

Vacation Security Awareness

Courtesy Edmonton Police Service

Vacations, whether alone or with the entire family, have become part of our way of life. Vacations are suppose to be a time for fun and relaxation. A time to "get away from it all." Unfortunately, there is no vacation spot in the world that is 100% safe from criminal activities. *Therefore, the crime prevention measures that you incorporate into your daily routine must by incorporated into your vacation planning.* Do not develop a false sense of security just because you are on vacation. Actually you should develop a greater awareness to your surroundings while in unfamiliar territory. Don't let your vacation be ruined by becoming another crime statistic. The following precautions will help you to have a safe and enjoyable vacation.

BEFORE You Leave Home:

- Plan your trip and give the itinerary with emergency phone numbers to a trusted friend or neighbour.
- Place identification tags on the inside and outside of your luggage. Use your first initial and last name only.
- Install good locks on your doors and windows and be sure to use them.
- Remove all exterior "hidden" house keys.
- Make sure all your valuables are engraved with your name and driver's license or social security number.
- Make a record of your credit card and traveller's cheque numbers and keep it in a safe place.
- Arrange for a friend or neighbour to pick up your mail, packages and newspapers on a daily basis.
- Make arrangements to have your lawns mowed and watered.
- Use timers for interior lights and radios. Make your house look "lived in".
- Make arrangements for the care of your pets.

WHEN TRAVELLING

- Prior to any long distance motor vehicle trips, have your vehicle serviced by a reputable mechanic.
- Never carry large amounts of cash, use traveller's cheques.
- Always be aware of your surroundings.
- Always check the interior of your vehicle before entering.
- Do not stop and assist a stranded motorist. Go to the nearest phone booth and call for help.

- Never let your gas tank get below one-fourth full.
- Use well travelled roads, avoid shortcuts.
- Keep your doors locked and windows up at all times.
- Do not pick up hitchhikers.
- Never advertise your plans for strangers. If you think you are being followed, drive to the nearest public area telephone and call the police.
- Always park in well lighted areas.
- Always carry your purse or wallet with you.
- Keep your valuables out of sight, preferably locked in the trunk.
- Engrave your car stereo, CB radio, car phone, and other removable items with your name and driver's license number.
- Avoid late night driving.
- If lost, stop at a well lighted service station for directions.

AT THE HOTEL

- Unpack and arrange your belongings so you can tell if anything is missing.
- Lock your suitcases so they can't be used to carry your property out of your room.
- Always take your cash, credit cards, and car keys with you when leaving your room.
- Do not open your door to strangers. Look through the door viewer before opening your door.
- Do not leave jewellery, cameras, or other expensive items lying around your room. Use the hotel safe to store your valuables and extra cash.
- Always use the hotel's auxiliary locking devices on the doors and windows. Consider purchasing and using portable locks and alarm devices.
- When leaving, if the maid has cleaned your room, hang the "Do Not Disturb" sign on the outside of the door.
- When you go out, leave a light and the radio turned on.
- Take your room keys with you. Do not leave them at the front desk.
- Be aware of your surroundings. Notify the management of any suspicious persons in the area.
- Do not give out your room number to strangers.
- Report any missing items to hotel management and the police.

WHILE SIGHTSEEING

- There are safety in numbers. Tours should be taken with a group.
- Verify the tour agency or guide is reputable.
- Be wary of strangers who ask a lot of questions about you and your vacation plans.
- Never carry large amounts of cash. Leave what you don't need in the hotel safe. Separate the larger bills from the smaller ones in order to avoid flashing all your bills in full public view.
- Stay in public areas. Do not wander off from your tour group.

- Looking lost will make you an easy target for crime. If you need directions, ask a service station attendant. Do not ask pedestrians directions.
- If renting a car, cover the car rental agency's name or logo with a piece of masking tape. A rented car is a good indication that you are a tourist.
- Before leaving the hotel, ask if there are any areas in town that should be avoided.
- Travel brochures and maps are a good indication that you are a tourist. When not in use keep them in the glove compartment.
- Remember, vacation planning, thought and security awareness will reduce your chances of becoming the next victim of a crime.

CRIME PREVENTION TIPS FOR AIR TRAVELLERS

Theft is a crime of opportunity that can happen to anyone at any time regardless of your mode of travel. Travellers usually carry cash or credit cards that are tempting targets for thieves or pickpockets. Be alert and take precautions to safeguard your valuables whether you are a frequent flyer or are among those who seldom leave the ground.

- Never leave your luggage unattended, keep it in sight and within reach at all times.
- Never store valuables in checked luggage. Use a small carry-on bag for valuable items and keep it with you.
- Never carry or show large amounts of cash; use travellers cheques whenever possible. Don't flaunt expensive jewellery or clothing.
- Don't dangle a purse by the straps; carry purses and cameras close to you, especially in crowded areas.

SAFEGUARDING YOUR LUGGAGE AND ITS CONTENTS

Keep these helpful hints in mind when packing your bags for a trip as you carry them to and from your destination.

- Remove all old airline destination tags that might confuse baggage handlers.
- Place tags that list your name, address, and telephone number on the outside and inside of your luggage. If you and your bags are separated, airport and ground transportation employees will be better able to recover and forward them to you.
- Keep a list of the contents of your luggage separate from your luggage and carry-on items. This list could help identify your bags if the need arises.
- Pack your valuables in a carry-on bag that you keep with you at all times.
- Keep your luggage in sight; never leave it unattended or ask a stranger to watch it for you.

HOW TO RECOGNIZE A PICKPOCKET

Don't expect pickpockets to dress peculiarly or stand out in a crowd; they want to appear normal. You should watch for teams of two or three people, male or female, who may be:

- Riding escalators or elevators repeatedly in a short period of time.
- Loitering in crowded areas, such as baggage carousels, newsstands or restaurants.
- Changing seats constantly or walking in and out of lines in waiting areas.
- Carrying coats or jackets over their arms.
- Appearing to use their hands, head or eyes to signal others or to "accidentally" bump into others.
- If you are bumped or distracted by a stranger, be aware that a pickpocket may be targeting you. **Stay Alert!**