

# NEWSLETTER ARTICLES

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## CRIME PREVENTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



A physical disability, impaired vision, hearing, or mobility doesn't prevent you from being a victim of a crime. Use the following tips to help you remain safe during the course of your day.

Stay alert and tuned in to your surroundings, whether on a street, in an office or shopping mall, driving, or waiting for the bus. Send the message that you are calm, confident and know where you are going. Be realistic about your limitations. Avoid places or situations that put you at risk.

Know the neighborhood where you live and work. Check out the locations of police and fire stations, public telephones, hospitals, restaurants, or stores that are open and accessible. Avoid establishing predictable activity patterns. Most of us have daily routines, but never varying them may increase your vulnerability to crime.

### While you are at home

Put good locks on all of your doors. Police recommend double-cylinder, deadbolt locks, but make sure

you can easily use the locks you install. Install peepholes on front and back doors at your eye level. This is especially important if you are using a wheelchair.

Get to know your neighbors. Watchful neighbors who look out for you, as well as themselves are a frontline defense against crime.

If you have difficulty speaking, have a friend record a message giving your name, address, and type of disability to use in emergencies. Keep the tape in a recorder next to your phone. Ask your police department to conduct a free home security survey to help identify your individual needs.

### When you are out and about

When you go out, if possible go with a friend. Stick to well-lit, well-traveled streets. Avoid shortcuts through vacant lots, wooded areas, parking lots, or alleys. Let someone know where you are going and you expect to return.

If you are a woman, carry your purse close to your body, not dangling by the straps. If you are a man, put your wallet in an inside coat or front pants pocket. If you use a wheelchair, keep your purse or wallet tucked snugly between you and the inside of the chair.

**Protect Our Pines, Report All Crimes**

If you use a knapsack, make sure it is securely shut. Always carry your medical information in case of an emergency. Consider keeping a cell phone or installing a CB radio in your vehicle.

## When you use public transportation

Use well-lighted, busy stops, and stay near other passengers. Stay alert. Don't doze or daydream. If someone harasses you, make a loud noise or say "Leave me alone." If that doesn't work hit the emergency signal on the bus or train.

## TAKE A STAND

Join Crime Watch today, and help organize a Crime Watch program in your neighborhood. Contact the Pembroke Pines Crime Watch office at 954-435-6528 to find out how you can join and setup a meeting in your community.

Make sure the meetings are accessible to people with disabilities. For example, can individuals who use walkers, crutches, or wheelchairs enter a meeting place?

Work with local law enforcement to improve responses to all victims or witnesses of crime. Role-play how people with disabilities can handle threatening situations. ♦



We're forgetting to do the simple things that help us prevent crime, like locking our cars even when we'll be away "for just a minute", or using deadbolts on our doors at home; or using our "street smarts" when walking, biking or jogging.

We're also forgetting to apply some of the basic crime prevention information we know to new situations. We know it's important to love and support our children, but

are we participating in neighborhood events that help heal and prevent crime across our community? We've learned how to protect ourselves against phone and mail fraud; are we applying the same principles to prevent internet auction fraud? Crime Watch programs are active and successful in communities across the country, but fewer business districts have realized that the same Crime Watch techniques can work for them as well. ♦

# Identity Theft

Steps you can take to help prevent someone from stealing your identity.

**SHRED INSTEAD** When disposing of important papers, credit card receipts and pre-approved credit applications, thoroughly shred these documents. Request that your financial institutions, doctors' offices, etc shred any waste documents that may contain your personal information. Cancel and shred all credit cards you don't use or have not used in the past six months.



**BE ON THE LOOK OUT** When keying in personal information at an ATM or when using a phone card, beware of "shoulder surfers." These are individuals who look over your shoulder in an attempt to steal your Personal Identification Number. When ordering a new credit card or renewing an old one, pay careful attention to ensure that you receive these cards within an appropriate time frame. This is usually 30 days in advance of your current expiration date for credit card renewals and usually within 45-60 days of requests for new cards. Monitor your monthly bank and credit card statements. Contact the bank or credit card company if you don't recognize a transaction.



**SAFEGUARD YOUR MAIL** When ordering or recording blank checks from your financial institution, have them delivered to your bank instead of your home mailbox where there is more potential for theft. When mailing endorsed checks, avoid putting them in your home mailbox where the likelihood of theft is higher; a thief using an acid wash technique could easily change the payee name on your check. ♦

# How can Crime Watch help your Pembroke Pines business?

Just as our goal is to help reduce crime in our residential neighborhoods, it also is our goal to help reduce crime where you work.

Here's how the Crime Watch program works for businesses. We all know that knowledge is power, so we at Crime Watch will arm you with the knowledge of crimes taking place around your business. Whether your business is in a shopping plaza or a free standing building, we will keep you informed by calling you to let you know what has been happening near you.

During the course of a day, you are probably very busy on your job and you may not know what has happened during the day, and especially at night while you are away from your business. You may just hear about something through the grapevine. You might not even realize that the police have been near-by taking a crime report.

Sometimes we get complacent and leave something on our front seats. "Ah, who would want that old thing anyway?" Well, someone will want it and it will cost you a few hundred dollars to get your window fixed and a criminal got away with something that wasn't even worth five dollars. We want to remind you that leaving anything on your front or back seat in plain view is an invitation to a thief.

For example, did you know that in Pembroke Pines two of the most reported crimes are car thefts and car break-ins. If this has been happening near your business or in the plaza where you work, we want you to know about it and take every precaution to **STOP** your car from being stolen or broken into.

Did you know that cars are being broken into for the coins in your ashtray? That's right. Someone is stealing your turnpike change and you thought "No one will break in for \$1.25 in coins," but they do it continually.

These are just a few examples of some the crimes taking place in and around many businesses, and we want you to know about it so you can take precautions to keep it from happening to you or your employees. You can see the concept working already, can't you?

When you join Crime Watch (\$25 for two years) in addition to the phone calls you will receive, we will install a height strip on your exit door, place Crime Watch stickers on your entrance doors and give you a laminated "Auto Theft Prevention Tips" poster. This poster can easily be placed near your employee's time clock or a place where everyone will see it everyday. If requested, a trained officer from the Pembroke Pines Police department will come to your business and conduct a security survey to increase your safety while in the workplace and there is no charge for this service. Just ask a Crime Watch representative about how to sign up today or fill in the application printed in this newsletter.

When 50 percent of the tenants of a plaza join Crime Watch, we have enough people being informed of the crime incidents that the program really makes a difference. We will install signs at the entrance to your plaza warning criminals that this is a Crime Watch area and to keep out. Criminals **KNOW** they are being watched and that people here are paying attention. ♦

**Protect Our Pines, Report All Crimes**