

SAFETY ADVICE FOR SENIORS

PREVENTING CRIME IS
EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS



Tips for staying safe

IMPORTANT CONTACT NUMBERS	
Police assistance	131 444
Emergency	000
Emergency – mobile phone	112
Emergency – hearing impaired	106
Crime Stoppers	1800 333 000
Goodbye Graffiti hotline	1800 442 255

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Western Australian Police Force

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Working together to prevent crime

There are things you can do to make your neighbourhood a safer place with surprisingly little effort.

This booklet contains practical advice that can help you actively reduce the incidence of crime to make your life safer and more relaxed.

By introducing a few commonsense practices into your daily routine, you can give yourself, your family, friends and neighbours greater peace of mind.

Working Together

You, your neighbours, your community and the police can help to reduce crime. It only takes a little effort to make a criminal's life more difficult.

Together we can reduce crime

The advice in this booklet is practical, affordable, and based on sound commonsense principles. The tips are for you to consider and are not rules you must follow. Choose whichever tips help make you feel safe.

Your local government, local police or Neighbourhood Watch WA can assist if you would like more information on local services and crime prevention programs.

YOUR SAFETY AT HOME

The person most responsible for your safety is you.

Preventing crime within the community is everybody's responsibility. If you see something wrong or unusual, never get physically involved. Instead call the police immediately on 131 444 or 000 if it is an emergency.

By following a few simple procedures you can improve your safety. Make things difficult for criminals by following the tips below:

What you can do

- If you live alone, keep your details private.
- Apart from family, friends and trusted neighbours, beware of telling people that you are alone at home. For example, when dealing with delivery and

tradespeople, either directly or on the phone, try to indicate that there is someone else living with you. Simply say that you have to consult your partner, friend or relative before finalising any arrangements.

- Make sure your house number is clearly visible from the street to enable emergency services to locate your house more easily.
- At night, close all your curtains and remove clothes from any outside lines. Keep an outside light on as well so anyone approaching your home can be seen.

Simple habits will improve your safety



SECTION 1 AT HOME

- Make sure you have a clear view from your windows. If you have plants growing in front of windows, consider pruning them so that a potential intruder can't hide behind them.
- Avoid leaving a spare key outside your house. You never know who is watching, so leave your house key with a trusted friend, family or neighbour.
- Keep security screen doors locked when solid doors are open.
- Make sure that handbags or wallets are not left in sight, on bench tops or cupboards.
- Listen to your instincts: if something doesn't feel safe or comfortable, be aware and take precautions.

- If you are a victim of crime, don't be embarrassed. It's important to tell someone who can help you as soon as possible. For counselling and support please contact the Victim Support Service on 1800 818 988.

KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOURS

Good neighbours help to create happier, healthier and safer communities.

They support each other, look out for each other, and even socialise with each other.

Remember, building a better neighbourhood takes more than just one day.

- If you're not in the habit of talking to a relative, friend or neighbour each day, you could arrange to give them a daily signal so they are assured of your wellbeing.

For example, you could open a certain blind or curtain each morning when you get up.

- You could also use the phone as a way of signalling. One idea is to call a neighbour at the same time each day, let the telephone ring three times and then hang up.
- Take the time to knock on a neighbour's door and say 'hello'.
- Be welcoming – if someone new moves into the neighbourhood, make that first move to welcome them and make them feel included.



- Organise a get-together. Inviting your neighbours to your house for an afternoon tea or BBQ could be the start of a regular social network. Find out your neighbour's favourite activities and hobbies.
- Offer your services – would your neighbour like a little assistance in the garden, some help with the weekly shopping, or even someone to keep an eye on the house while they are away?
- Support Neighbourhood Watch and stay connected to your local community. This helps to foster unity and a sense of safety. For more information visit www.nhw.wa.gov.au
- Exchange phone numbers with your neighbours and record them in the Important Contact Numbers section on page 32 of this booklet.

How to deal safely with visitors

- Avoid opening the door to anyone you don't know and trust, no matter what story they tell you. It's your home and it's your right to decide who you let in.
- Speak to people you don't know through your locked security screen. If you don't have a security screen, speak to your local council about discounts and rebate programs for seniors.
- If someone wants to use your phone for an emergency call, get them to write the number down and pass it under the closed door and call the number yourself.
- Ask to see identification. Western Power, the Water Corporation, and other company representatives all carry identity cards.

