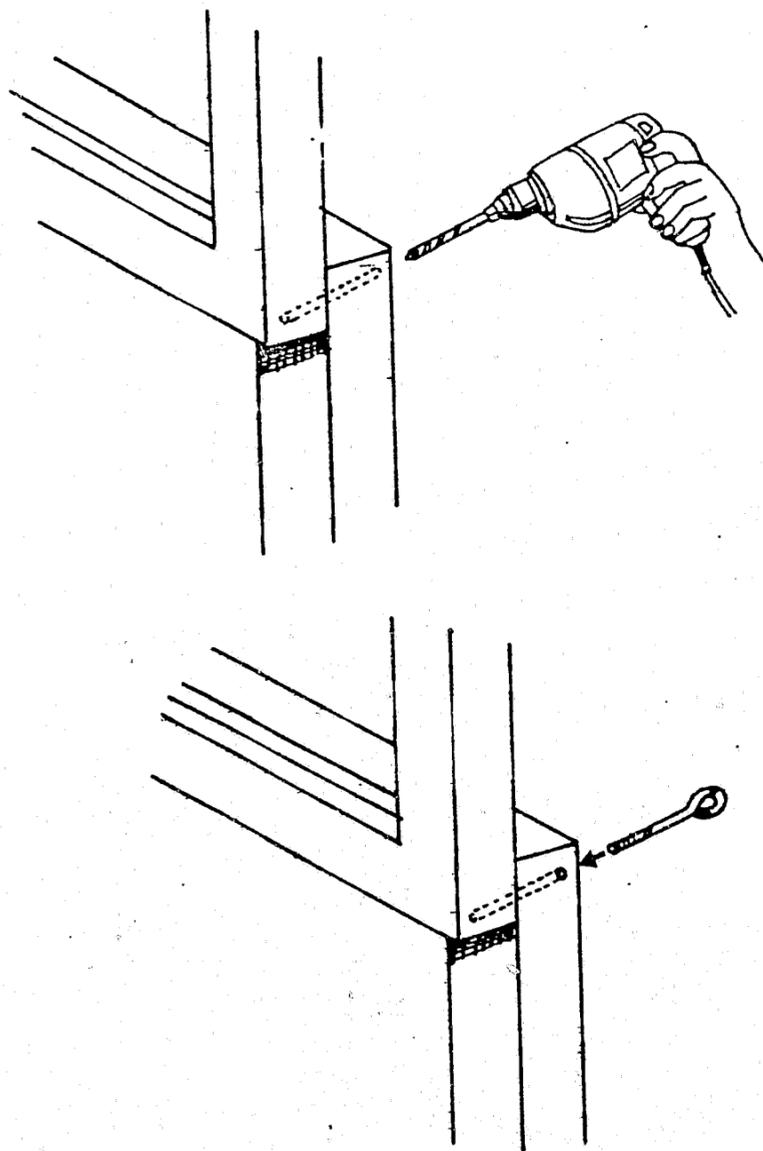
The best exterior door for a home or apartment is **solid core wood** (at least $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches thick) or **metal**. Many hollow core doors and doors with glass panes can be easily smashed and forced open. To strengthen inadequate doors at little expense, install metal grilles or break-resistant plastic panels over the glass. Be sure doors fit in frames tightly—with no more than a $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch clearance between the door and frame. Too big a gap? Bolt a sturdy metal strip to the door edge or replace the door. To know who's on the other side of your door, install a "peep-hole" or wide-angle viewer in your door—and use it.

Place a broomstick in the track of sliding doors so that they can't be easily forced open. Or install an aluminum "charlie bar" for even greater protection. To prevent a burglar from taking a sliding door from its tracks, insert a couple of metal screws through the track into the frame so that the screwheads protrude just far enough so that the door clears.



WINDOWS

Many window locks do not provide good security—they can be easily forced or jiggled loose. You can secure traditional double-hung windows by drilling a hole at a slight downward angle through the first sash and into, but not through, the second (back) sash. Then slip a large nail or eyebolt into the hole. You can easily remove the nail when you want to open the window. If your windows slide sideways, a piece of broomstick or wooden dowel in the track will make them harder to open.



