

## *Personal safety*

### **S A V E   Y O U R S E L F F R O M   A   P H Y S I C A L   A T T A C K**

We're all alone at some time or another, and that makes us more vulnerable to crime – theft, assault, or worse. While crime can happen in any neighborhood to anyone, you can use the four-part “Circle of Friends” plan\*, developed with help from the Seattle Police Department, to stay safe.

- 1. Tie together your Circle of Friends.** Make a short list that includes your name, telephone number, place of employment, and the names and phone numbers of close relatives and friends. Give the information to your friends, family members, and your employer. That way, the people who care about you can contact each other if, for example, you unexpectedly miss an appointment or don't show up for work.
- 2. Figure out a personal safety plan.** Sit down for an hour and answer these questions. Where would you go if someone bumped your car on the highway? Followed you? Confronted you on the street? Locate public phones, police stations, and fire departments in your neighborhood, near your workplace, and anywhere else you frequent. Keep the phone number of your automobile club or auto repair shop with you in case you have car problems.
- 3. Develop “the attitude.”** Criminals look for people who appear vulnerable or distracted. Act confident and comfortable in your surroundings. Keep your head up and look at people as they pass. Scan the area constantly. Avoid flashy clothes and jewelry. Don't carry a purse or bag if you can help it. Instead, keep your wallet in a front pocket. It should contain a piece of ID, small amount of cash, credit card, and your Circle of Friends list. Most important, trust your instincts. If a situation doesn't feel “right” to you, get out!
- 4. Rely on your Circle of Friends.** Tell friends when you're going out for the evening alone and where. (It's also important if you're going on a date with someone you don't know well.) Let them know when you plan to leave and arrive at your destination. If plans change (or an outing could turn into an all-nighter), let them know. Afterwards, tell them when you've arrived home safely. When people drop you off, ask them to wait until you're inside your home with the lights on.

*(continued)*



Finally:

- Remember that criminals often look like us. They may be young or old, male or female, suspicious looking or apparently harmless.
- If anything around your car or home looks unusual, DON'T go near it. Head to a populated area and call the police.
- Carpool when possible.
- Know your route before you leave.
- Get to know your neighbors. Identify a trusted neighbor who can be part of your Circle of Friends.

*\* The "Circle of Friends" concept was developed following a random, brutal attack on a young Seattle woman, Connie Freeburn, in 1994. Because they had no way of knowing or contacting each other, her family and friends didn't realize Connie was missing for two days.*