Ask to see the card and take time to look at it carefully. If you are unsure, don't let them in. If you are still unsure, telephone their company to confirm their identity and purpose.

Regular visitors

If you have regular visitors from organisations such as Silver Chain and Meals on Wheels:

- Store the contact numbers of the organisations that regularly visit you in the 'Important Contact Numbers' at the back of this booklet (Page 32), so when someone new visits, you can check whether the visitor is genuine.
- Keep your door locked, even when you are expecting a visitor to prevent unknown people entering your home without your knowledge.

Unexpected visitors

Sometimes you will have unexpected visitors. Some of them are genuine, but others may wish to take advantage of you. Remember:

Scams and dishonest people exist.

- Don't be talked into anything you are uncertain about. Remember, it's a lot easier to say 'No' than to call for help.
- Be assertive. Question their identity. If they are not genuine, they will most likely run away. If they are genuine, they will respect your caution.
- Be careful when giving money to door-to-door charity collectors. Ask to see their official identification and take the time to assure yourself they are genuine.
- While you can normally trust your usual delivery people, such as the postie, be cautious of buying from door-to-door salespeople you don't know.
- Australian Consumer Law allows a ten day cooling-off period for contracts entered into with door-to-door salespeople.
- Beware of cheap home improvement offers, 'miracle' cures and work-at-home schemes that require you to buy equipment or outlay money.
- Remember, dishonest people can be males or females and of any age or appearance. They may work on their own or in pairs.

If visitors are genuine, they will respect your caution

PHONE AND SAFETY

The mobile phone can be a useful safety device, so for your convenience and safety, consider having a mobile phone and keeping it charged and with you at all times.

If you choose to rely on a landline, consider having a second, telephone installed beside your bed.

Ensure all emergency and important contact numbers are listed in your phone.

Dealing with unwelcome callers

- The greatest proportion of nuisance callers are known by the person they are calling. If you do know them, tell them. It is easier to solve the problem than to let it go on.



- If you don't know the caller and you live alone, try to give the impression that someone else shares your home.
- Hang up on unwelcome callers. Hanging up on them spoils their game and they usually give up.

If any unwelcome callers persist

- Contact your phone company and advise them.
- You can block the phone number of incoming calls, contact your service provider to find out how.
- Avoid giving your name, phone number or address to unknown callers.
- Go to www.donotcall.gov.au to register your details so telemarketers cannot contact you.
- Most phone services offer a free home message service allowing you to inform the caller that you are not available. You can then choose when to listen to the message and if you wish to phone back. Call your provider to find out what is available to you.
- If you prefer, invest in a phone with an answering machine incorporated to allow you to monitor your calls.
- Most modern phones include a caller identification unit which displays the telephone number of the caller, so you can decide whether or not to answer the call.

USING SECURITY DEVICES

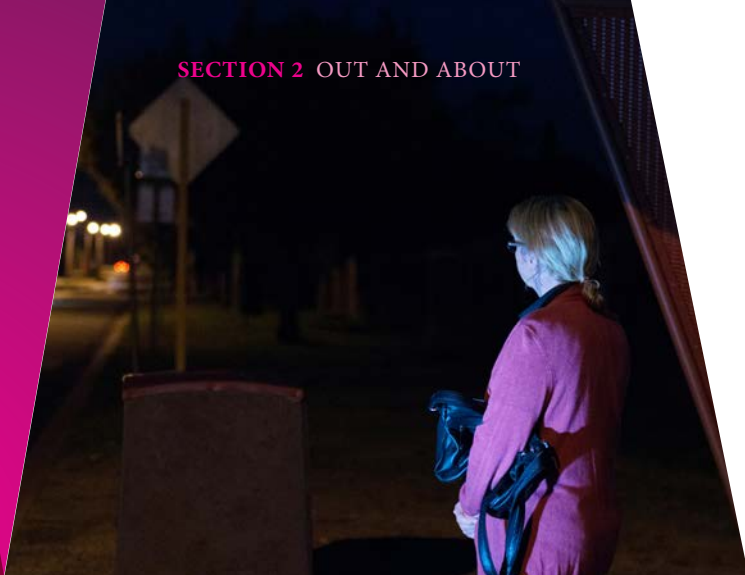
Security devices can include deadlocks for doors, security screens and property marking.

