

# An Garda Síochána

## Crime Prevention Information Sheet



# Personal Safety

## Security for the Older Person



### Introduction

Believe it or not - older persons are less often the victims of crime than many of their younger neighbours. Cases of assault are infrequent, although we would all love if they never happened at all.

Older persons are, however, subjected to burglary and thefts as frequently as the rest of the population. A lifetime of experience coupled with the physical problems associated with aging can make older persons feel vulnerable and more fearful of becoming a victim of crime.

### Home Security

- Fit a door viewer. This will allow you to safely see who is outside prior to opening the door.
- Fit a door chain / limiter. This will allow you to open the door partly while still allowing you some control over security.
- Front and rear doors should be kept locked day and night. Windows should also be locked.
- Keep a list of emergency numbers that you can refer to in an emergency situation e.g. family, relations, neighbours, Gardaí, doctor, district nurse etc.
- If you have a mobile phone, ensure that you have emergency contact numbers recorded under the ICE (In Case of Emergency) system.
- Keep a Personal Information Pack in your fridge (see Age Action Ireland website for further information).
- Number your house clearly so that Gardaí and emergency services can find you quickly when necessary

### Distraction Burglary

Some burglars will try to trick their way into your home. A distraction burglary is where a bogus caller to your home gains entry on a pretext / lie or creates a diversion so that an accomplice can sneak in separately.

Unfortunately, older persons are frequently targeted with this crime. Bogus callers will say anything to get into your home -

*"There's been an accident, can I call an ambulance?"*,

*"I've broken down, can I use your phone?"*,

*"I've had a fall, could I have a glass of water"*,

*"I'm from the council, there's a burst main, I need to turn off your supply" etc.*

Some will keep you talking at the front door while their accomplice sneaks in the back door. In all cases you need to **be wary of strangers calling to your home**. Take precautions -

- Do not open the door to anyone before you've checked who it is and what they want. Use your door viewer and chain / limiter.
- Check identification, where appropriate.
- Do not leave strangers unattended at your doorstep.
- Ensure your back door is locked when you answer a call at the front door.

**Remember -  
if in doubt, keep them out**

### Cash / Financial Security

Thieves and burglars love nothing better than cash. It is therefore important to observe the following as far as possible -

- Do not keep large amounts of cash in your home. Use banks, building societies, credit unions, post offices etc. as much as possible.
- Keep all credit and debit cards in a secure location, including bank and other financial books and statements etc.
- Old, out-of-date cards should be appropriately destroyed
- Do not give your credit / debit card passwords to anybody.
- When out and about, avoid having large sums of money on your person.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THIS OR OTHER CRIME PREVENTION ISSUES,  
PLEASE CONTACT  
your local GARDÁ CRIME PREVENTION OFFICER  
or  
visit the Garda website at [www.garda.ie](http://www.garda.ie)**

## Property:

Mark your property and record serial numbers where appropriate. It makes it easier to identify if stolen and recovered. UV markers and/or special etching tools can be used. Use a unique reference number such as your initials and date of birth. Seek advice about marking high value property e.g. antiques, paintings etc.

It is also a good idea to photograph your property. Photograph items such as jewellery against a ruler or some other common household item (for size reference). If taking digital photos, keep copies of your property photographs elsewhere than on your own computers.

## Make use of good neighbours.

Having and being good neighbours is a vital component in the prevention of crime, in feeling secure and in reducing the fear of crime. This is particularly important for the older person. A good neighbour is someone who keeps an eye on their neighbours' property and calls regularly to see if everything is OK.

You too can be a good neighbour, its all about awareness of what is happening around you and keeping a friendly lookout for the person near you. Arrange a 'buddy system' with your peers to check on each other daily. Consider also joining a Community Alert or Neighbourhood Watch scheme if there is one in your area. These schemes can assist in getting funding for various security systems available for qualifying older persons. Your local Garda station or Garda Crime Prevention Officer can provide more information on the setting up of such schemes.

## Out and About

- Avoid travelling alone, where possible. Go with family, friends and neighbours.
- If travelling by car, keep all doors locked. Be alert when parking and getting in / out of your vehicle.
- On public transport sit as close to the driver or exit as possible.
- Keep cash to the minimum. Carry only credit / debit cards that you need.
- Keep wallets and purses out of sight; hand or shoulder bags should be kept close to the body and not dangling by the straps.
- Try to avoid walking at night, If you must, it is advisable to have a companion, walk in well-lit streets and as close to the roadside as possible.

## Scams

Be alert to con artists. Don't fall for anything that sounds too good to be true.

- In general, do not give out personal information over the phone unless you know whom you are talking to. This also applies to internet communication.
- Do not give out your credit / debit card, bank account, social welfare numbers etc to anyone over the phone.
- Do not leave old and no longer relevant financial statements lying around. Shred as appropriate.

- Be wary of bogus trades people calling to your door and advising you that your roof needs to be repaired, gutters are blocked and need to be cleared, trees need to be felled etc.

## Elder Abuse

Elder abuse can fall into the following categories -

- Physical abuse
- Psychological abuse
- Financial abuse
- Material abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect (active or passive)

In many cases, the victim can be subjected to more than one type of abusive behaviour.

Everybody has the right to be free from abuse and neglect. If you are a victim of elder abuse, or you suspect someone of being the victim of elder abuse, report it to the appropriate authorities.

## Conclusion:

Following the advice in this leaflet will help to stop you becoming a victim of crime. Your local Garda Crime Prevention Officer can also help in this regard.

In the event that you are threatened by physical force do not resist. Try to remain calm and, if possible, concentrate on getting a good description of the culprit.

***The advice contained in this information sheet is not intended to be exhaustive or absolute.***

***Nothing contained in this publication should be interpreted as mandatory, obligatory or designed to conflict with any statutory regulations.***

## Useful Contacts and Links

**The Garda National Crime Prevention Unit,  
Garda H.Q., Harcourt Square, Dublin 2.  
Tel: (01) 6663362, Fax: (01) 6663314  
Email: [crime\\_prevention@garda.ie](mailto:crime_prevention@garda.ie)**

**An Garda Síochána**  
[www.garda.ie](http://www.garda.ie)

**Age Action Ireland**  
[www.ageaction.ie](http://www.ageaction.ie)

**National Council on Aging & Older People**  
[www.ncaop.ie](http://www.ncaop.ie)

**Health Service Executive**  
[www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)

**Department of Health & Children**  
[www.dohc.ie](http://www.dohc.ie)

**Dept. of Social, Family & Community Affairs**  
[www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie)