

SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR THE FAMILY

INTRODUCTION:

1. These guidelines have been drawn up for easy reference from hints in various pamphlets issued by the SA Police Service as well as other sources from time to time with the view to the combating of crime.
2. Many of these guidelines are already being implemented by a number of you and are therefore nothing new, but although you might be aware of some of the other guidelines, you might not be implementing them.

The purpose of these guidelines is therefore to again bring to your attention as many of the handy safety hints as possible with the request that members of the community will practice them to achieve maximum safety for their families and with the help of the SA Police Service and Neighbourhood Watch groups, create a safer community in general for children, youth, parents and senior citizens.

3. It is important to bear in mind that prevention, awareness and preparedness are the best weapons against crime. If we know what to do and do it conscientiously and are constantly prepared and aware of suspicious occurrences and act in close co-operation with our neighbours and the SA Police Service, we can be assured of a relatively crime-free and safe existence.
4. The different aspects relating to safety measures follow in this document to enable you to utilize whichever of them relate to your specific needs.

5. **SECURITY MEASURES FOR THE DWELLING:**

5.1 **Windows:**

- Fit all open able windows with good quality burglar proofing.
- Fitting of burglar-proofing over fixed window panes provides additional safety especially in view of the sophisticated equipment used nowadays to remove such panes noiselessly especially when the family is absent. Such burglar-proofing could also prevent an object from being thrown through the windows.
- Good quality burglar-proofing over bathroom and toilet windows is necessary as these windows are favourite access routes for criminals.
- Never sleep with an open window unless burglar-proofing is fitted, even in upper storey rooms where a window is situated near drainpipes.

5.2 **Doors:**

- Ensure that all external doors of the home are protected by good quality security gates. Light gates can easily be bypassed.
- Security gates must be fitted with quality locks.
- The external doors themselves must be fitted with a security chain and a peephole is necessary to enable identification of any visitor prior to opening of the door.
- Avoid external doors with a glass panel which afford minimal resistance to penetration.
- It is imperative to fit quality locks with 4, 6 or more levers throughout the home to prevent the use of master keys by housebreakers.
- Keep security gates locked at all times and make it a fixed rule for the whole family. Draw up a procedure to successfully control entering and exiting by family members. Bear in mind the installation of ordinary doorbells or an intercom system.
- Always remove keys from external doors and place them in a suitable place at a safe distance from the doors.
- Good quality security gates allow one to leave external doors open for ventilation which the family relaxes within.

6. **YARD AND BOUNDARY FENCES:**

- Weak spots in boundary fences of the yard, i.e. places where intruders can easily climb over should be attended to in consultation with the respective neighbours. Fitting of "razor wire" can possibly be envisaged.
- Divide the erf into two separate areas (front and rear) by means of a security fence and access gates to create a security or safety zone where the housewife can safely perform her outdoor tasks, children and toddlers can play, motor vehicle maintenance can take place and the family can relax.

7. **KEYS:**

- It is important to suitably mark and safely store all duplicate keys in the home in a place which cannot be reached by unauthorized persons.
- File the code numbers of all the keys in use so that unauthorized persons cannot identify them thus preventing them from making duplicates.

- Should any key of an external door or security gate inexplicably vanish, the lock should immediately be replaced to prevent access by unauthorized persons.
- Never leave a key on a ledge above the door, under a doormat, in the nearest pot plant or in any other place where an intruder can find it. Criminals are aware of and take advantage of this. Rather provide each member of the family with their own key and ensure that they are absolutely aware of the necessity to safely store such key.
- Never attach your name and address to a key ring. Should you lose your keys, anyone could find and gain access to your home or car. Merely by telephoning your home, they could ascertain when you are away from home and then gain access without any resistance whatsoever.
- Never provide your servant with a key to your home. Although he or she may be trustworthy, he/she might be exposed to serious intimidation by criminals or even his/her own family members, thus enabling them to make a duplicate.
- Keys left in the lock can easily be pushed out of the lock from outside, drop onto a piece of paper inserted under the door and be withdrawn enabling easy access to the home.

8. **WATCH DOGS:**

- A trained watch dog together with a smaller dog which acts as a catalyst can be of great value as a preventative measure if the yard is properly fenced allowing free access by the dogs without allowing them to constitute a danger to the general public.
- A small vigilant dog which sleeps inside the home is considered to be an excellent early warning system as its acute hearing permits it to give you a timely warning and stimulate the large dog into action.

9. **ENSURING THE SAFETY OF YOURSELF AND YOUR GOODS:**

- Engraving of our furniture, goods and especially your electrical equipment is of great importance as it enables the SA Police Service and you to identify your property stolen from your home. Clothing should also be suitably marked.
- Always lock your garage to prevent criminals from ascertaining exactly what it contains.