Inexpensive and effective options

- Install deadlocks on all your external doors.
- Install key locks on all windows.
- Fit quality security screens on doors and windows.
- Install a peephole in your front door and a light outside, so you can clearly see anyone who is there, day or night, without opening the door. Once the door is opened, you are more vulnerable.
- Security lights: the automatic (sensor lights) type are a great deterrent to unwelcome callers and a courtesy light for you when you come home after dark.
- Install an alarm in your house through a licensed company.
- Mark your property with your Driver's License Number. This will assist in the return by police if found. Different forms of property marking can include engraving, ultra violet pens, microdots and other available technologies. Take close-up photos of jewellery and other assets for identification purposes. These photos can be stored electronically or filed.
- Consider installing CCTV and appropriate recording devices.

- Carry a personal alarm if you feel unsafe.
- If you have deadlocks installed, have the key handy while you are inside. A good tip is to tie the key to a piece of string hidden out of sight near the lock. If there is a fire, and you need to get out quickly, you will know how to find the key even in the dark or smoke. Remember to take the key with you when you go outside. A burglar could enter through a window and let others in or carry goods out.
- Lock external doors when outside gardening and take the key with you on a lanyard.
- Your shed may also contain valuable items. Put a good lock on your shed to keep it secure.





SAFETY PRECAUTIONS AT NIGHT

- Travel with a friend whenever possible.
- Travel along well-lit main roads rather than side streets.
- Keep a torch handy. Small powerful lightweight models that can be carried in bags and pockets are readily available, or use the torch on your mobile phone.
- Avoid waiting at a bus stop or railway station for too long. Take time to familiarise yourself with the timetables to reduce waiting times.
- If you have to wait for public transport at night, stay close to well-lit areas or where there are other people.
- If travelling by car, keep your bags or handbags out of sight in the boot or on the floor.

- Keep the car doors locked at all times while you are in the car.
- Park in a well-lit street rather than a quiet back street.
- If walking, don't use back lanes, parks or vacant lots as a shortcut to your destination.
- When returning home, whenever possible let someone accompany you right to your front door.
- The safest public toilets are those that are well-lit and in regularly used areas such as shopping centres.
- If you are concerned about your safety, ask someone you are with to accompany you.



PREVENTING A BAG SNATCH

Handbags are a target for thieves. If you carry a purse, handbag or bag, hold it close to your body, tucked firmly under your arm. A thief may watch how you carry it, looking for an easy grab.

- Avoid leaving your handbag, purse or wallet unattended.
- If someone attempts to steal your bag:
 - Try to remain calm.
 - Observe the thief so you can give an accurate description to the police.
 - Avoid physically resisting the thief. No amount of money is worth the risk of serious injury.

**Hold your handbag close to your body,
tucked firmly under your arm**



ROAD SAFETY

Whether you are using the roads as a driver or as a pedestrian, you can't always perceive or react quickly to sudden or unpredictable situations.

Some seniors may experience reduced flexibility and slower reaction time. These factors can also affect driving ability and your safety as a pedestrian. In addition, hearing problems, dementia and heart disease may also impact on a senior's ability to drive safely or use the roads as a pedestrian.

There may come a time when driving becomes difficult and hazardous. Before this occurs drivers should exercise their own judgement and listen to the advice of family and friends to decide when it is time to give up their licence.

In Western Australia special laws apply to drivers over 80 years of age. Information regarding these rules can be found at www.transport.wa.gov.au/licensing

For your safety and that of others, consider the following to improve the safety on our roads.

Drivers

- Vision naturally deteriorates as we age. It is important to wear spectacles if they have been prescribed and to also have regular eye checks.
- Check warning labels on medication and don't drive if the medicine causes sleepiness, nausea, blurred or double vision, dizziness and shaking. Check with your doctor or pharmacist if you are not sure about the effects of your medication.
- Plan your outings to avoid heavy traffic, driving in poor weather conditions, or at night.
- Keep your vehicles maintained and windscreen clean. Brakes, tyres, wipers, electrics and seatbelts should be checked regularly.
- If making long trips, make sure you get a good night's sleep and take a break every one to two hours.

