

## **Crime Prevention Tips**

### **Stop the Violence -- Promote Your Community**

Every 17 seconds, a violent crime - murder, rape, robbery or assault - is reported to law enforcement somewhere in this country. And fewer than half the violent crimes that take place actually get reported. Nationally, more than 5,000 children are victims of violent crime each day. Somebody's child. Maybe a child you love.

People in even the toughest circumstance have turned the tables on violent crime and created safer neighborhoods and schools. You can, too, by protecting yourself and your children and getting involved in the community.

Violence ruins individual lives, tears apart the fabric of our communities, and makes the costs of law enforcement and emergency care soar. Many calls to 911 can be traced back to signs of trouble, trouble that was allowed to continue: the rape that could have been prevented by better street lights, the domestic violence that could have been deterred by family counseling, a child brutally bullied who could have been protected by a concerned parent; a rash of burglaries that could have been prevented by an active community watch program.

Creating a community that will not tolerate violent crime means bringing together vision, energy, confidence and commitment. You need to reduce your family's risk of becoming crime victims. In order to go to work, attend school or church, or get together with friends, with reasonable safety, you need a neighborhood - not just a home - that's secure against crime. Your goal must be to build a strong community in which kids can be kids and adults can freely participate in neighborhood activities.

What can you do? Here are specific ways to strengthen your community and stop the violence. Some can be done right away. Others take time. Some don't require any help, while others require advice or help from others.

### **Tips for Kids:**

- Settle arguments with words, not fists or weapons. Don't stand around and form an audience when others are arguing. A group makes a good target for violence.
- Learn safe routes for walking in the neighborhood, and know places to go when seeking help. Trust your feelings, and when there's a sense of danger, get away.
- Report any crimes or suspicious actions to law enforcement officers, school authorities and parents. Be willing to testify if needed.
- Never go anywhere with someone you don't know and trust.
- If someone tries to hurt or abuse you, say no, get away, and tell a trusted adult. Remember, violence and abuse are CRIMES, and are not the victim's fault.
- Don't use alcohol or other drugs, and stay away from places and people associated with them.
- Stick with friends who are also against violence and drugs, and stay away from known trouble spots.
- Get involved to make your school safer and better - participating in crime prevention programs, settling disputes peacefully. If there's no program, help start one!
- Help younger children learn to avoid being crime victims. Set a good example, and volunteer to help with community efforts to stop crime.

### **Tips for Adults:**

- Teach children how to reduce their risk of being victims of violent crime. Insist on knowing at all times where your kids are, what they are doing, and who they are with.
- Get involved. Volunteer to help in community anti-crime and other improvements efforts. Encourage established groups to become involved in crime prevention efforts.
- Use common-sense tips to reduce your risk of becoming a crime victim. Stay in well-lit, busy areas; travel with a friend; walk in a confident, assured way. Avoid known trouble spots.
- Report crimes and suspicious activities to law enforcement officers. Agree to testify when necessary. Stand up for what you believe in - maintaining a safe community.
- Get to know your neighbors and agree with them to look out for one another. Get organized - work with law enforcement agencies - they'll welcome your interest.
- Find ways to settle arguments without violence. If you resort to violence to settle disputes, you will teach your child to do the same. Be a good role model.
- The vigilant use of common courtesy helps ease tensions that can otherwise lead to violence. Teach your children that good manners ARE important.
- Don't carry a weapon illegally. You lose, whether you use the weapon, or if it's used on you.
- Don't support illegal activities, like buying stolen property or using illegal drugs. This sends the wrong message to children, and by definition involves you and your family in criminal activity.
- Volunteer your home as a reliable source of help for kids who are scared or need assistance.

### **Tips for Neighbors and Communities:**

- Work with public agencies and other organizations to solve common problems.
- Make sure that all the youth in the neighborhood have positive ways to spend their spare time, through organized recreation, tutoring programs, and volunteer opportunities.
- Set up a Community Watch program, working with local law enforcement agencies. Make sure your streets and homes are well-lit.
- Build a partnership with law enforcement, focused on solving ongoing problems, instead of reacting to crises.
- Take advantage of safety in numbers to show you're determined to drive out crime and drugs.
- Clean up the neighborhood! Involve everyone. Tell criminals that you do care about where you live. Ask for assistance in cleaning up the neighborhood.
- Ask local officials to use new ways to get criminals out of your community. These include enforcing housing, health, and fire codes, and putting drug-free clauses in rental leases.
- Support victims and court witnesses.
- Work with schools to establish drug-free, gun-free zones.
- Develop and share information with local organizations that can provide other services that neighbors might need.

Remember that the Union County Sheriff's Office and your local police departments employ trained crime prevention specialists. Working together with law enforcement, and combining the citizen's knowledge of the community with the officer's professional crime prevention skills, enormous progress can be made toward stamping out crime.

