

Public Safety Tips

Crime Prevention Tips

Strolling - Day and Night

- Plan your route, know where you are going before leaving.
- Try to walk places with your friends rather than alone.
- Stick to well-lighted, well-traveled streets. Avoid shortcuts through wooded areas, parking lots, or alleys.
- Take the safest route to and from schools, stores, or your friends' houses. Know where to go for help if you need it.
- Don't display your cash or any other inviting targets like pagers, cell phones, hand-held electronic games, or expensive jewelry and clothing.
- Carry your backpack or purse close to your body and keep it closed. Just carrying a wallet? Put it inside your coat or front pants pocket, not in your back pocket or in your backpack.
- Have your car or house key in your hand before you reach the door.
- If you think someone is following you, change direction or cross the street. If they're still there, move quickly toward an open store or restaurant.
- **Don't be afraid to yell for help.**
- Be alert in the neighborhood. Call the police **911** to report suspicious persons or suspicious activity.

Walking - Be Street Smart

Use well populated and well-lit streets. If you suspect you're being followed, stay away from deserted blocks and head for an area where there are many people, or the nearest open store. Ask the storeowner to call **911**. If you're being driven home, ask the driver to wait until you are safely inside.

Emergency numbers:

- **510.777.3211** Oakland's Cell Phone 911 Emergency
- **510.777.3333** Oakland's Cell Phone Non-Emergency

Pickpocketing

According to the police, pickpocketing incidents increase during the months of August, September, and October, obviously during the start of the school year. In many of the reported incidents, the victim had their wallet removed from their backpack front compartment, a common location where students put their wallets. Carry your bag in front of you. Gentlemen, carry your wallet in your front pocket.

Common locations where thieves target victims:

- By the subway turnstiles – Thief one walks in front of you swiping their Transit card, but they use a card that denies them access while the second thief is behind you, bumps into you removing your property (cell phone, wallet, etc.)
- In a crowded train – removing your wallet from your backpack front compartment.
- Going up or down the stairs of the subway – removing your property from your backpack front compartment.

Pickpocket thieves blend in and usually work in a team of two or three.

Smart Phone Users BEWARE!

Police departments nationwide are reporting an increase in snatching of electronic devices from individuals who carry their smart phone in their hands NOT paying attention to their surroundings, listening to music, or even texting while walking

Police Recommend:

- Keep your smart phone on your person / coat or jacket, don't display when not in use especially while using mass transit. Use a hands-free device and pay attention to your surroundings.
- If you suspect you're being followed, stay away from deserted blocks and head for an area where people are or the nearest open store.
- Passwords protect your device.
- Have an Apple device? Download the latest iOS software to your device. The latest software has additional bells and whistles that can help law enforcement with the recovery.

Using Electronics - MP3 Player & Cell Phones

According to the Police Department, the snatching of electronic devices is on the rise across the city and in many other large cities around the world. This is due to both the increased value and ubiquity of these devices.

A common element in these incidents is that the victims are not paying attention to their surroundings, distracted by the device in question. Quite often the perpetrator follows the victim from behind and snatches the electronic device right out of his or her hand. In a number of these incidents, the perpetrators were riding bicycles / mopeds when they targeted their victim. These events are not limited to the streets and have also occurred on subways and buses.

To avoid being a victim:

- Pay attention to your surroundings, minimize the amount of time you talk on your cell phone in public places.
- If you suspect you are being followed, go into an open store.
- Keep all electronic devices in an inside jacket pocket. Avoid clipping them onto outer garments or displaying them anywhere visible.
- If your cell phone is stolen, call your carrier and report the theft. Request that an alert be placed on the phone, preventing its use.
- Mark your device by engraving.

