



TIPS

With Thanks
From McGruff
the Crime Dog[®]

Dear Friend

You know, I've always reminded you to lock your doors and leave some lights on to help keep burglars at bay. That's still good advice. We've covered a lot of ground—child protection, drug prevention, teen safety, neighbors working together to solve problems, communities planning and organizing against crime, and more. It's all been part of my effort to help you build safer, more caring neighborhoods and communities.

This booklet, filled with crime prevention tips, is my way of saying thanks for all your hard work to Take a Bite Out of Crime and of reminding you of those good old basics of crime prevention.

We've got a lot to celebrate! Crime is at its lowest levels in nearly 30 years, in large part because you've taken prevention measures and worked hard to make your neighborhoods and communities safer and more caring places. Keep up the good work!

McGruff the Crime Dog



At Home

- Make sure you have sturdy, metal or solid wood doors at all entries into your home, and that sliding glass and similar doors are properly secured.
- Install and use well-made deadbolt locks (1 1/2 inch throw or greater) on all exterior doors.
- Make sure all exterior doors have wide-angle viewers that can be used by everyone in the house. Install two viewers at different heights if necessary.
- Light up entry doors so that you can tell who's there. Motion detector lights, flood lights, or similar lighting can help brighten up the property.
- Trim the shrubbery around your doors and windows so crooks don't have a place to hide.
- Instead of hiding keys around the outside of your house, give a key to a neighbor you trust.
- Ask law enforcement for a free home security survey.
- Consider an alarm. They can be a good investment, especially if you have valuables in your home.

Car-Wise

- Always lock the doors and take the keys when you leave the car, even if you'll be gone for "just a minute." As many as one in five stolen cars has the keys in its ignition.
- Keep your car in good running order and keep the gas tank at least half full.
- Make sure someone knows where you're going and when you plan to be back.
- Approach the car with your door key already in hand. If anyone nearby makes you nervous, leave and get help.
- Lock up the doors as you buckle up your safety belt. Keep windows rolled up.
- Is someone following you? If you think so, head for the nearest busy brightly lighted area. Write down the license number and make and model of the car. Call 911 (or your local emergency number) on your cell phone if you have one, or ask convenience store or gas station personnel to help you.
- Car disabled? Pull over to the side of the road, put on your flashers, and put out flares or reflective markers if you have them. Tie a light-colored cloth to your antenna or door handle. Stay with the car. Use a cell phone if you have one to call for help. If a stranger offers to help, ask him or her to call police to assist you.

Protecting Kids

- Listen—really listen—to what your child tells you about friends, the neighborhood, worries, and fears. Thoughtful listening builds communication and trust, which are keys to helping your kids grow up safe.
- Talk with your kids about drugs, violence, and other problems. Make your family values clear, and provide a good example.
- Make sure you know your child's friends and the friends' parents.
- Before your children go to another home, ask the adults there whether they have guns or alcohol and if so whether these are securely and safely stored.
- Check out the neighborhood with your child. Find out where he or she feels safe and unsafe. Work with neighbors to address problems such as unsafe “shortcuts,” dangerous intersections, areas where shrubbery needs trimming back, lack of safe places to seek help.
- Set up clear rules for play after school, on weekends, and during “time off” in the summer or at holidays. Help your child review them regularly.
- Urge kids to play in groups, which are far less susceptible to an approach by strangers.
- Be a helping adult. Let kids know that they can tell you anything and that you will listen caringly. Mentor a child who needs adult support.