Avoid driving in heavy traffic, poor weather conditions or at night



Speed

It is important to keep a few things in mind:

- Be aware of the speed you're driving.
Even when you are driving within the posted speed limit, it may be too fast for the current road or weather conditions.
- Take extra care when driving past special low-speed limit areas such as schools and roadwork sites.
- The faster you are moving, the further your vehicle will travel after the brakes are applied. A few kilometres extra per hour makes a big difference for the time it will take to stop the car.
- Be aware of speed limits when entering traffic. Oncoming traffic will arrive much sooner when entering highways and freeways.
- Keep left where possible unless overtaking or turning right.

Alcohol

In Western Australia it is an offence to drive with a blood alcohol concentration of 0.05% and above. The majority of older road users have a very responsible attitude to the use of alcohol. Unfortunately, it can only take one lapse for a serious crash to occur.

If you are an average-sized healthy man, two standard drinks in the first hour and one every following hour should keep you under 0.05%.

If you are an average-sized healthy woman, one standard drink every hour should keep you under 0.05%.

For more information on this please go to www.mhc.wa.gov.au

Fatigue

Driver fatigue is believed to be a factor in at least one-third of all serious road crashes. As a driver, fatigue can decrease your alertness as well as

slowing your reactions and decisions, putting you at risk of a crash.

Factors increasing your risk of being involved in a sleep-related vehicle crash include:

- averaging less than six hour sleep or poor quality sleep
- excessive daytime sleepiness
- medications or combination of medications that cause drowsiness
- driving after being awake for more than 15 hours
- driving for extended periods of time
- night driving

The first signs of fatigue are often ignored and include; wandering thoughts, slowing unintentionally, missing a road sign or exit and braking too late. Ignore the first signs you will start to yawn, blink more than usual, and have trouble keeping your head up and your eyes open, you may forget driving the last few kilometres. This is dangerous and if you are driving you should get off the road.

Seat belts

Too many drivers and passengers killed or seriously injured on Western Australian roads did not wear a seat belt.

Wearing a seat belt is one of the easiest ways to protect yourself in vehicle. You are 10 times more likely to be killed in a road crash if you're not wearing a seat belt.

Whether you are a driver or a passenger, take a moment to fasten your seat belt. In the event of a crash, a seat belt prevents you from being thrown from the vehicle, decreases the time until your body comes to a stop, reduces your contact with the inside of the vehicle and spreads the impact force over a greater area of the body.



Cycling

Cycling is a good activity for seniors, as it encourages fitness and good balance. It allows you to get from place to place quicker than walking and cheaper than driving – and it is also environmentally friendly. But please note the following points:

- Cyclists in Western Australia travelling on roads and paths must wear approved helmets.
- Make yourself visible, consider wearing light coloured clothing or clothing with reflective tape when riding at night.
- You are now permitted to cycle on any path unless there is a sign saying 'No Bicycles' or the symbol of a bike with a red line through it in a red circle.
- Road rules apply to cycle paths, too. You must keep to the left when using a shared or cycle path.
- You can download maps which show the location of cycle paths and shared paths in your area at <https://yourmove.org.au/community>. Some local councils may provide printed copies.

Always use designated cycle paths and shared paths when available

Walking

Walking provides good, safe, enjoyable exercise for seniors and can contribute significantly to your health and wellbeing. There are a few things to keep in mind:

- If possible, avoid walking near busy roads.
- When crossing roads, even at pedestrian crossing and traffic lights, try to establish eye contact with the drivers to make sure they're aware of you. If you can't catch their eye, be cautious and wait for another opportunity.
- Plan walking routes to include footpaths, quieter roads, controlled crossing points and pedestrian access ways such as overpasses and underpasses.
- By law, you must cross at traffic signals or pedestrian crossings if they are nearby. It is considered jay-walking if you are within 20 metres of a crossing.
- You are also required to use footpaths, shared paths or nature strips if they are available, rather than walk on the roads.
- Consider wearing light coloured clothing, clothing with reflective tape or carry a reflective badge when walking in the dark.
- If you require glasses for distance vision, or a hearing aid, use them when you are out walking.