Helpful Safety Tips for Joggers

- Safety in numbers, jog with friends in well-lit / traveled areas, avoiding short cuts and poorly lit parks. Jog in open spaces, away from bushes or alcoves where someone could hide.
- Jog in a familiar area but vary your routes. Changing the route you take will prevent someone from noting your schedule or movements.
- Carry your ID. Do not run with your phone or other valuables in sight and avoid devices that may distract you.
- If you suspect you're being followed, call the police immediately and find a safe place to wait for them to arrive.
- Wear bright colored clothing to improve your visibility.
- Program emergency phone number in your phone
 - **510.777.3211** Oakland's Cell Phone 911 Emergency
 - **510.777.3333** Oakland's Cell Phone Non-Emergency

Safety Tips while using Ride Share Services like Uber & Lyft

Now that the vast majority of Americans know about Uber or Lyft, millions of people count on a safe and convenient ride with just a few taps on the phone. But stories like the one about the South Carolina college student who was killed after getting into a car she mistook for an Uber raise questions about what riders can do to maximize their safety.

Here are some key safety tips to help maximize your safety when using rideshare services like Uber and Lyft:

- **Wait for your ride indoors** - This prevents you from standing outside unnecessarily with a phone in your hand, signaling to passing motorists that you're waiting for someone to pick you up. Instead, wait until your driver is close or has arrived before going outside.
- **Confirm details when the car arrives** - Don't just look at what time your driver is coming. Pay attention to the make, model, and color of the car, as well as the driver's name and photo. Make sure to match the license plate number on your screen to the one you see in real life.
- **Always ask "What's my name?"** - Never get into an Uber, Lyft or any other private car unless the driver can first identify you by name. If they're your actual driver, they will also know your destination.
- **Map your own route during the ride** - This is especially important if you're in a different city and aren't familiar with the route. By monitoring your own GPS navigation, you'll see if the driver is leading you astray.
- **Don't share private information with your driver** - This includes your personal phone number. The Uber app automatically encrypts both the driver's number and the passenger's digits to protect both sides' privacy. You should never share credit card info with the driver. All Lyft and Uber fares are paid through the app, and tips can be added there, too.
- **Ride in the back seat** - If you're the only passenger in the car, riding in the back seat gives both the passenger and driver more personal space. It also ensures you're able to get out on either side to avoid traffic.

- **Tell a friend where you're going and who you're with** - Both Lyft and Uber let you quickly and easily share who your driver is, where you're going and when you're supposed to get there. The "share status" option in the Uber app gives your friend your driver's name, photo, license plate and location. Your friend can then track your trip and see your estimated time of arrival -- even if he or she doesn't have the app. The "send ETA" feature on the Lyft app is very similar. It sends a text to your friend with details about the car, the driver and how far along you are on the route.

Home Safety

Have your keys ready before you get to the door. Look back before entering your building or home. If you live in an apartment, close the lobby door behind you, especially if a stranger is approaching. Do not hold the door open for strangers. Make all visitors and delivery persons use the doorbell.

When placing your name on mailboxes or on your bell, use only the last name, e.g., The Smiths. When recording an outgoing message on your answering machine, avoid leaving your name, phone number or a message that indicates you're not at home. A good message is, "We are unable to answer the phone. Please leave a message." Say it confidently.

Prevent Theft of Unattended Packages at Your Building

There are steps you can take to help prevent theft of unattended packages from happening to you or your neighbors.

- **Pick up packages as quickly as possible.**
 - Leaving packages in the lobby for an extended period increases the chances of theft. Most major shipping companies offer online package tracking, and some can even send you a notification when your package arrives. Utilize these and other services to avoid leaving your delivery unattended for long periods of time.
- **Don't allow building access blindly.**
 - Verify a visitor's identity over the intercom before letting them in. Keep an eye out for suspicious activity like loitering and "piggybacking." People may wait outside the building for someone to leave or enter, allowing them access to an open door. If you believe someone has entered the building on false pretenses, call Public Safety immediately.
- **Request a signature or schedule a delivery.**
 - Many shipping companies allow you to request a specific time frame for delivery, such as an evening or weekend when you know you will be home. You can also request that the package not be left without a signature. That way, if you are not around to sign, the carrier will try delivering your package at a later date.
- **Use a locker or other secure location.**
 - Sign up for free services such as FedEx Delivery Manager and UPS My Choice® or use Amazon Lockers to deliver your package to a local retail store or another secure location until you are able to pick it up. The FedEx Office Ship Center will also hold packages for pickup upon request. Visit their websites to learn more.
- **Ship your items where you have the best chance of receiving them**, such as your office or place of work.