LIGHTING

Good visibility discourages crime. Keep doorways, garages, and even alleys well lighted. In apartment buildings, stairways and corridors, storage space and lockers, laundry rooms, areas under stairwells, garages, and any other nooks and crannies where a criminal could hide should be brightly lighted at all times.

TAKING A TRIP?

Make sure your home always looks "lived-in," especially when you're not there:

- Ask a neighbor to collect your newspapers and mail so things won't pile up outside your door.
- Use automatic timers to turn lights and radios on and off. You can buy timers at hardware or department stores. Set them so lights go on in different rooms at different times.
- Make arrangements to have your lawn mowed, hedges trimmed, so the house looks cared for.

INSURANCE INFORMATION

Are you unable to afford home or apartment insurance against burglary or robbery? Then look into Federal crime insurance—insurance that's sold by the Federal Government in 28 States.

The insurance will help you replace stolen possessions or repair any property damaged in a break-in, or both. It is low cost (less than 25 cents a day provides up to \$10,000 household protection), and it cannot be cancelled regardless of the number or size of claims you make.

All you have to do to qualify is to install approved locks on outside doors and windows.

For information and eligibility requirements, call any licensed property insurance agent or broker, or call toll free: Federal Crime Insurance Program, P.O. Box 41033, Washington, D.C. 20014, 800-638-8780.

In Washington, D.C., and suburban Maryland, call 652-2637; other locations in Maryland you may call collect.

OUTDOORS

Trim heavy bushes and trees near windows and doors. They can provide cover for burglars. Don't "hide" extra house keys nearby. Burglars can figure out your hiding places. Always keep garage doors closed so no one can tell when you're away.



IF YOU ARE A VICTIM

If you arrive home and suspect a stranger is inside, don't go in! Leave quietly and call the police. Remember, your own safety should always come first.

If you confront a burglar in your home, don't attempt to corner him. Most burglars will flee if they can. You, too,

should leave, if possible. If the intruder is armed, sit down quietly and obey instructions. **Do not resist or fight.** When the burglar leaves, **call the police immediately.**

SIMPLE WAYS TO REDUCE YOUR RISK . . . FROM THE CON ARTIST

If a deal sounds too good to be true, it probably is! Yet every day people get taken by such schemes as:

The pigeon drop.—The swindlers claim they've found a large sum of money and offer to share it with you. They ask you to put up some "good faith" money before you get in on the deal. That's the last you'll see of it. You're left with nothing but phony instructions on how to collect your share of the "found" cash.

The bank examiner.—A phony "bank examiner" calls and asks you to help catch a dishonest bank employee. You are asked to withdraw some cash from your account and turn it over to the bank examiner, who will check the serial numbers and catch the embezzler. After you turn over your money, you'll never see it or the examiner again.

Do these swindles seem obvious? Actually, they're two of the most frequent and successful con games used. In fact, "pigeon drop" swindlers make millions each year, mostly from older women. Con artists dupe, defraud, and cheat unsuspecting Americans out of several billion dollars each year. People of all ages are victims, but the swindlers' prime target is the senior citizen.

Swindlers see the elderly as easy marks for many reasons. Many older people live on social security and pensions supplemented by savings. They may be looking for ways to increase their incomes through investments, home business opportunities, or retirement properties. Such business ventures may be sound, but some are ideal settings for fraud.

Con artists know that many people today worry about inflation and energy costs. They've come up with beat-inflation schemes and phony energy conservation gimmicks that may be hard to resist. But it pays to beware and check things out carefully before you invest or buy.

Hearing aid and insurance ripoffs, health quackery, and work-at-home rackets are other well-known swindles aimed at senior citizens. Most con artists promise "incredible bargains" or "quick money." Unfortunately, senior citizens

are just as vulnerable as everybody else when it comes to get-rich-quick schemes.