Involving and Safeguarding Teens

- Keep listening to your teen, no matter how difficult and argumentative he or she may become.
- Know your teen's friends and their parents. Insist on meeting new friends.
- Bring teens into the life of the community. Let them know you value and need their skills. Get their help in solving neighborhood problems. Encourage their sense of responsibility and of respect from you as a caring adult.
- Talk with your teen about dating, violence, alcohol, other drugs, and other worries. Find out what they think. Make clear your expectations and the limits you will enforce.
- Recognize that as teens mature, they should be able to handle increasing responsibility, but base that on your teen's maturity and experience, not on what "everybody does."
- Work with teens and with other parents to ensure that young people have safe, positive, attractive alternatives to hanging out. Start an after-school program that attracts older youth.
- Help teens learn crime prevention basics they'll need to know as adults—such as home security, personal safety, car security.

To, From, and At School

- Check out the routes your child takes when walking or biking to school—whatever your child's age. Check out school bus or regular bus stop areas if your child uses them. Look for hazardous short cuts that might tempt kids or take them out of public view. Agree on safe walking and biking areas.
- Tell your child that *anything* that makes him or her uncomfortable or suspicious should be reported immediately to you and to school officials.
- Make sure your child travels with others to and from school; kids in groups are generally safer.
- Look into starting a McGruff House Program in which folks who are at home offer to call for help for children who are lost or frightened or in trouble.
- Encourage your child's school to provide anger management and conflict resolution training and to consider enlisting students as mediators for their peers—even elementary-age children have done it well.
- Ask about the safety plan for your child's school. How are local police involved? How are students and parents involved? What emergencies have been considered?

About Preventing Violence

- Set a good example for your child. Settle disputes without using or threatening violence.
- Role-play with your child how he or she can handle typical childhood arguments without violence.
- Make sure your child knows you want to hear immediately about any bullying or threats of violence.
- Insist on good manners. They are a buffer against violence.
- Agree with neighbors on how adults in the neighborhood should intervene with kids. Usually separating them and listening to each one is a good start.
- Help your child avoid things and people that are associated with violence—including alcohol and other drugs.
- Help your child understand the difference between real violence and what's on TV and in the movies. Talk about long-term consequences.
- If your child is a witness to or victim of violence, get counseling help—the violence often leaves emotional injuries that are hard to see but still harmful.

Out and About

- As you walk down the street or through the parking garage, walk alertly and assertively. Don't weigh yourself down with too many parcels. Take several loads to the car if necessary.
- Walk in the middle of the sidewalk rather than against the doorways or along the curb.
- Know where the nearest police station or 24-hour store or gas station is, in case you need help late at night.
- Park in areas that are well traveled and will be well lighted if you return after dark. When parking in an attended lot, leave only the ignition key.
- Keep purses hugged close to your body, wallets in front pants or jacket pocket.
- Coming in early or leaving late at work? Be sure you have a secure parking area or an escort to your car. Pay for a cab if necessary.
- Use the busier, better-lighted stops on public transit, especially if you don't know the area.
- Sit near the bus driver or in subway cars with several other passengers.
- If someone seems to be following you, turn in the opposite direction or cross the street. If he or she persists, move quickly to the nearest group of people and ask for help.

Traveling for Business or Pleasure

- Pack the least possible amount and be sure your luggage stays under your control (or that of authorized personnel) at all times.
- Carry only the credit and ATM cards you absolutely need. Leave the others at home, safely stored.
- Keep a record with you and with a family member or trusted friend of your itinerary, including lodgings, and of the credit and other cards you are taking.
- Be sure to check the locks at your lodging. Each door should have a sturdy key lock and a well-constructed deadbolt.
- Never open the door to someone you don't know well and trust. If someone claims to be a hotel employee, call the front desk for verification.
- Never leave your room key out where it could be picked up.
- Never leave the room unlocked, even to go to the ice or vending machine.
- Don't invite strangers to your room. Don't give out your room number.
- Especially if you're traveling alone, insist on being given your room number discreetly by registration staff. If you are nervous about someone inappropriately overhearing your room number, insist that you be relocated.