- It is important to lock away all tools and equipment such as lawnmowers, wheelbarrows, spades, forks, pickaxes, etc when not in use.
- Do not leave laundry on the washing line overnight or during your absence in day time unless the specific area is safely fenced off.
- When leaving home, even for a few minutes, always be aware of vagrants sitting around aimlessly as they may have sufficient information regarding your home and habits to enable them to break in within a couple of minutes. Always inform your neighbours and the SA Police Service of such suspicious persons.
- A good quality well hidden safe in your home can fulfil a valuable function but, if in plain sight, could act as an attraction to house breakers.
- It is advisable to preferably place valuable items such as expensive jewellery, coin collections, share certificates, wills and similar items in a bank safety deposit box where they are better protected from theft or fire.
- Don't place small valuable items such as jewellery, portable radios, etc on window sills, even if there is burglar proofing. They are an invitation to burglars.
- Never work in the back garden with the front door open or visa versa. This could provide the thief with the opportunity of sneaking into your home only to launch a surprise attack on you later or remove valuable items within the space of a few minutes. This aspect is especially relevant in the case of senior citizens or children who are at home alone.
- Don't place your name on your front gate or front wall of your home as it makes the task of gaining access to your telephone number so much easier, thus enabling the criminal to ascertain when you are away from home so that he can break in.
- Do not indicate in any public place that you are single or female as it could render you a target.
- Clearly visible numbers on your post box, gate or house are absolutely necessary to facilitate the tracing of your home in an emergency by the SA Police Service, Fire Brigade, ambulance or any other emergency service.
- Don't keep large amounts of money in your home as your loss will be so much greater in the event of a theft.
- Store your cheque book, credit cards and savings bank books in a safe

place out of reach of unauthorized persons at all times.

- The least safe place for the storage of your handbag, watch, portable radio, etc is on top of your refrigerator as burglars are aware of this habit and can easily slip in and out taking one or all of the items with them.
- Store smaller valuable items in different places in the home. Should a burglar gain access to your home, it would slow him down, possibly giving you time to call for help. By forcing the burglar to search for various hiding places, he is forced to take more risks with small rewards which is not what he wants to do and could result in his deciding to preferably leave the premises.

10. **STRANGERS AND VISITORS:**

- Don't open the door to strangers. The provision of a peephole or safety chain allows you to safely identify a caller first.
- Never allow a stranger to enter your home under any circumstances until he/she has identified him/herself to your absolute satisfaction and you are fully satisfied with the reason for his/her presence.
- Beware of strangers who offer to do odd jobs around the home, request or insist that they be allowed to use your telephone, urgently need to use the toilet, or use some other excuse to enter your home.

Should you experience any problems in the above regard, telephone your neighbour and/or the SA Police Service.

- Beware of strangers who unexpectedly approach you with some or other offer of a highly profitable investment opportunity, or without an obvious reason, try to gain your trust or who are noticeably interested in you or your family's health. Swindlers use various methods to trick or rob people. Unfortunately this very often happens to senior citizens.
- Don't open your security gate to receive a package, post or a telegram. Such items can be handed to you through the openings in the security gate.
- Be exceptionally careful of bearers of collection lists of persons who ask for food. Keep your locked security gate between yourself and them at all times.
- Never leave a newly hired servant alone in your home – the servant must first prove herself to be trustworthy. You could return to find your servant and your valuables are gone. It is known that some thieves/"servants" use

the steal and vanish method. Should you have to go out, the new servant must be satisfied in being locked out until you return.

11. **FIREARMS:**

- Ensure that the mother, father and older children in the home can handle the firearm safely and skilfully. Gun practice should take place as often as possible.
- Regularly service your firearm and clean and oil it lightly every two weeks. A weapon which has been neglected is a greater risk to use as it could jam when you need it most.
- Ensure that you are aware of the legal aspects relating to use of a firearm so as to obviate landing in serious trouble, should you use it in contravention of the law.
- Ensure that your firearm is safely stored when not in use, yet easily accessible when needed in an emergency.
- Old ammunition might misfire and should be replaced regularly.
- It is absolutely essential to keep your firearm safely out of reach of children and untrained family members.
- Don't leave your firearm in your motor vehicle.
- When taking your firearm with you, ensure that it is carried on your person in a jacket pocket or holster, etc.
- Theft of a firearm should immediately be reported to the SA Police Service.

12. **FIRE PREVENTION:**

- Ensure that the electrical wiring of your home is in good condition. Avoid the personal installation of temporary wiring.
- Ensure that all outlet plugs are not overloaded.
- Ensure that light fittings in your home are fitted with suitable shades so as to prevent a fire hazard, especially standing lamps and bedside lights.
- Ensure that electrical apparatus and equipment in use in your home is in good condition.

- Use extreme care when using open electric heaters during the winter and draw the family's attention to the inherent dangers thereof. No open electrical heater should be left switched on and unguarded especially where small children could gain access to it.
- Keep matches out of the reach of children at all times and inform them of the dangers of matches and cigarette lighters etc.
- Ensure that you have a basic knowledge concerning the extinguishing of fires involving flammable liquids, electrical short circuits, cooking oil on a stove, etc. Bear in mind that fires involving petrol and electrical short circuits should not be sprayed with water. Consult your local fire brigade for tips.
- Obtain an effective fire extinguisher and train your family in its use.
- Other items which can be used effectively to extinguish fire are sand, wet blankets, a garden hose capable of being connected to a tap inside the home.
- When a fire has been caused by an electrical short circuit, the main switch must immediately be switched off before any attempt is made to extinguish such a fire with water.
- Plan escape routes from the home for your family, taking into account all the possible places where a fire could take place and ensure that each member knows and understands what to do in case of fire.
- Inform your neighbours and other members of your Neighbourhood Watch in your immediately area of your fire fighting procedures so that meaningful help can be rendered when necessary.
- Ensure that your local fire station's telephone number is prominently displayed on your emergency telephone list.