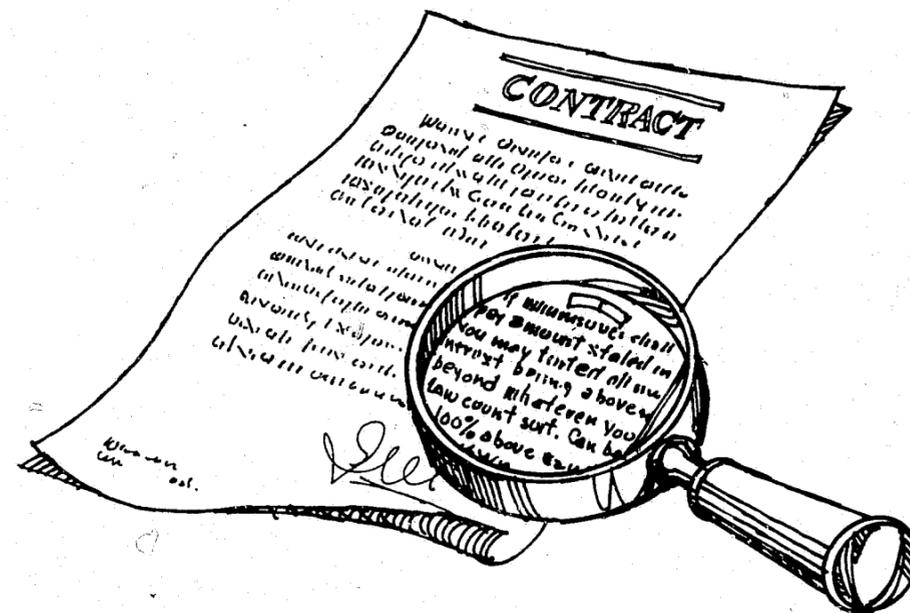
Swindlers are usually well dressed, talkative, and intelligent. After all, they are trying to win your confidence. They'll play to your natural inclination to be helpful. Let's face it, most of us don't expect to be cheated. Here are a few tips to help you spot swindles and frauds:

BUYING BY MAIL

Before you buy by mail, consider looking for a better deal at a local store. If you do order by mail, remember that the Federal Trade Commission requires that most mail-order companies fill your order within 30 days unless the order form states otherwise. You can cancel the order if it's not filled within the 30 days and the company must return your money in 7 days. Be alert to "easy" ways to make money or offers for a "bargain" retirement home or land in the sun. Beware of "winning" a contest you never entered—a technique to dupe you into buying something you don't want. Check first with the local consumer affairs office, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the Better Business Bureau, or your senior citizens' organization.

BUYING AT THE DOOR

Don't fall for gimmicks or so-called "free" gift offers. When salespeople call, wait. DON'T buy today. If it's legitimate, they'll come back tomorrow. In the meantime, check out the company with your local consumer affairs office, Better Business Bureau, or your local police department. And remember, whenever you make a purchase in your home totaling \$25 or more, the salesperson must give you a written contract and two notice of cancellation forms. You have 3 days to change your mind and use one of those forms to cancel your contract.



HOME REPAIRS

If someone comes to your door who "just happened" to be walking by and noticed your home needs some repairs, BEWARE. Be wary of door-to-door sellers of home insulation or other energy-saving devices. Don't sign anything until you get another opinion and other estimates. Check with the consumer affairs office or Better Business Bureau, too.

SIGNING YOUR NAME

Before you sign a contract or agreement, make sure you understand and agree with everything it says. Don't skip the small print and **never** sign a blank contract or one with blanks to be filled in later. If your eyes aren't as good as they used to be, have a friend read it to you. Check with your lawyer or local legal aid society to be sure the contract is sound. If you do sign a contract but later have second thoughts, check with your local consumer affairs office to find out your rights in your State.

BUYING ON CREDIT

Credit is available from many different sources, so it's wise to shop around. Be wary of "low monthly payments." Find out the total amount of interest you'll pay over the life of the loan. The Truth-in-Lending Act requires that creditors tell you the annual interest rate and the total cost of the credit. Your bank, credit union, or local legal aid society can tell you if the interest rate is fair.