On Vacation

- Make sure your home is secure—all deadbolts locked; lights left on timers, deliveries cancelled or being collected by a trusted neighbor who has your travel schedule.
- Take only the credit and other cards that you will absolutely need. Carry traveler's checks instead of cash. Record information on these cards and any valuable equipment (e.g., camcorders, cameras, and CD players) that you take with you. Take a copy along and leave one with a friend or family member.
- Study up in advance on your vacation destination. Know where you want to go and how you want to get there. Ask hotel personnel about the safety of areas off the regular tourist path.
- Don't leave valuables in view in the car—your own or a rental. Leave them in the trunk or, better still, in your room.
- Make sure everyone in your party—adults, teens, children—has the name, address, and phone number of the place you are staying and carries that information along at all times.
- Set up rules for each day's outings on where and how you'll link up if you become separated.
- Don't leave rooms unlocked in your lodgings. Insist that everyone carry his or her key when outside the room.

Your Child's Safety on the Internet

- Teach your children never to give out their name, address, telephone number, password, school name, parent's name, or any other personal information.
- Tell your children never to send a picture of themselves to anyone without your permission.
- Tell your children never to meet face to face with someone they've met online.
- Monitor your children when they're online and monitor the time they spend online.
- Talk to children about where they can surf and what's off limits.
- Consider purchasing blocking software and choose a commercial online service that offers parental control features.
- Make sure that access to the Internet at your children's school is monitored by adults.
- If your child receives threatening e-mails or pornographic material, save the offensive material and contact that user's Internet service provider and your local law enforcement agency.
- If you come across sites that are inappropriate for children when you are surfing the Net, send the addresses to online services that offer parental control features or to sites advertising protection software to add to their list to be reviewed for inclusion or exclusion.

Identity Theft

- Do not give out personal information over the phone, through the mail, or over the Internet unless you have initiated the contact or know with whom you are dealing.
- Shred all discarded documents, including bank statements, pre-approved credit card offers, insurance forms, and other documents that contain financial information.
- Do not use your mother's maiden name, birth date, or last four digits of your social security number when creating a password.
- Carry only credit cards you use on a regular basis. Never carry your social security card, birth certificate, or passport unless necessary.
- Do not write your social security number on checks or give it out to businesses. If a government agency requests the number, a privacy notice should accompany the request.
- Do not put your credit card number on the Internet unless it is encrypted on a secured site.
- Cancel all credit cards you have not used in the last six months.
- If you order a new credit card, make sure it arrives within the appropriate time. If not, call the credit card grantor to find out if it was mailed and to what address.
- Order your credit report at least twice a year. Correct all mistakes with the credit bureau.

Holiday Time

- Do as much shopping as possible in advance of the crowds. You'll be less hassled and more alert to your surroundings—and you'll get a better selection.
- Put parcels in the trunk of your car if you're driving. Don't leave prospective presents in plain view.
- Be sure to lock all doors and secure the home (including that garage door), even if you're only running to the store or visiting a neighbor "for just a minute or two." That's all the time a burglar needs, in many cases.
- Leave lights on timers and window shades or blinds in normal positions if you're going away, even just overnight.
- Keep presents out of view. The gaily wrapped packages are a beacon to burglars if they're on display near a window.
- Don't drink to excess. Not only does it increase your chance of being in a car crash but also it increases the odds that you might wind up a victim of crime.

Prevention at Work

- Find out what security measures exist at your workplace. Are there security guards, safe rooms, panic buttons, and surveillance cameras? Are visitors screened?
- Keep your purse, wallet, keys, or other valuables with you at all times or locked in a drawer or closet. Mark other personal items with your name or initials.
- Check the identity of any strangers who are in your office by asking whom they are visiting. Report any suspicious behavior.
- Avoid stairwells and out-of-the way areas.
- Don't work alone after hours. Create a buddy system for walking to parking lots or public transportation, or ask security to escort you.
- Never lock fire exits or block doorways, halls, or stairways. Keep fire doors closed to slow the spread of smoke and fire.
- Know the exit routes and evacuation plans in your building, including at least two exit routes from each room, if possible.
- Find out if your company has an emergency preparedness plan. If not, volunteer to help develop one.
- Keep your own personal emergency supplies such as a flashlight, walking shoes, a water bottle, and nonperishable food in a desk drawer.

Together in the Community

- Make sure your own neighborhood is safe and working together against crime opportunities and causes.
- Find out who's working to help keep kids out of trouble. Volunteer to mentor, coach, counsel, or just help out at or after school or on weekends.
- Ask whether your community has a comprehensive action plan to reduce crime, one that involves all sectors of the community. If not, help get the process started.
- Speak out for prevention. Help make it the community's first choice for reducing crime, because it costs less and hurts less.
- Talk with your employer (or your employees). Businesses stand to lose a lot if crime gets in the way of community health. Offer your skills, services, and facilities for community anti-crime efforts.
- Find out whether your community has community policing, in which police work with specific communities and help them address crime and its causes by solving problems with local residents. Get involved in your neighborhood and at the community level.
- Support programs that strengthen families in bringing up crime-free, drug-free children who know how to keep themselves safe.

Together in the Neighborhood

- Get to know your neighbors. You are each other's best defense against crime. Studies show that where neighbors work together, where they know and respect each other, there's less crime.
- Start or strengthen a Neighborhood Watch. Almost every local police or sheriff's department in the nation can help you.
- Find out whether your area has community policing. Work with officers who are assigned to help your neighborhood reduce problems that cause crime.
- Look out for each other's children. Agree that you all want to reduce drug abuse and violence, especially weapons violence.
- Help those who need a hand making their homes more secure. Trim shrubs, install a wide-angle viewer, help pick up litter, put in a deadbolt lock for a neighbor who is unable to do so.
- Involve teenagers in the neighborhood's safety; invite them to help solve local problems. Make sure they have safe, enjoyable places to go and "hang out."
- Invite neighbors to work together on all sorts of community problems, which builds a sense of neighborhood teamwork and competence.

Neighborhood Preparedness

- Arrange a meeting of community members through Neighborhood Watch or other civic association. Together, develop a community disaster preparedness plan.
- Invite a local law enforcement official to attend a meeting and discuss terrorism prevention (e.g., what kinds of incidents to look for and how to report them).
- Create a neighborhood directory with home/work phone numbers, email addresses, and plans for community members who may need special assistance during emergency situations.
- Identify members of the community who have special skills or equipment that they would be willing to share in an emergency.
- Discuss your local warning system. Know the location of temporary shelters as well as designated evacuation routes in your area.
- Look at potential terrorist targets such as airports and bridges in or near your community and discuss the consequences of an attack on these targets.
- Find out what your local school district and day care centers plan to do in the event of an emergency.
- Develop individual preparedness plans that cover emergency contact information for family members, predetermined meeting places, home evacuation procedures, emergency pet care, safe storage of food and water, and disaster supplies kits.

MISSION



STATEMENT

*To forge a nationwide commitment
by people acting individually and together
to prevent crime and build safer,
more caring communities.*

The National Crime Prevention Council is a private, nonprofit tax-exempt [501(c)(3)] organization whose primary mission is to enable people to prevent crime and build safer, more caring communities. NCPC publishes books, kits of camera-ready program materials, posters, and informational and policy reports on a variety of crime prevention and community-building subjects. NCPC offers training, technical assistance, and national focus for crime prevention: it acts as secretariat for the Crime Prevention Coalition of America, more than 4,000 national, federal, state, and local organizations committed to preventing crime. It also operates demonstration programs and takes a major leadership role in youth crime prevention. NCPC manages the McGruff "Take A Bite Out Of Crime" public service advertising campaign, which is substantially funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Proceeds from the sale of materials funded by public sources are used to help support NCPC's work on the National Citizens' Crime Prevention Campaign.



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Thanks to each and every one of you!
Let's keep up the good work.

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