

# Crime Prevention Recommendations For Persons With Physical Disabilities

Persons with physical disabilities — impaired vision, hearing or mobility — face numerous physical challenges. These challenges can make them vulnerable to would-be criminals who assume the disabled are less capable of protecting themselves.

The following recommendations may help a person with a physical disability from becoming the victim of a crime.

## General Crime Prevention Tips

- Know and avoid situations and locations that could invite crime, i.e., dark alleys, unlit parking lots, etc.
- Know the neighborhood where you live and work. Know the locations of police and fire stations, hospitals, restaurants or stores that are open and accessible.
- Stay alert and aware of your surroundings, whether on the street, in an office building or shopping mall, driving or waiting for public transportation.
- Decide what you plan to do in the event you are confronted, i.e., show confidence, scream, etc.
- Consider your options in these situations and practice your responses so that you can recall them in a real situation.
- Be realistic about your limitations. Avoid places or situations that put you at risk.



## Home Security Tips

- Put good locks on all your exterior doors. The majority of doors in most homes are equipped with a standard entrance latch (also called a spring latch or key-in-the-knob latch). These locking devices do not provide adequate security. They have a spring which holds a latch in place. They can be defeated by wrenching the knob with a large pair of pliers, by sliding a credit card between the door and the frame, by kicking the door or by spreading the frame with a pry bar. These types of latches should never be depended upon alone to secure your exterior doors.

The single cylinder dead bolt lock is key operated from the outside only. The interior operation is thumb knob. This lock is best utilized where there is no glass in the door or

within 40 inches of the lock mechanism. When purchasing a dead-bolt lock, it is important the lock have a bolt constructed of case hardened steel and that it extends one full inch out and locks into place. When fully extended, the bolt should not be able to be pushed back in by hand. Also, it is important that the hole in the door frame is sufficient depth to allow the bolt to open the full one inch, otherwise it cannot lock in place and can be pushed back with a knife or screwdriver.

A double cylinder dead bolt lock is operated with a key from both the inside and outside. It should be used on doors where there is breakable glass in the door or within 40 inches of the locking mechanism. This makes it impossible for a burglar to break the glass and reach inside to unlock the door.

For security reasons, you should not leave a key inserted in the inside portion of a double cylinder lock. At the same time, however, you should understand that without proper preparation, a double cylinder dead bolt can contribute to a fire hazard. In addition to door keys kept on your family's key chains, an extra key should be kept close to the door (perhaps taped underneath a nearby table) where every member of the family knows its location in the event of an emergency.

Sliding glass patio doors can be among the easiest entry points for burglars. Special locks are available to secure the door against lifting and prying. Installing a "charlie bar" can help keep a sliding door from being pried open. An inexpensive means of securing a sliding door is to cut a broom handle or other wooden stick to the exact length of the exposed door track and placing it in the door track so the door itself cannot be forced open.

To prevent a sliding glass door from being lifted out of its track, it should be pinned. This can be accomplished by purchasing and installing a specially designed door pin or by drilling a hole in the door frame and inserting a nail.

Windows can be prevented from being pried open by also pinning them. Drill a small downward sloping hole into the top of the sliding portion of the window and into the frame of the fixed or stationary part of the window. Then insert a nail or pin in the hole to prevent the window from being opened.

- All exterior doors should be either metal or solid-core wood and should be at least 1 3/8 inches thick. Door frames usually provide limited protection against a pry-bar. Most door hinges and dead bolt lock strike plates are fastened to the door jam with 1/2 inch screws. You should strengthen the security of exterior doors by replacing hinge and strike plate screws with hardened steel screws which are a minimum of 2 inches long.
- Install through-the-door viewers at a convenient height on exterior doors. Be sure such a viewer is at your eye level.
- Develop a positive relationship with your neighbors. Watchful neighbors can help protect

you as well as themselves.

- If you have difficulty speaking, have a friend pre-record a message (giving your name, address and type of disability) to use in the event of an emergency. Keep the tape recorder with this message in it near the telephone.
- Never open the door of your home to a stranger. Always demand verification of a stranger's identity and purpose for the visit.
- Never tell a stranger calling by telephone that you are alone or that you are disabled.
- Plan an avenue of escape from each room of your residence to use in case of an emergency or a break-in.
- Ask your local law enforcement agency to conduct a free home security survey and to help identify your individual needs.

### **Travel Safety**

- Whenever possible, travel with someone you know. There is safety in numbers.
- Leave word of your plans with a family member or friend — including your ultimate destination and estimated time of arrival.
- When waiting for a bus, train or other public transportation, wait in a centralized location near other passengers.
- If you carry a purse, keep it close to your body, not dangling by the straps. If you have a wallet, put it 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.
- Always carry your medical information, in the event of an emergency.
- If you have a speech or hearing impairment, always carry a card of communication symbols.
- Consider having a cellular telephone or CB radio inside your vehicle.
- If you are on public transportation and someone harasses you, make a loud noise or say, "Leave me alone." If that doesn't work, hit the emergency signal on a bus or train.

### **Consumer Protection Recommendations**

- Con artists may prey upon people's desires to find a miracle cure for chronic conditions or fatal diseases. Remember these tips:

- ✓ If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- ✓ Don't let greed or desperation override common sense.
- ✓ Get a second opinion.
- ✓ Be wary of high-pressure tactics, need for quick decisions, demands for cash only, or high-yield, low risk investments.
- Always ask for identification from all solicitors and call their agency for verification.
- Don't commit yourself to purchases or charitable donations over the phone. Ask the caller to mail the information to you so you can make an informed decision. If you are not familiar with the company or organization, consult your state's Department of Consumer Affairs or the Better Business Bureau.
- Read and understand all contracts before you sign them. If your sight is impaired, have someone you trust read the entire document to you.
- Beware of anyone offering products or services at a "once in a lifetime" offer.
- Consider having your checks mailed directly to your bank to avoid mail theft or robbery.

### **What Else Can You Do?**

- Join, or help arrange, a Neighborhood Watch group. Be sure their meetings are accessible to persons with disabilities.
- Work with local law enforcement to improve responses to persons with physical disabilities.

### **For Additional Information**

- Equal Opportunity Employment Commission  
1801 L Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20507  
800-669-3362  
TDD  
202-663-4900  
TDD

- National Easter Seal Society  
70 East Lake Street  
Chicago, IL 60601  
800-221-6827  
312-726-6200 TDD
- Paralyzed Veterans of America  
801 18th Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20006  
800-424-8200  
202-872-1300 TDD
- United Cerebral Palsy Association, Inc.  
1522 K Street, NW, Suite 1112  
Washington, D.C. 20005  
800-USA-5UCP V/TT  
202-842-1266 V/TT
- U.S. Department of Justice  
Office of the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)  
Civil Rights Division  
P.O. Box 66118  
Washington, D.C. 20035-6118  
202-514-0301 ADA Hotline  
202-514-0983 TDD



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