13. **WHEN YOU GO ON HOLIDAY:**

- Attempt to enlist someone you know well to sleep in your home while you are away.
- Inform your Neighbourhood Watch members, neighbours and the SA Police Service that you will be away, the duration of your absence, your cell phone number, telephone number of your holiday address and who has the right to your property in your absence.
- Don't attach notes to your front door relating to your absence. Criminals

also get to see them.

- Don't allow internal and external lights to burn constantly as they draw unwanted attention. Rather request a neighbour to switch them on and off at certain times.
- By using a time switch effectively, lights and radios or televisions can be switched on and off at prearranged times thus giving the impression that someone is at home.
- Arrange with a Neighbourhood Watch member or neighbour to open and close some of your curtains during the day and night respectively to mislead anyone watching.
- Arrangements should also be made to place your refuse bin out on refuse removal days, even if it contains only garden refuse. Post should be removed from your post box daily. If possible, your lawn, especially facing the streets should be cut now and again.
- Allow a trusted Neighbourhood Watch member or neighbour to keep your home keys in safe keeping for you when you are away.

14. **SAFETY IN YOUR MOTOR VEHICLE:**

- Ensure that your vehicle is in proper running order to prevent breakdowns on trips.
- Never leave parcels or valuable articles in sight on car seats. Rather lock them in the baggage compartment.
- Keep doors locked and windows closed when driving in town where regular stops in traffic or at robots take place.
- Always attempt to park your vehicle in a lockup garage or carport at night. Alternatively park your vehicle in a brightly lit area. This could discourage thieves.
- Never pick up hitchhikers.
- Take care when strangers approach your vehicle at traffic lights. Use your mirrors to keep a lookout for the movement of persons behind or alongside your vehicle. Don't hesitate to immediately move off quickly and safely should anything look suspicious.
- Always check your mirrors for vehicles which might be following you and if you suspect this, drive directly to the nearest police station. This will

immediately frighten off criminals.

- Should you be caught unaware, blow your vehicle's hooter constantly to attract attention and frighten off attackers.
- Be aware that a large number of car thefts, hijacks and assaults take place in one's own driveway.
- When you approach your home, study the vehicles in front of you and behind you carefully so as to spot suspicious looking persons. Scrutinize your driveway too before getting out of your vehicle.
- Ensure if at all possible that your driveway is free of shrubs and/or structures where criminals could lie in wait for you.
- When pulling your vehicle out of the garage into the street, remember to:
 - check the vicinity for suspicious persons;
 - never leave the engine running while leaving the vehicle to open or close gates. Switch off the ignition, leave the car and lock the doors.
- Ensure that your vehicle's alarm system is in proper working order and that you use it always. The immobiliser is especially important. It should be a system approved by your insurance company.
- Never travel alone at night or stop in an isolated spot, especially if you are female or a senior citizen.
- Always remove the ignition key from the car and lock the car when you leave it, even in your garage.
- A locking mechanism locking the brake pedal to the steering wheel (or a steering wheel lock) have often prevented the theft of motor vehicles.
- Always lock trailers with valuable contents and store such trailers in a safe place at night.
- Don't leave baggage on a roof rack or leave it visible on seats during the night. This invites thefts.
- Car radios and tape-decks are a popular attraction to thieves. If possible, remove such articles from the car or lock them in the baggage compartment.
- Purchase a lockable petrol cap for your car to prevent petrol theft. Provide

lockable wheel nuts to prevent the theft of wheel rims and never leave your car parked in a dark place at night.

- Have your car's registration number engraved on all the windows.

15. **SAFETY IN THE STREET:**

- Leave valuable property such as jewellery and rings at home (locked up) when you go out.
- Never carry large sums of money.
- Don't walk alone in dark places.
- Carry handbags with the strap over your shoulder and the bag held tightly against your body.
- Carry your purse or wallet in an inner pocket and never a back pocket.
- Avoid swindlers and cardsharps on the sidewalks.
- Use shop windows as mirrors to spot persons following closely behind you. Stop suddenly with your back to the window or wall thus forcing him/her to walk ahead of you.
- Be aware of potential danger at all times. Walk briskly and purposefully so as not to appear to be an easy target.
- Avoid a crowd on pavements and rather make a wide detour around such a crowd than walk through it.
- Should you draw money at a bank, put the money away safely before walking out onto the sidewalk.
- A bundle of keys, a sharp umbrella point or ballpoint pen or pocket knife can be effectively used for self defence.
- Always remember that a thief relies on the element of surprise to perpetrate his/her crime with the minimum or resistance so as to make a fast escape.
- If you appear quick-witted and aware, the criminal will overlook you in prevention of an easier unsuspecting target.