Motorised wheelchairs and gophers

Motorised wheelchair and gopher users are classified as 'pedestrians' if the maximum speed of their equipment does not exceed 10km/h. If maximum speed is above 10km/h, the equipment has to be registered as a vehicle.

Low-powered wheelchairs and gophers are allowed to travel on footpaths and shared paths. If there is no footpath, low-powered wheelchairs can travel along the side of roads.

Most shopping centres and business centres allow free access for motorised wheelchairs and gophers.



Safer vehicles

The Road Safety Commission supports the use of safer vehicles. While all vehicles on the roads must comply with the minimum standards of the Australian Design Rules, there are significant variations in the amount of protection offered by cars.

- Some cars are better designed and have more safety features than others. The Australian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP) provides a way of understanding the relative safety of different vehicles.
- If you're choosing a new or used vehicle, check the safety ratings of the vehicles you're interested in.

- You are five times safer in the highest rating cars on the roads than in the least safe ones. This applies to all car sizes.
- Safety rating brochures are available from the RAC or from the Department of Transport Centres. If you use the Internet, visit these websites for more information:

www.ancap.com.au

www.rsc.wa.gov.au/Your-Safety/Safety-Topics/Vehicle-Safety

SAFE BANKING

With today's modern banking services, there is no need to carry large sums of money. Cheque books, EFTPOS, credit cards and automatic bill-paying by your bank make money matters much safer and easier. Ask your bank about the safest way to do your banking. Some tips to consider:

- Avoid carrying large sums of money.
- Keep your savings and large amounts of money in a bank or other financial institution, never at home.
- Varying your routine helps to prevent theft. Try not to do your banking at the same time on the same day each week or fortnight.
- Do not share your PIN and shield your PIN with your hand or a piece of papers as you enter it into an ATM or EFTPOS facility.
- Put your money straight into your purse or wallet before moving away from the teller at a bank counter, or from an ATM so your cash is not easily seen by others.
- Avoid placing all your money and keys in your handbag or wallet. You could place some of the money in a concealed part of your clothing or in a money belt.
- ATMs outside shopping centres which are closed have less natural surveillance and may be more likely targeted by offenders.
- Withdraw money when you pay for groceries by using the in-store EFTPOS facilities. They are located in supermarkets, convenience stores and service stations.

Carry only small amounts of cash

SIGNING CONTRACTS AND/OR LEGAL DOCUMENTS

Before signing any legal document, such as a contract or will:

- Read it carefully and check it with your own solicitor or legal aid officer, or simply call the Citizens Advice Bureau of WA on (08) 9221 5711.
- You have the right to refuse to sign any document if you are being pressured into signing before you have had time to think about it.
- Keep a copy of the signed document in a safe place.

SAFEKEEPING YOUR DOCUMENTS

- Keep all legal documents such as your Will, insurance policies, shares and deeds in a safe place at home, at your solicitor's office or bank. Some banks offer seniors free safekeeping services. Enquire at your local bank for details.
- Give your solicitor, a relative or trusted friend a list of all the documents you have in safekeeping and details of how to get them in an emergency.



ELDER ABUSE

Everyone has the right to feel safe in their own home, manage and control their own finances and make their own decisions.

Elder abuse can be any action which causes harm to a senior and occurs within an informal relationship of trust, often family members or friends. This includes financial abuse, emotional abuse, social abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse and neglect.

If this is happening to you or another elderly person you are concerned about, you can contact the police or speak confidentially with the Elder Abuse Helpline on 1300 724 679 or 1800 655 566 for country callers.

INTERNET SAFETY

More and more seniors are using the Internet, especially for staying in touch with family and friends. When using new technology there are a few things to keep in mind:

- Having a credit card that you use only for Internet transactions will reduce the risk of losing large sums of money if your card number is compromised by hackers. Have a low limit on it and check your statements regularly.
- Only give your credit card details to individuals or companies that you know and trust.
- Print out and keep a record of all transactions and receipts for purchases online.
- Logging off after all transactions will make it more difficult for hackers to access your details.
- Be sparing in providing personal details over the Internet.
- Firewall and anti-virus software will protect your computer.
- When making payments online look for the padlock symbol in the address bar this indicates a secure site.