HEALTH "CURES" AND HEALTH MACHINES

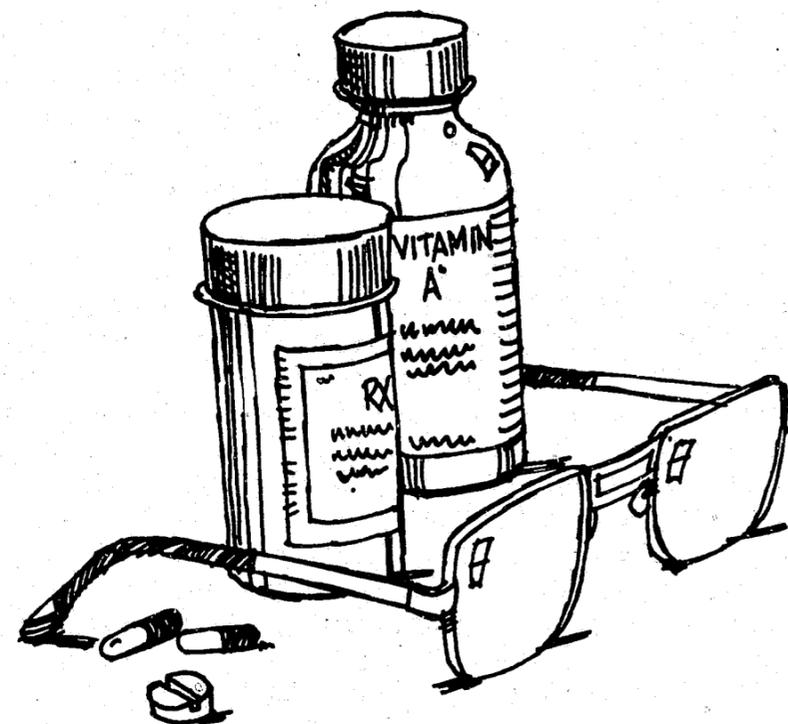
Some are good, and some aren't! Check with your doctor or local health clinic before you buy. Don't take anyone else's word. Be wary of "mail order" labs or clinics that offer to diagnose and cure diseases through the mail. Only go to medical laboratories and clinics recommended by your doctor or hospital. And never use medicine prescribed for someone else.

HEALTH INSURANCE

A lot of senior citizens worry about getting sick and being unable to pay for medical expenses that medicare doesn't cover. There is health insurance that is supposed to pick up where medicare leaves off. However, many such policies offer inadequate coverage. Or the type of coverage provided by the policy may not be right for you. Before you buy a "medigap" policy, check with the State insurance commission, a lawyer, the Better Business Bureau, or a knowledgeable individual. Congressional hearings on insurance rackets and national news programs have questioned these so-called "bridge" policies. Before you buy health insurance, make sure the policy does what the salesperson says it does.

GLASSES AND HEARING AIDS

Check with your doctor or local health clinic if you think you need glasses or a hearing aid. They must be properly fitted. Don't buy them at a bargain price without your doctor's okay. A bargain isn't a bargain if you can't use it. Remember this important fact—ophthalmologists or optometrists may prescribe glasses but you are not obligated to buy from them. You can buy elsewhere if you're not satisfied with their prices.



SOME SPECIAL TIPS

Don't be afraid to say "no!" High-pressure tactics can convince you to buy something you don't want or need. And don't be afraid to delay making a decision so you can check with a lawyer, your local Better Business Bureau or consumer affairs office, or other knowledgeable individuals.

Get a receipt for all transactions.

Check on sellers—if they're legitimate, they won't object.

Talk with a bank officer if you're going to withdraw your savings to make a purchase or close a business deal. He or she can help you do it safely and wisely.

If you have any questions, call your local consumer affairs office, your mayor's office, or your county commissioner's office. They're there to help you get advice and assistance.

IF YOU DO BECOME A VICTIM

If you become a victim of a swindler or suspect something about a purchase or a deal, call the police, your State or local consumer affairs office, the district attorney's office, or your State attorney general. Con artists count on their victims' reluctance to acknowledge that they've been duped.

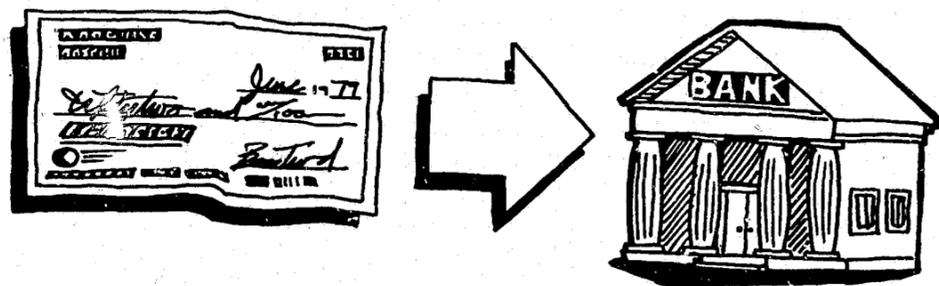
If you delay, you help them get away. Remember, if you never report the incident, they're free to cheat again and again and you have no chance of ever getting your money back.

