

## Street Smarts

We all need to be more aware of our surroundings and watch out for ourselves and others. Take the following short quiz to see where you stand. It doesn't matter if you are a man or a woman; there is still merit in increasing your street smarts.

Test Your "Street Smarts" IQ:

### Do You...

- Jog or walk by yourself early in the morning or late at night when the streets are quiet and deserted?
- Stuff your purse with cash, keys, credit cards, and checkbook – and then leave it wide open on a counter, your desk, the floor?
- Put your wallet in a jacket, which you then hang up or throw over a chair?
- Let your mind wander – thinking about your job, or all the things you have to do – when you are walking or driving?
- Think it's a waste of time to lock your car when you'll be back in a few minutes?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you need to change a few habits. Even if you answered "no" and had a perfect score, read on. Spend a few minutes now to prevent trouble later.

### Basic Street Sense

- You become vulnerable if you choose to walk alone. You can carry pepper spray, you can arm yourself in some way, but you are alone and someone may want to victimize you and they may have a

bigger weapon than you! Choose wisely, plan ahead and be smart!

- The odds of you becoming a victim of crime will be much less if you make good choices about the places you go. Example: Going to the ATM at 3:00 am would not be a good choice.
- Wherever you are – on the street, in an office building or shopping mall, driving, waiting for a bus – stay alert and tuned in to your surroundings.
- Send the message that you're calm, confident, and know where you are going.
- Trust your instincts. If something or someone makes you feel uneasy, avoid the person or leave.
- Know the neighbors where you live and work. Check out the locations of police and fire stations, public telephones, hospitals, and restaurants, or stores that are open late.

### On Foot

- Stick to well traveled streets. Avoid shortcuts through wooded areas, parking lots, or alleys.
- Don't talk on your cell phone while walking, it sends a message that you're not paying attention to your surroundings.
- It is safer to be under dressed than over dressed for your environment. Wearing fine jewelry, watches, or flashing a large amount of cash sets you up as a victim.
- Carry a purse close to your body, not dangling by the straps.
- Put a wallet in an inside coat or front pants pocket, not a back pocket.



- Try to use the ATM in the daytime. Have your card in hand and don't approach the machine if you're uneasy about people nearby.
- Don't wear shoes or clothing that restrict your movements.
- Wear or bring shoes you can run in if you are walking or using public transportation.
- Have a car or house key in hand before you reach the door.
- If you think someone is following you, switch directions or cross the street. Walk toward an open store, restaurant, or lighted house. If you're scared yell for help.
- Have to work late? Make sure there are others in the building, and ask someone – a colleague or friend – to walk you out.

## Carjacking

- Carjackers look for cars keys readily available and unlocked doors for a quick getaway.
- A popular location for the carjacker is a roadway intersection with a stoplight.
- Beware of the "bump" and carjack, where the carjacker will crash into the back of your vehicle at low speed and "bump" you with enough force to make you believe a traffic accident has occurred.
- Always park in well-lighted areas. Don't park in isolated or visually obstructed areas near walls or heavy foliage.
- Watch out for young males loitering in the area (handing out flyers, etc.)
- As you walk to your car be alert to suspicious persons sitting in cars.
- If someone tries to approach you, change directions or run to a busy

store. Trust your instincts to walk or run away.

- Don't be a target by turning your back while loading packages in the car.
- As you approach your vehicle, look under, around, and inside your car.
- Always drive with your car doors locked and windows rolled up.
- Make it a habit to always start your car and drive away immediately.
- When stopped in traffic, leave room ahead to maneuver and escape, if necessary.
- Be suspicious if you are "bumped" in traffic.
- Don't argue or fight or chase the robber. Give up your keys or money if demanded without resistance.
- Never agree to be kidnapped. Drop the car keys, run and scream for help.
- If you are forced to drive, consider a way to draw attention to yourself to attract the attention of bystanders who can come to your aid and call the police.