SCAMS

Scammers are becoming more sophisticated in their attempts to get your money or personal details.

Scams succeed because they look like the real thing and can catch you off guard. With advancing technology, new products and services scammers create believable stories that can convince you to give them your money or personal information.

Scammers often try to create a sense of urgency so that you will act impulsively. This can be done through short deadlines, fake emergencies, or threats of legal action.

If something seems too good to be true, or does not seem to be the ethical way an organisation works it probably is not legitimate.

Tips to avoid being scammed?

- If you receive an unsolicited phone call, email or letter, do not provide personal details, account or PIN numbers. A bank or Government Agency will not call or email you for this information. If you have any doubts about the identity of the person who is asking you for information, hang up and call your bank or Agency directly.
- Do not respond to unsolicited approaches to help strangers.
- Be careful when internet dating. Make sure your admirer is interested in you - and not your bank account. If they are asking money for any reason be very wary.

- Do not provide your personal information to strangers. This information can be used for identity fraud or to con others.
- Never send money to a stranger using a money wire transfer service.
- If asked to keep the transaction a secret don't follow their advice.
- For more information on scams
<http://www.scamnet.wa.gov.au>

SECTION 7 HOME SECURITY CHECKLIST

Use the following guide to conduct your own home security audit. The more 'Y' boxes you can tick, the more secure your home will be.

Is your house number clearly visible from the street? Y ☐ N ☐

Are your trees and shrubs trimmed so it's hard to hide behind them? Y ☐ N ☐

Do you have solid core doors? Y ☐ N ☐

Do you have locks and deadbolts or deadlocks fitted? Y ☐ N ☐

Do you have security screens on doors and windows? Y ☐ N ☐

Does your door have a peephole? Y ☐ N ☐

Do your windows have key-locks or security devices? Y ☐ N ☐

Does your house have an automatic light timer or sensor lights? Y ☐ N ☐

Do you have gates and fences to your property to restrict access? Y ☐ N ☐

Are the entrances to your home well lit? Y ☐ N ☐

Is your home fitted with an alarm that's well maintained? Y ☐ N ☐

Is the garage and/or shed kept locked? Y ☐ N ☐

Are your tools and ladders stored away? Y ☐ N ☐

Is the meter box locked? Y ☐ N ☐

Is your mail box locked? Y ☐ N ☐

Is your property engraved or marked for easy identification? Y ☐ N ☐

Have you recorded the serial numbers? Y ☐ N ☐

Do you have window stickers identifying that you have an alarm and your property is marked? Y ☐ N ☐

Do you keep your mobile phone charged and on your person? Y ☐ N ☐

Do you have a dog? Y ☐ N ☐

Have you joined Neighbourhood Watch? Y ☐ N ☐

Support is only a phone call away

IMPORTANT CONTACT NUMBERS

Emergency	000
Police Assistance	131 444
Crime Stoppers	1800 333 000
Victim Support Services	1800 818 988
Reporting graffiti	1800 44 22 55

Relative/close friend	<input type="text"/>
Neighbour	<input type="text"/>
Neighbourhood Watch	<input type="text"/>
Doctor/Hospital	<input type="text"/>
Dentist	<input type="text"/>

Meals on Wheels	<input type="text"/>
Silver Chain	<input type="text"/>
Community Health Centre	<input type="text"/>
Church	<input type="text"/>
Seniors' Centre	<input type="text"/>
Other	<input type="text"/>
Centrelink	<input type="text"/>
Lawyer	<input type="text"/>

OTHER USEFUL NUMBERS FOR SENIORS

Seniors' Information Service

Metro: (08) 6551 8800

Country: 1800 671 233

WA Seniors Card Centre: (08) 6551 8800 (Metro) or 1800 6233 (Country free call)

Advocare: (08) 9479 7566 (Metro) or 1800 655 566 (Country free call)

For further information on crime prevention, reporting graffiti, reporting hooning and designing out crime at your home visit the following websites:

WA Police: www.police.wa.gov.au

Neighbourhood Watch: www.nhw.wa.gov.au

Crimestoppers: www.wa.crimestoppers.com.au

Reporting graffiti: www.goodbye graffiti.wa.gov.au