SUGGESTIONS FOR SENIORS

DIRECT DEPOSIT PROGRAM

Your mailbox may not be the safest place for your monthly social security or retirement checks. Thieves can easily learn the payment dates and be ready and waiting to steal your mail when the time is right. You can get a duplicate check in a while, but what do you do in the meantime? Even worse than the mailbox ripoff is getting held up or mugged just after you've cashed your check. You can't get reimbursed, and worse yet, you could be injured.

There is a simple way to protect your life-lines. Almost every bank, savings and loan institution, and credit union participates in the Federal Government's direct deposit program. It's easy to arrange for your checks to be **deposited automatically** to your account. Just take your next check and your medicare card or benefit award letter to the place where you bank and tell them you want to sign up for direct deposit. They'll help you fill out the form and give you a copy for your records.



NEIGHBORHOOD ACTIONS TO MAKE YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD SAFER

Crime prevention doesn't stop at your door. Get together with your friends and neighbors and come up with your own good ideas about how to prevent crime in your neighborhood or building.

Across the Nation, many senior citizens are doing just that, and doing it well. They're using their commonsense, experience, and practical knowhow to make things safer. Check with your local police or sheriff's department. They can tell you about special services for senior citizens and volunteer programs you can join. If there are no programs in your area, they could help you organize one. Some examples:

SECURITY INSPECTION

In Cottage Grove, Oreg., six senior citizens serve as crime prevention specialists, visiting homes and buildings to instruct residents in security measures. They also promote crime prevention at civic functions.

In St. Louis, Mo., a team of 84 police-trained senior citizens perform 140 home security inspections a-month, helping other senior citizens install locks and peepholes, and fix broken windows and light fixtures. Contact your local police or sheriff to see if they can help you determine where burglars might get in and how you can prevent it.

OPERATION IDENTIFICATION

A group of older persons in Natick, Mass., joined Operation Identification.

Volunteers armed with engraving tools etch identifying serial numbers on household valuables like TV's and stereos. If the marked property is stolen and recovered by authorities, the owners can prove it's theirs. Residents of the community may contact either the police department or the senior citizen center to arrange an appointment for this free service. See if your police or sheriff's department will help you engrave your possessions. You can also buy an engraving tool

from a hardware store to mark your valuables. Ask your law enforcement agency what identification number to use. Be sure to post Operation Identification stickers (available from many local law enforcement agencies) on your windows and doors to warn burglars away.

SILENT OBSERVERS

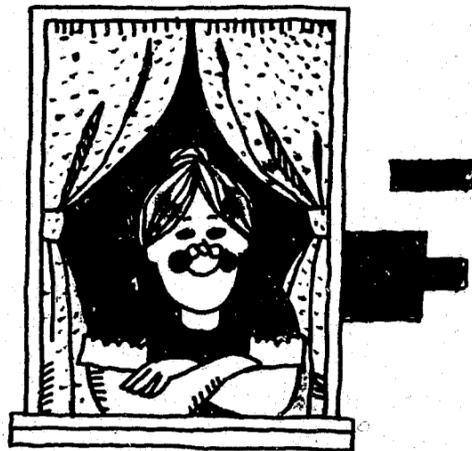
Some people fight crime as "silent observers." In many communities, police train senior citizens, shut-ins, housewives, and other neighborhood people to watch for and report suspicious events in their neighborhoods.

In Mansfield, Ohio, as part of a comprehensive program to encourage citizen involvement, police issue confidential identifying numbers to senior citizens who participate in the senior power program. That way, senior citizens can report crime and suspicious activities without fear of reprisal.

In Battle Creek, Mich., silent observers have anonymously reported crimes and received cash awards for valuable information since 1970.

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

You don't have to go outside to protect your neighborhood. Organize a neighborhood watch. Exchange telephone numbers and daily schedules with neighbors on the block. That way, you'll be able to spot unusual activities that may signal a crime. For example, burglars sometimes masquerade as movers. If your neighbors said nothing about moving when they went on vacation, then call police if you see a moving van parked outside their house.