## **Protect Your Child From Abduction and/or Abuse**

- Every year thousands of children are kidnapped, by strangers, acquaintances, family friends, or even by their own parents, beginning a tragic ordeal of life on the run, abuse, or worse.
- The following tips may help keep your child safe from abduction:
- When in public, keep your child in sight at all times. When your child is away from you, know who is with the child and where they are located.
- Teach your child not to wander off, to keep you in sight at all times, and to avoid lonely places.
- Establish strict procedures for picking up your child from school, at a friend's or after a movie. Don't let your child accept rides from anyone with whom you haven't made prior arrangements - even if they say they're a friend of the family.
- Teach your child never to go anywhere with anyone who doesn't know a family code word. Make sure this word is something that the child is familiar with and is known only to the family members.
- Teach your child his full name, your full name, address, and telephone number. Teach your child how to make local and long distance phone calls. Even a small child can be taught to dial 911 for help, or 0 for operator.
- Tell your child about the abduction problem in a calm and simple way - as if you were teaching any other important coping skill.
- Listen attentively when your child talks about a man or woman your child met in your absence.
- Teach your child that it's OK to run away or scream if someone makes or attempts to make your child do something the child doesn't want to do, or that makes the child feel uncomfortable.
- Take head and shoulder photographs every six (6) months for children six (6) years and younger, annually for older children. Make note of birthmarks and other distinguishing features.
- As a community function, invite all of the community children to a community building or home for a safety program. McGruff, the national Crime Prevention mascot, may visit if possible. Also, arrangements should be made for making photos of children for parents. Residents of Union County may contact LT William Thompson at the Union County Sheriff's Office, (704) 283-3765, to arrange such a program for their community.

## **Safety Tips for Travelers**

- Even though trips and vacations are often opportunities for relaxation, all citizens should practice good safety habits, even when on the road.
- Don't answer the door in a hotel or motel room without verifying who it is. If a person claims to be an employee, call the front desk and ask if someone from their staff is supposed to have access to your room, and for what purpose. An opened door is an invitation to enter, whether you tell the person to come in or not.
- When returning to your hotel or motel late in the evening, use the main entrance of the building. Be observant and look around before entering parking lots.
- Close the door securely whenever you are in your room, and use all of the locking devices provided.
- Don't needlessly display guest room keys in public, or carelessly leave them on restaurant tables, at the swimming pool, or in other places where the keys may be easily stolen.

- Do not draw attention to yourself by displaying large amounts of cash or expensive jewelry. Leave a record of the credit cards that you will be taking with you on your trip. Be careful not to needlessly display the cards, or to carelessly leave the cards at a vendor's desk.
- Don't invite strangers to your room.
- Place all packages and valuables, if possible, in your vehicle's trunk. Make sure all doors to your vehicle are locked. At night, park your vehicle, if possible, under a light, relatively near your room.
- Place all small valuables in the room safe, or in the hotel's or motel's safe deposit box.
- Check to see that any sliding glass doors or windows and any connecting room doors are locked.
- When out of your room, leave the television or radio playing low. This makes your room sound occupied. At night leave your room lights on, as well as the television or radio playing.
- If you see any suspicious activity, promptly report your observations to the management.

### **Guarding Against Home Improvement and Repair Fraud**

- There are many honest, hard-working people in the field of home improvement. Nevertheless, citizens should watch out for dishonest home repair firms and practices.
- Some tips on how to avoid home improvement and repair fraud:
- Be suspicious if someone offers to do an expensive job for an unusually low price. The old saying, You get what you pay for, is usually quite true.
- Always get several estimates for every repair job, and compare prices and terms. Check to see if there is a charge for estimates before asking for one.
- Ask your friends, neighbors, and co-workers for recommendations, or ask the firm for references, and check them out.
- Before signing any type of contract, take your time and read the contract very carefully. After you have read the contract, invite a friend or relative to read the contract. Make sure you understand all parts of the contract. If you feel pressured to sign the contract, remember there are other firms that would be delighted to work with you.
- Be wary of high-pressure sales tactics. When faced with such tactics, heighten your scrutiny of the contract documents. Often the time constraints asserted by the salesperson are relatively minor or even illusory.
- Pay by check, never by cash. Arrange to make payments in installments, one-third at the beginning of the job, one-third when the work is nearly completed, and one-third after the work is done.
- When you find a home repair firm you trust, stick with them and tell a friend! Reward good business practices.
- Make note of the employees working with the company and vehicles being driven by the workers. Occasionally, even the best firms have difficulties with problem employees. Be on guard.

Often, a victim does not know he has been cheated until it's too late. A few fraudulent individuals make the rest of the business community, businesses and consumers alike, suffer. If you don't report fraud, you're only helping the crooks, and that's just what they want. You should report any type of business-related fraud to the Better Business Bureau. Contact your local law enforcement agency to report the crime, and provide as many details as you can.

The following web sites contain valuable information on personal, neighborhood and work safety as well as information on alcohol, drugs, prescription medication, gangs and many more topics that effect communities.

These web sites also provide many publications and brochures that may be printed and copied.

National Association of Town Watch:	<a href="http://www.nationalnightout.org/natw/">http://www.nationalnightout.org/natw/</a>
National Night Out:	<a href="http://www.nationalnightout.org/nno/">http://www.nationalnightout.org/nno/</a>
North Carolina Crime Prevention Council:	<a href="http://www.ncpc.org/">http://www.ncpc.org/</a>
NC Crime Prevention Council Publications:	<a href="http://www.ncpc.org/publications">http://www.ncpc.org/publications</a>
NC Dept. of Crime Control & Public Safety:	<a href="http://www.nccrimecontrol.org/">http://www.nccrimecontrol.org/</a>
NC Crime Prevention Association:	<a href="http://nccrimeprevention.com/">http://nccrimeprevention.com/</a>
NC Dept. of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention:	<a href="http://www.ncdjjdp.org/">http://www.ncdjjdp.org/</a>
Center for the Prevention of School Violence:	<a href="http://www.ncdjjdp.org/cpsv/index.html">http://www.ncdjjdp.org/cpsv/index.html</a>