- **Family members, trusted neighbors, or friends** may be home when you are not.
 - Consider asking them to accept packages on your behalf or hold them until you arrive.

Identity Theft a Growing Epidemic

Identity theft occurs when someone wrongfully uses your personal identification to obtain credit, loans, services, even rentals and mortgages in your name. Information can be stolen from a consumer in a variety of ways including going through your mail / trash to take pre-approved credit card offers, discarded receipts or other personal information, stealing your purse or wallet, calling you over the phone posing as a solicitor to gain your personal information.

Here are some effective ways to combat Identity Theft:

- Get a FREE annual credit report: www.annualcreditreport.com Check and review your credit report. Report any discrepancies to the credit reporting agency. Put an alert on your credit if necessary.
- Stop prescreened credit card offers coming to your home: www.optoutprescreen.com or call **1-888-5-OPTOUT**.
- Stop tele-marketing calls: www.donotcall.gov
- Stop receiving unwanted catalogs and other telemarketing mail: www.dmachoice.org
- Shred your old credit card, bank statements, bills, etc. to avoid dumpster diving. For more information on ID Theft or what to do if you are a victim, please go to www.ftc.com/idtheft

Job / Fraudulent Check Scams

Scammers know that finding a job can be tough especially now during this pandemic. To trick people looking for honest work, scammers advertise where real employers and job placement firms do. They also use [spoofed e-mails](#) to make you think that they are coming from a legitimate organization, person or even a member of the Columbia Community. They make upbeat promises about your chances of employment, and virtually all of them ask you to pay them for their services before you get the job. But the promise of a job isn't the same thing as a job. If you have to pay for the promise, it's likely a scam.

There are many variations to this scam but all end with the same ending...you deposit the check, send them the material or cash and now you get a notice from your bank that the check you deposited was fraudulent. You are now out of the money that you sent them, you are charged a bank fee for the bounced check and a negative report on your credit.

Remember **NO** legitimate company will ask you to pay for any material or certification before giving you the job or even starting a job.

While we cannot prevent [phishing](#), we can train ourselves to follow best practice guidelines and report suspicious activity.

- **Do not give out personal information via email.** Social engineering is the process of deceiving individuals into providing personal information to seemingly trusted agents who turn out to be malicious actors.

- **Always verify the authenticity of requests from companies or individuals by contacting them directly.** If you are asked to provide personal information via email, you should independently contact the company directly to verify this request.
- **Be suspicious of unknown links or requests sent via email or text message.** Do not click on unknown links or answer strange questions sent to your mobile device, regardless of who the sender appears to be.
- **Look at the email address that has sent you the offer.** Does it match the name they are providing? University officials will not use a Gmail account to correspond.

Driving Safely

- Keep your car in good running condition. Make sure there's enough gas to get where you're going and back.
- Turn the ignition off and take your car keys with you, even if you just running inside for a minute.
- Roll up the windows and lock car doors, even if you're coming right back. Check inside and out before getting in.
- Avoid parking in isolated areas. If you are uncomfortable, ask a security guard or store staff to watch you or escort you to your car.
- Drive to the nearest gas station, open business, or other well-lighted, crowded area to get help if you think you are being followed. Don't head home.
- Use your cellular phone, if you have one, to call the police if you are being followed or you've seen an accident. Otherwise, stay off your cellular phone while you are driving.
- Don't pick up hitchhikers. Don't hitchhike.

Holiday Safety Reminders

As we embrace the holiday spirit, it is important to remember that not everyone shares our merriment. There are Grinches lurking about, ready to swoop in and steal your joy. Don't let that happen to you. Follow these simple crime prevention tips to make it harder for an opportunistic thief to ruin your holiday.

Don't shop 'til you drop:

- Stay alert and be aware of what is going on around you.
- Park your car in a well-lighted area; close the windows and lock the door.
- Don't leave packages and boxes visible through car windows. Lock them in the trunk or take them directly home.
- Don't carry large amounts of cash. Pay with debit, or credit cards whenever possible.
- Don't get overburdened with packages; always keep one hand free. Don't leave your packages unattended; thieves are always looking for unattended packages and shopping bags.
- Keep your purse close to your body, not dangling loosely. Put your wallet in your front pants pocket or in an inside coat pocket.