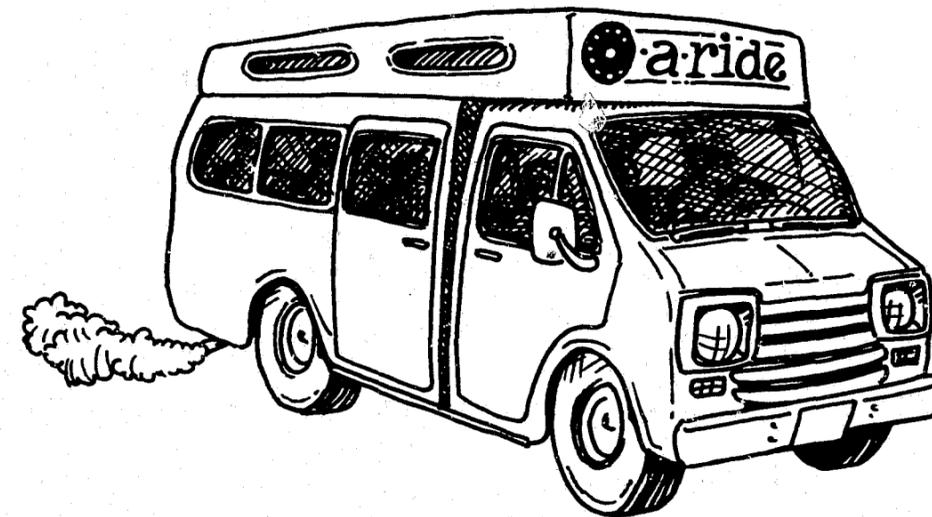


BUDDY BUZZER SYSTEM

Tenants of a retirement building in New York, installed buzzers in each apartment that sound in one or two other apartments. Residents can call for help from a neighbor just by pushing a button. Good for all kinds of emergencies!

CITIZEN ESCORT

In Wilmington, Del., young people and other volunteers escort senior citizens on errands. On New York City's Lower East Side, 10 minibuses take area senior citizens to health care facilities, shopping, and other functions without charge.



CITIZEN PATROL

In cities as large as Seattle, Wash., and as small as Mansfield, Ohio, senior citizens serve as eyes and ears for law enforcement. They patrol their own buildings and neighborhoods, on the alert for suspicious activity.

Remember to check with your local law enforcement officers before you start so you can work as partners.

Police in Wilmington, Del., provide police radio monitors to selected senior citizens in two high-rise apartments. That way, if a crime occurs in the neighborhood, 15 seniors are alerted—looking out their windows for suspicious persons running or hiding. And if someone sees a suspect, he or she calls the police immediately.

SENIOR POWER—GET INVOLVED AS A VOLUNTEER

In scores of communities, older people are translating concerns about crime into action. As volunteers for the police, the courts, community programs, and social service agencies, the elderly are finding that they can make a difference—by preventing crimes, improving criminal justice operations, and helping persons who have become victims.

Using older persons as a resource in the criminal justice system is a relatively new trend. This trend may be the result of simple economics: Criminal justice agencies increasingly realize that their agency budgets are not sufficient to maintain and improve services the public demands and wants.

Or it may stem from the fact that criminal justice administrators recognize several basic points about older volunteers:

- Older people are generally supportive of the criminal justice system and they are available.
- Older volunteers often have needed skills or are readily trained, and they are eager to participate in improving the level and quality of community services.
- Older volunteers are usually dependable and conscientious, exhibiting high workmanship standards and ethics.
- Older volunteers are experienced, bringing with them many years of practical and specialized knowledge.
- Older volunteers can perform valuable community relations services as they become personally involved in advocating for the services of the agency.

HELP THE POLICE

A growing number of police and sheriffs' departments across the country already recognize and regularly use the enormous pool of talent and energy which exists among America's retired persons.

In Far Rockaway, N.Y., senior volunteers monitor a base station citizens' band radio located at the police station. When a call for police service is received over the citizen band, they relay it to the police dispatcher. They've helped with calls about crimes in progress, automobile accidents,

boats in distress, fires, plane crashes, and many other emergency situations.

