

Safety and Security

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Older persons are rated as a vulnerable group. They should thus feel secure in their homes. It should be a safe haven against the elements and intruders - a place of comfort so vital for their general well-being. Considering the housing needs of older persons is crucial, especially in light of the ageing society in which we live.

As we age we are not as agile as before, our judgment and responses are slower, our physical abilities are reduced and make us prone to accidents even in and around our homes.

Older persons, here are a few tips to improve your safety and security, and help you to enjoy your twilight years.

AT HOME

- Doors should never be left open or unlocked. If you need to be outside to garden, do laundry, etc. lock the door; keep the key in a safe place till you are done outside.
- For extra protection, have a strong safety door fitted.
- Do not open the door or windows to strangers or allow them to enter your home, even if they claim to be hungry, from Telkom, Eskom, doing surveys, etc. – it is too unsafe.
- Have a peep-hole or security chain fitted in order to detect strangers at the door.
- Windows that can open must be fitted with burglar bars.
- Get an alarm system with panic buttons if you are able.
- Burglars will be deterred by bright outside lights especially in dark areas on your premises.
- Your home number should be visible as it will help Police or emergency services when needed.
- Do not hide your keys under pot plants, mats or in your postbox – find a more unusual spot for this purpose.
- If you live alone or are alone during the day, ask your family/friends to check on you regularly. If possible, join WhatsApp groups, more especially with neighbours who can assist you during emergencies. Ask the youth for help with WhatsApp if needed.

IN THE STREET

- Leave all your valuables at home when going out.
- Make a copy of your ID and leave original at home.
- Do not carry more money than you need – and try not to withdraw money at ATM's in the street.
- Avoid isolated or dark areas.
- Hold your bag close to your body.
- Never keep money, cards or your phone in your back pocket – rather keep change in your purse/wallet and credit cards and notes in an inside pocket.
- Do not be misled by anyone offering you the chance of making extra money quickly – first speak to one or two people you can trust about it before 'investing' your hard earned money into risky schemes.
- When someone tries to rob you, stay calm and co-operate to avoid being injured or even killed in the process. Try to be vigilant to give the Police as much details as possible.

ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT

- Do not wait at deserted/isolated terminals but rather in well-lit areas.
- Avoid standing far from others while waiting on transport.

- Be alert for suspicious characters – make the driver aware of such persons or raise the alarm.
- In an almost empty bus/train, sit near to the driver or in a carriage with other people.
- When disembarking, take note of fellow passengers getting off.
- When being followed, enter the nearest safe place. When travelling at night, use well-lit streets.

IN YOUR CAR

- Make sure your car is roadworthy and in good working condition so that you will not easily be stranded.
- Ensure that you always have more fuel than needed to accommodate traffic jams, detours, etc.
- Never leave personal belongings on car seats or the floor – place them in the boot.
- Lock doors and close windows when driving.
- Park in well-lit areas at night.
- Do not pick up strangers, even if they offer money, and be alert at stop streets or red robots.
- If you suspect that you are being followed, drive to the nearest police station.
- When someone threatens you, blow the hooter.

WHILE SHOPPING

- Keep your handbag on you, do not leave it in the trolley or try to hide it amongst goods.
- Handbags/wallets should not be placed on the counter when checking out as this is an ideal opportunity for thieves to grab your valuables.
- Keep your wallet/purse out of sight – beware of bag snatchers and pick-pockets.

GENERAL SAFETY

- Check who is in the lift before entering. Stand near to the control panel, press the alarm button in case of emergency.
- Have your pension paid into your bank account - it is safer.
- Paste emergency numbers next to your phone or load them onto your cell phone to speed dial when necessary.
- Ensure that your landline is within reach or use a cell phone – ensure that you have data and a fully charged battery.
- Remove worn/torn carpeting and rugs - it is hazardous.
- Small, loose rugs should have non-skid backing and not placed in traffic areas.
- Check electrical cords and replace when necessary.
- Do not place electrical cords (extension leads) under carpets/loose rugs or in walking areas.
- Do not hang long curtains above stoves - it is a fire hazard.
- Flooring, especially tiles, should be non-slip.
- Unplug appliances when not in use.
- Wipe up fatty/greasy spills immediately to prevent falls.
- Staircases/passages to have sturdy handrails and be well-lit.
- Replace or discard unstable chairs and couches, etc.
- Install grab rails in bathroom – near bath and toilet.
- Trim hedges and trees in your garden regularly so that it does not obstruct your view to the street.
- Maintain your steps/pathways.
- If you enjoy outdoors, rather join clubs instead of going walking/hiking, etc. alone.