

## **SAFETY AND SECURITY TIPS**

Here are some safety tips provided by the Los Angeles Police Department:

### **AT HOME:**

- Protect your house or apartment from vandalism by using good lighting and locking gates and garages.
- Install quality deadbolt locks on all exterior doors and use them.
- Remember a small chain between the door and doorjamb is not safe. It can be easily broken and pulled out.
- Install quality locks on all windows and use them.
- When a window is left open for ventilation, keep the opening small enough to prevent entry.
- Install a wide-angle viewer in the doors at all entrances to see who is outside without opening the door.
- Remove or trim shrubbery that hides doors and windows so neighbors or passersby can see someone trying to break into your home.
- Light the outside of your home to discourage prowling or loitering. Use outside floodlights for all entryways, pathways, stairwells and laundry, trash and parking areas. Connect outside lights to a timing device, motion detector or a light sensitive switch so lights switch on automatically during hours of darkness.
- Make a decision about installing an alarm system only after considering such factors as the cost, the reputation of the company and the likelihood of false alarms.
- A watchdog offers additional protection.

### **INTUDERS:**

- If you are at home and you suspect someone is trying to break in, call the LAPD immediately;
- If confronted by an intruder, remain as calm as possible;
- Consider your safety and that of your family as the highest priority; and
- Choose a strategy such as negotiating, fleeing, screaming, fighting or complying whichever seems safest and most effective relative to the situation.

### **AWAY FROM HOME:**

- Use timing devices to turn on inside lights and radios to give the appearance that your home is occupied. Setting timers to go on and off at different hours in different rooms is also a good idea.
- If no one will be at home for more than a few days, arrange to have a relative, trusted friend or neighbor pick up your mail.

### **RETURNING HOME:**

- Have your door key in your hand when approaching your entryway.
- At night, keep car headlights on and car doors locked until you have checked your garage or parking area. Look around before you get out of your car.
- If you are driven home, ask the driver to wait until you are safely inside.
- If possible, arrange for a relative, neighbor or friend to be there when you arrive home.
- Never go into your home if anything seems unusual, such as an open door or a broken window. Leave immediately to a place where you can call the police. Do not go into your home until the police advise it is safe.

### **KEY CONTROL:**

- Give a duplicate house key to a relative, trusted friend or neighbor in case you are ever locked out;
- Do not hide house keys in mailboxes, in planters, under doormats, or other places they might be easily found. This will prevent criminals from finding an easy way into your home;
- Do not place personal identification on key rings;
- Be able to separate your car key from all of your other keys. You can purchase a detachable key ring for this purpose;
- Leave only your ignition key with the car when it is valet parked, serviced or repaired; and
- If you lose the keys to your home, change the locks as soon as possible.

### **APARTMENTS AND CONDOMINIUMS:**

- Always lock the doors to common areas and garages;
- When leaving or entering a garage, be sure the door closes and locks behind you before moving on;
- Do not leave the garage door opener in your car. If stolen, it provides easy access to your building;
- Organize regular meetings to discuss security issues;
- Contact neighbors in your complex whenever a crime occurs so they may take appropriate precautions; and
- Never use a laundry room alone or late at night. Do your laundry during the day and invite a friend or neighbor to do their laundry with you.

### **WALKING:**

- Become familiar with stores and gas stations that stay open late at night, as well as LAPD, sheriff, highway patrol and fire department locations.
- If followed or threatened by someone in a car, use your personal alarm or scream loud and long, cross the street and run in the opposite direction. This will force

the driver to turn the car around to pursue you. Try to obtain the license plate number and a description of the car and its occupant(s).

- Stay alert to your surroundings at all times. Observe people and activities around you. Look confident and purposeful when you walk.
- Plan and use the safest and most direct route to your destination.
- Choose busy, well-lighted streets and avoid isolated areas, alleys, vacant lots, abandoned buildings and construction sites.
- Walk near the curb and do not pass too close to shrubbery, dark doorways and other places of concealment.
- Avoid shortcuts.
- If followed or threatened by someone who is walking, use your personal alarm or scream loud and long, cross the street and run in the opposite direction. Head for bright lights and people.
- When arriving home by taxicab or limousine request the driver to wait until you are inside the house.
- Have your key ready so you can open the door to your house as soon as possible.

