



TRIAD NEWSLETTER

Safety for Older Adults

Volume 21 Issue 3 July August September 2018 Issued Quarterly

How To Protect Yourself From Car Break-Ins

By Phyllis Rose, Freelance Writer/Editor, RSVP Volunteer

This past April, 16 cars were broken into in one week in Kalamazoo County, according to Channel 3 news. That made a total of 79 car break-ins for the month. These are not isolated incidents. According to Nationwide Insurance, the “smash-and-grab” is one of the most common types of thefts in the United States. The thieves don’t take your car which is good, of course, but then you have to replace lost possessions and pay for expensive car repairs. And it doesn’t take long for the thieves to smash-and-grab. A former car thief, writing at bluecollarworkman.com says thieves realize they have about 20 seconds to break a car window, grab valuables, and get away from the scene.



To prevent your car from being a target whether it’s parked in your driveway, at a store or restaurant, or in your apartment’s parking lot, you can do several things. The latest thing is to protect the coded information on your key fob by storing the fob in a metal can which blocks the electromagnetic field, according to Phoebe Howard, writing in the “Detroit Free Press.” The information on your key fob can be copied by tech savvy thieves. With that information, they gain access to your car and everything in it and you may not even know the car has been broken into until you discover the car or the things in it missing.

The not-so-tech savvy “smash-and-grab” thieves look for opportunities to get something valuable very quickly, so lock your doors and roll up the windows. Then, never leave valuables such as phones, purses, or laptops where they can easily be seen, advises Nationwide. Since thieves don’t want to be seen, choose highly visible parking spaces, says Nationwide. Park where there’s a lot of traffic - both vehicular and pedestrian. At night, park in a well-lit area and, if possible, use an attended parking lot.

If your car is parked outside your home, installing motion sensor lights can help deter thieves, according to bluecollarworkman.com. The lights should be installed high enough so that thieves can’t reach them to unscrew the bulb. Anti-theft devices also help protect your vehicle from “smash-and-grab” thieves. “Whether it’s a steering wheel lock, a window alarm, or an ignition cut-off system, anything that makes a thief work harder could also make your car safer,” reports Firestone in its online blog. “If it will slow them down or potentially get them caught, they’ll probably pass.”

Even if you’ve taken several precautions, your car could still be broken into. The question then is what should you do. Call the police and then document the scene, says Lacie Glover, writing at nerdwallet.com. Take pictures of the damage and list stolen items. Most likely, you’ll need this evidence if you file a claim with your insurance company. If any stolen items contain identifying information, place a fraud alert on your credit record, Glover advises. Call your bank to freeze accounts if the stolen items included your credit and/or debit cards. And, of course, it’s important to get your vehicle repaired right away so other thieves can’t take advantage of the broken window.

Don’t become a victim. Simple steps can keep your car and your valuables safe from the “smash-and-grab” scoundrels.

WHAT IS TRIAD?

Law-enforcement seniors, and concerned citizens working together to increase older adult safety and to allay their fears of crime.

You’re invited to attend our next Triad council meeting.
Tues. July 11
9:30-10:30am
at
Senior Services in Kalamazoo

TRIAD SPEAKERS BUREAU

Presenters available to give talks on various senior safety concerns

Kalamazoo County Triad

Contact
Traci Furman
269-382-0515
ext.123
TFurman
@seniorservices1.org



Kalamazoo County Senior Expo—October 2, 2018

Triad and the Sheriff's Department will be at the County Fair Grounds offering safety information and Red Med Box collection to safely dispose of old medications.



Avoiding Internet Romance Scams

By Phyllis Rose, Freelance Writer/Editor, RSVP Volunteer

He's fat, lives in his mom's basement, works at Pizza Pit, and drives an old clunker. But online, he's tall, rich, has a six-pack of abs, and drives a Maserati. And as country singer, Brad Paisley, sings in his song, "Online," "I'm so much cooler online."

Yes, people can be as cool as they can imagine online. A fat slob can transform himself into a Cary Grant; a slovenly woman can become as elegant as Grace Kelly. The song may be funny but it points to a risk of online dating. According to DatingAdvice.com, about 10 percent of the profiles on free dating sites are fake. Also, about 10 percent of sex offenders use the sites to find victims. Over 60 percent of online daters are already in a relationship with 11 percent of them being married.

And every year, online dating scammers con their victims out of millions of dollars. Still despite these frightening statistics, seniors are the fastest growing segment of the online dating population, according to AARP.

So, how can seniors protect themselves when using online dating sites? First of all, be alert for signs that the person you're communicating with is most likely a scammer. According to Kimberly Palmer, staff writer at money.usnews.com, four red flags should make you think twice about getting involved with someone you meet online. The red flags are using bad grammar, never being available to meet in person, asking for money, and professing love very quickly. The bad grammar indicates the person is probably using an online translator because English is not his/her native language. If the person is never able to meet in person and always seems to be traveling, he/she is probably a scammer living in a foreign country and looking to get your money. To get your money, the scammers will give you a tale of woe about a tragedy or crisis and ask you to send them money. That request usually comes shortly after they tell you that they love you which usually occurs early in the online conversation.

So, before getting involved with a person who seems like the perfect match, here are some safety tips. First, check the person out online yourself. Scammers often steal photos of good-looking men and women from other websites and post them on dating sites. So do a Google image search. "We know they steal from modeling websites," says Amy Nofziger, a fraud specialist with AARP. "If your Google image search leads you to a modeling photo page, then you're probably being duped. Find out if their Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and other accounts match up to what they told you about themselves."

If the person turns out to be legitimate, and you want to pursue the relationship, you still have to be careful. Never invite the person to your home for a first date, advises Jonathan Aslay, a dating coach, writing at eharmony.com. Instead, meet in a public place such as a coffee shop. Also, be sure to give a friend or family member your date's contact information. You might also consider asking your friend to call you during the date, so if it's not going well, you can pretend there's an emergency and can quickly end the date. Drive yourself instead of depending on your date, advises Aslay. That gives you more control and increased safety.

Finally, don't get drunk on a first date, it can lead to bad decisions and possible bad consequences.

In the play, "Our Town" by Thornton Wilder, Mrs. Gibbs says, "People are meant to go through life two by two. 'Taint natural to be lonesome'." For seniors, who through divorce or widowhood, are no longer going through life "two by two," the lure of finding someone online can be seen as a cure for being lonesome. But you need to take precautions to make sure that the person you find is "much cooler" in real life than online.

