



St. Joseph County Sheriff's Office



Vacation Crime Prevention Tips

Vacation is a time for relaxation and enjoyment. It can also be the time for crime victimization if appropriate crime prevention measures are not followed. The following crime prevention tips or recommendations are designed to allow the vacationer to enjoy a safe and secure trip and to return to a secure residence.

Before Leaving Secure Your Residence

- Have good locks on all doors and windows and use them.
- Make sure your residence looks lived in, not empty.
- Leave shades and blinds in a normal position.
- Ask a neighbor to watch your residence while you are away. Leave your vacation address and telephone number with a neighbor so you can be reached in case of an emergency.
- Test your smoke and burglar alarms.
- Stop all deliveries, arrange for a neighbor to pick up your mail, newspaper and packages.
- Arrange for someone to mow your lawn, rake leaves and maintain the yard to give the home a lived-in look.
- Have a neighbor place garbage cans at the curb on your normal pickup day(s) and return them after the garbage pickup is made.
- Plug in timers to turn lights and a radio or television on and off at appropriate times.
- Turn the bell or ringer on your telephone down low. If a burglar is around, he won't be alerted to your absence by a ringing telephone.
- If you have call forwarding on your telephone, forward your calls to a trusted friend or relative.
- Don't announce your absence on answering machine messages; leave your normal message on the machine.
- Engrave your valuables with your driver's license number and post Operation Identification decals on entry doors and windows.
- Close and lock garage doors and windows. Ask a neighbor to occasionally park in your driveway. If you leave your car at home, park it as you normally would. Vehicles parked outside should be moved occasionally to appear that they are being used.
- Consider taking valuables to a bank safety deposit box.

Cash

- Do not carry large amounts of cash. If you must carry cash, never display large amounts.
- When possible, carry cash substitutes such as traveler's checks or credit cards. Keep a written record of your traveler's checks and credit card numbers, and keep them in a safe place.

Luggage

- Remove old flight tags from your luggage. Old flight tags can cause confusion and misdirect your luggage.
- Provide adequate identification on the outside and inside of your luggage.
- Never leave your luggage unattended, even for a short period of time.
- Never store cash, jewelry, medicine or other valuables in your luggage.

On The Road

- Never carry large amounts of cash; use travelers checks. If you must carry large sums of money, do not display it openly.
- Keep a record of traveler's check numbers and your credit card numbers in a safe place. Have the telephone numbers to call in case your checks or credit cards are stolen or lost.
- Be aware of your surroundings and never advertise your plans to strangers; this includes travel routes and the amount of cash you are carrying.
- Do not stop to offer help to a stranded motorist. Go to the nearest telephone and call for assistance.
- If you suspect someone is following you, drive to the nearest service station, restaurant or business and call the police or sheriff's department. If you believe it is unsafe for you to get out of your car, sound your horn and flash your lights to draw attention.
- If your car breaks down, raise the hood and attach a white flag to the antenna or door handle. If someone stops to help it is advisable that you stay in your locked car and ask them to call the police or a garage. If you must abandon your car, keep all passengers together.
- Do not carry your airplane tickets or passport in open view.
- Be very careful with bus, train or airplane tickets. They are as good as cash.
- Males are advised to carry their wallets in an inside pocket or front trouser pocket.
- Females are advised to carry their purse under their arm.
- Take a picture of your suitcases and keep the picture(s) with you. The picture(s) may be helpful in identifying your luggage if it is lost by an airline.
- While traveling, be sure your luggage is locked.
- Label each piece of luggage with your name and *business address*.

Car Security

- Always lock your car after entering or leaving it.
- Park in well-lighted areas.
- Check the back seat before entering your car.
- Mark your car radio and other removable car equipment with your driver's license number.
- Always lock valuables out of sight, preferably in the trunk. Always carry wallet, checkbooks and purses with you.
- Do not advertise that you are a tourist. Place maps and travel brochures in your vehicle's glove compartment.

Hotel and Motel Security

- If you are staying in a hotel or motel, take all of your luggage and valuables to your room.
- Never leave money, checks, credit cards, car keys or valuables in the room. Take them with you.
- Determine the most direct route to and from your room, to the fire escapes, elevators and nearest telephone.
- When occupying or leaving your room, use all auxiliary locking devices on doors and windows. (You may want to purchase a portable door lock for traveling.)
- Keep a daily check of your belongings.
- Place extra cash, expensive jewelry or other valuables in the hotel/motel safe.
- Use the door viewer to identify anyone requesting entry. Open the door only if you are certain the person has a legitimate reason to enter your room. If in doubt, call the hotel/motel office.
- Unpack and place belongings in the closet and dresser. Arrange your things so you'll know if anything is missing.
- Consider locking any electrical appliances (blow dryers, electric shavers, etc.) in your luggage. Suitcases should always be locked so they cannot be used to carry your property out of your room.
- Report any lost or stolen items to the hotel/motel management and to the police.
- Report to the management any suspicious movements in the corridors or rooms.

Sight-Seeing

- Make note of your passport number. If it becomes lost or stolen, knowing your passport number will facilitate getting a new passport.
- Ask for directions at a hotel/motel on how to get to those attractions you want to visit.
- If you are going out in an unfamiliar area, ask the hotel clerk if there are areas you should avoid.
- Select tour guides carefully.
- Don't advertise you are a tourist. Don't look lost or vulnerable. Walk with a purpose and stay alert to what's happening around you. If you get lost, find an open business and ask for directions.
- Only carry with you the cash you will need, and only in small denominations.
- If older children go off separately, be sure they understand the importance of keeping track of time and returning promptly at appointed hours.

Camping Tips

- Avoid camping alone in isolated areas.
- Park your vehicle so it cannot be blocked by another vehicle in case of an emergency.
- Mark all your belongings and camping equipment with your driver's license number and keep a record of equipment.
- Mark your tent, sleeping bags and clothing with indelible ink.
- Engrave your foot locker, thermos, coolers, lamps and flashlights, fishing gear, backpacks, barbecue grills, etc.
- Familiarize yourself with local emergency locations and phone numbers in case of accidents or crimes.

- Avoid leaving your camping gear (cook stove, ice chest, chairs, etc.) out in the open unattended.
- Get to know your neighbors and help protect each other's belongings.
- Avoid walking alone at night.
- Carry a spare lock so you can use storage containers available at many parks.
- Use a chain and lock to secure propane tanks, portable generators, spare tires, bicycles, etc.
- Always lock your camping trailer when you leave the vicinity.
- Install a locking device on the trailer towing hitch, so your trailer cannot be towed away.
- Report any suspicious activities and all crimes to the proper authorities.

Emergencies dial 911