### **PARKING:**

- Choose well-lighted parking areas;
- Look around for loiterers before you get out of your car;
- Keep valuables and packages locked in the trunk;
- Always turn off the ignition, remove the key, and lock your car doors, no matter how soon you plan on returning;
- Do not park next to vans, trucks with campers or other vehicles whose size and structure can provide concealment for a potential assailant;
- Exercise caution and be extra alert when using underground or enclosed parking garages. Walk in the center aisle, rather than close to parked cars; and
- If you have a choice, park in areas that have an attendant or in locations that have heavy pedestrian traffic.

### **RETURNING TO YOUR CAR:**

- Have your key in hand before you get to your car;
- Be aware of occupied cars around you;
- If you are carrying packages, try to keep one hand free, even if it means making an extra trip;
- Check outside, under and inside your car before you unlock the door and get in. Criminals have been known to conceal themselves on the floorboards behind the front seats; and
- Criminals have been known to disable an engine or flatten a tire to strand a targeted victim. The victim is then approached, offered assistance and attacked. If your car is disabled in suspicious circumstances and a stranger offers to help you, use your personal alarm, scream loud and long and leave the area immediately. If there is no time to flee, get into your car, lock the doors and sound the horn to

attract attention to the situation. Try to obtain a good description of the suspect and report the incident to the LAPD, security and the parking attendant.

### **IF FOLLOWED WHILE DRIVING:**

- Drive to the nearest police or fire station for assistance;
- Drive to an open gasoline station, grocery store or other business where you can safely call the police;
- Keep driving until you find a safe area. In the meantime attract attention to your situation by honking the horn in rapid, short blasts and by turning on the emergency flashers;
- Attempt to obtain the license plate number and a description of the car following you; and
- Do not drive home or pull over to the side of the road or turn into a driveway. You could be trapped.

### **OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES:**

- When biking, jogging, roller-skating or participating in other outdoor activities remember the following:
- Choose a route in advance that is safe and populated;
- Always carry proper identification;
- Advise a loved one or a friend the route you will be taking so they will know where to look for you in an emergency;
- Vary your route and activity schedule so that your behavior is not predictable;
- Avoid pursuing outdoor activities after dark;
- Know businesses that are open and the locations of the LAPD, sheriff, highway patrol or fire stations along your route;
- Keep your exercise gear in good repair and carry the necessary tools in case of an emergency; and
- Consider carrying a personal alarm.

### **IF YOU ARE ATTACKED:**

Be physically and psychologically prepared to defend yourself. Start by preparing an inventory of your personal skills. Think about how you usually respond during a confrontation. What is your style? Do you fight, run, cry or freeze? Think through various strategies. Talk with other people about ways to handle confrontations and rehearse alternatives. By preparing, you will have more options to choose from if you ever find yourself in a confrontation.

Every confrontation is different. The best response depends on a combination of many factors, such as the location of the incident, characteristics of the assailant, the presence of weapons and your personal skills and available resources. Your most effective weapon in a confrontation is your own judgment.

Only you can decide how you will respond to a given situation. When faced with danger, trust yourself. Stay as calm as possible. Think rationally, without panic. Find a way to escape.

Evaluate the situation and the options available to you. **The following strategies may be effective in confrontations:**

- Nonresistance
- Negotiating
- Stalling for time
- Distracting or diverting the assailant and fleeing
- Verbal assertiveness
- Screaming or using a personal alarm to attract attention and help from people nearby
- Physically resisting and fighting off the assailant

Keep assessing the situation as it is happening. Never give up. If the first strategy you choose does not work try another strategy. Observe as much as you can about the identity, clothing and behavior of the assailant. This information will be important and useful for the police investigation.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Get a good description of the assailant. Carefully observe and remember as much as you can about appearance and behavior. Try to memorize details of the assailant's identity such as age, height, weight, eye and hair color. Look for any distinguishing personal characteristics, such as scars, tattoos, hairstyle, or other prominent features. Observe the assailant's clothing style and colors, jewelry, gait and manner of speech. If a car is involved in the crime, note the make, model, color and license number. Call the LAPD immediately to make a crime report. The sooner you report the crime, the more likely the LAPD will be able to collect important evidence and apprehend the offender. If the crime occurred in your home or neighborhood, it is a good idea to notify neighbors and the landlord so they may take extra precautions.