When shopping online, use common sense to protect against fraud or ID theft:

- Familiarize yourself with the rules and policies of online stores and auction sites.
- Only shop with companies you know and make sure that the sites comply with industry security standards.

- Keep your personal information private and keep your passwords secure. Do not respond to requests for a password or credit card information unless you initiate the transaction.
- If you're not going to be home to accept the delivery, USPS, UPS Fed Ex and other package delivery providers offer alternatives that prevent your packages from being left unattended. Lockboxes and secure alternative retail locations are just a couple of options. Visit your courier's website for more details.

Safeguarding Your Vehicle and Property

Don't Leave the Keys in the Ignition:

Vehicles left unattended with keys in the ignition are easily targeted by car thieves. This dangerous practice allows for an easy theft or a joy ride by an inexperienced driver. This commonly occurs around the neighborhood store, deli, coffee shop, or newspaper stand. Remain alert. Don't create an opportunity. Don't become a victim!

When leaving your vehicle always:

- Close Your Windows
- Turn off the Ignition and REMOVE THE KEYS
- Lock Your Doors!

You might only be a "minute" — but a minute is all a thief needs. Lock up your car and take your keys with you!

Safeguarding Your Property:

Stay alert and be aware of what is going on around you.

- Park your car in a well-lighted area; close the windows and lock the doors.
- Don't leave packages and boxes visible through car windows. Lock them in the trunk or take them directly home. While your trunk is better than the passenger compartment for shopping bags and laptops, an experienced thief will often stake out a parking area and watch you transfer your things there. So, **before** you even get to your location move your valuables to the trunk or wherever they're out of sight.

For the subway:

- Plan your trip before leaving. Visit transit websites for directions or delays in service and download transit apps
- Board the conductor's car
- Stay several steps away from the yellow line.
- Try putting your back up against the wall, or against one of the steel columns, which will eliminate the chance of anyone pushing you from behind.
- Speak to BART employees if you need immediate assistance. In case of an emergency, call 911.

For the bus:

- During late night hours, request a stop by asking the driver to let you off anywhere along the route, even if it is not a designated stop.
- Use well-lit and busy stops whenever possible.
- If you're getting off at a little-used stop, try to arrange for a friend to meet with you.
- When riding the bus or waiting at a bus stop stay alert, and don't doze off.

- Consider waiting inside a nearby retail location and tracking your bus's arrival through Transit App

Four Ways to Increase Your Personal Safety

1. Reduce or eliminate opportunities that may make you a target.
2. Increase awareness in places where you're most comfortable.
3. Trust your instincts even if you feel embarrassed.
4. Prepare your schedule daily with safety in mind.
 - Be AWARE of your surroundings at all times and trust your INSTINCTS.
 - Stay in well lit, populated pathways. Avoid shortcuts.
 - Travel in groups. There's always safety in numbers.
 - Walk with your head upright. Make eye contact. Thieves often target victims who are not paying attention to their surroundings or who are looking down.
 - Pay attention to your surroundings when using electronics on the streets, subways & buses. Don't TUNE yourself out. DON'T WALK AND TEXT.
 - Don't display electronics when not in use. Avoid becoming a victim of "Apple Picking."
 - Change the color of your earphones from "White" to any other color. White earphones usually indicates that you have an APPLE DEVICE which is an attractive target for thieves.
 - Avoid traveling or short cuts through parks after dark.
 - Before entering your apartment building, have your keys ready. Don't hold doors for anyone whom you don't know.
 - If you observe anyone acting in a suspicious manner, or if you feel threatened in any way, call the police immediately by dialing **911**.
 - Have an iPhone? Make sure you download the latest iOS software to your phone. By downloading the latest software, if your device is lost or stolen, it cannot be reprogrammed without an Apple ID and password.

If Someone Tries to Rob You

- Give up your property-don't give up your life, your life is more important. You can always replace your property.
- Report the crime to the police **911 ASAP**. Let the Police Operator know where you are at & try to describe the attacker accurately. Your actions can help prevent others from becoming victims.

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