In Sun City, a retirement community 20 miles from Phoenix, residents working closely with the sheriff's department have formed a large volunteer posse. Groups of senior citizens patrol their neighborhoods on foot, bicycle, and even in golf carts! They also go door to door to promote operation ID and neighborhood watch. By doing these things, they free more officers for patrol. Not only that, the sheriff's department figures these posses save taxpayers about \$1 million a year!

In the San Diego Police Department, a dozen senior aides help out by encoding data on incident reports, entering and checking computer data, and studying false burglary alarm reports. AARP/NRTA has developed a package of training materials for interested police or sheriffs' departments to use in starting a crime analysis unit, and then to place retired or older volunteers and/or paid assistants in crime analysis support roles.

Ask your local law enforcement agency or senior citizen center about crime prevention programs in your community. If none exists, organize your own group to take action against crime.

AID THE COURTS

Learn about your court system, and with the support of the local police, prosecutors, and court officials, help improve the treatment of victims and witnesses and the efficiency of the court.

In Milwaukee, Wis., 15 senior volunteers, with the encouragement of the district attorney, follow all criminal cases involving older victims or witnesses to determine if they are being treated fairly and considerately in the process. In addition, volunteers contact the victims or witnesses prior to their court appearances, greet them upon their arrival at the court, and accompany them throughout the entire court procedure. The volunteers' observations are recorded and the results are reported periodically to the county government, the office on aging, and various law enforcement and government agencies.

Senior volunteers from the Baltimore Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) have succeeded in bringing order out of chaos in the busy waiting room of the juvenile court, which handles over 12,000 cases per year. Working in pairs, they run a reception desk in the court waiting

room, where they register and keep track of all of the persons who arrive for each case, explaining procedures, and when and where their cases will take place. Their presence is a calming influence on nervous citizens called to court and helps to reduce the stress on court personnel.

ASSIST THE VICTIM

Victims of crime often face many hardships as a result of injury or loss of property. As volunteers, older persons can help victims by joining a victim assistance program.

Older crime victims in Pasadena, Calif., receive immediate attention and support from a corps of trained senior volunteers. Working on a 24-hour police call for emergency cases, these volunteers relieve the burden of the police by providing whatever help older victims need to overcome the trauma and losses. These senior volunteers provide crime prevention and victim assistance services to about 85 older victims each month.

In Yonkers, N.Y., over 20 volunteers make up a "CARE Team," a program of the local office on aging. Using a car donated by the police department, the volunteers make home visits to older victims who request help following a crime. The volunteers also provide inservice training for the police, sensitizing them to the special needs of the older crime victims.

WORK WITH KIDS

Nearly half the violent crimes in cities are committed by young people 21 and under. There are many opportunities for the elderly to work on a one-to-one basis with kids. Some groups work with teenagers who are thinking of dropping out of school; in other communities volunteers are encouraged to help as teaching assistants, counselors, and special tutors.

The Federal agency ACTION has set up several programs for older Americans. The retired senior volunteer program (RSVP), which operates in over 700 communities, provides volunteer assignments for anyone 60 and older who want to serve others in the community, including kids. ACTION also sponsors the foster grandparent program, a part-time opportunity for low-income older citizens who want to provide much needed attention to disadvantaged youngsters in their community.

Remember: Help you give a kid now could prevent a crime later.

HOW TO GET MORE INFORMATION

Much of the material in this publication was drawn from a booklet, "Senior Citizens Against Crime," published by the Office of Justice Assistance Research and Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice. The publication is part of a series of 11 booklets produced for the Crime Prevention Coalition. The coalition, a group of 48 public and private organizations, sponsors a national citizen crime prevention campaign called "Take a Bite Out of Crime." For more information, write: Crime Prevention Coalition, Box 6600, Rockville, Md. 20850.

Other information in the committee's publication was drawn from two other organizations. For information on crime prevention and senior citizen volunteer efforts, write: Criminal Justice Services, American Association of Retired Persons/National Retired Teachers Association, 1909 K Street, NW., Washington, D.C. 20049, 202-872-4912.

For information on victim assistance programs and volunteer efforts, contact: Criminal Justice and the Elderly Program, National Council of Senior Citizens, 925 15th Street, NW., Washington, D.C. 20005, 202-347-8800.

(21)

○

END