

UC Monthly Safety Spotlight, October 2011

Crime Prevention and Personal Security

Be Your Own Security Force

As the days get shorter and activity picks up on UC campuses, the need for crime prevention is more important than ever. Tough economic times trigger property crimes, and crimes against people are another unfortunate fact of life. And though law enforcement professionals are on the job, prevention is much more effective when individuals take an active role in protecting themselves.

Keeping yourself and your possessions secure in the fast-moving campus environment is a joint effort shared by you and your local UC police department. "Police officers are dedicated to their mission to protect you," says UC Davis Police Chief Annette Spicuzza; "But they can't be everywhere all the time. It's up to each of us to take steps to ensure our own safety, both on and off campus."

Reset Perspective from Passive to Active

It's natural for people to put routine activities on auto-pilot and overlook basic precautions. This passive attitude is just what law-breakers are looking for as they scan for criminal opportunities. They are more likely to avoid someone who is aware and on guard, protecting their space and ready to react to the unexpected. Start with a reality check. Recognize that it *can* happen to you and use your imagination to identify the potential for danger at all points of your daily activities. Take advantage of crime prevention programs and training offered by your UC police agency. Work together with your family and co-workers to sustain your proactive mindset and crime-resistant behaviors.

It Takes a Department

The whole is greater than the sum of its parts when department members work together to safeguard people, possessions and vital university resources. A group effort can generate momentum, raise awareness and make it easier to track success. Positive steps toward crime prevention in the workplace:
Contact your UC police agency regarding training and education, crime prevention presentations.

- Ask about specific coaching to improve security in your department.
- Get to know staff members from other departments in your work area so you know who is authorized to be there.
- To protect departmental resources, everyone on staff should follow the policy for file back-up and data security. Update and communicate the policy often to keep up with advances in technology.
- Train staff on how to report suspicious or threatening behavior, and how to spot the signs of potential workplace violence.
- Update and communicate contact numbers and procedures for quickly reaching your facility's police force.
- Develop or update your department's emergency response plan.
- Work with your campus emergency response staff to set up periodic emergency response exercises.

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Invest Your Attention on Your Personal Safety

Though it's easy to let your thoughts drift as you move through your day-to-day routine, the cost of this distraction can be a purse or backpack snatch or worse. The next time you're walking, cycling or jogging, make a conscious effort to examine your surroundings carefully. "Don't walk about with both ears plugged while you listen to music," advises Chief Spicuzza; "Trust us, you won't hear anyone coming up from behind." Use all five senses—including your sixth sense—and stay alert for possible threats. Try using this mental checklist:

- Are there nearby areas that could conceal a criminal?
- Where is the nearest open building entrance if you need to ask for help?
- Are you weighed down by excessive bags and packages?
- Are your shoes suitable for running if that becomes necessary?
- Is your cell phone easy accessible, and is the emergency number programmed in?
- Do you know how to describe your location to the dispatcher?
- Do you really need to talk or text right now, or can you postpone the distraction and pay attention to your surroundings instead?

Police agencies also encourage you to follow these simple tips:

- Use lit paths and well-traveled areas when you go out at night.
- Don't jog or walk alone. Travel with a group or at least in pairs.
- Take advantage of escort services whenever they are available.
- Don't leave valuables in plain sight in your vehicle. Even if you try to conceal your possessions, thieves may still break in.
- Keep careful control over laptops and other electronics when you're in the library, meeting rooms, cafes or other public areas on campus.
- Keep your office, laboratory or workshop doors locked if you're working after hours.
- Don't prop doors open. If they are meant to be closed and locked, leave them that way.
- Lock your purse, backpack and other valuables in a drawer or cabinet if you step away from your workspace.

Take Advantage of Campus Resources

Your UC police department and other emergency response professionals are there to help you. Time spent exploring their websites for advisories, program and educational opportunities and other information is time well spent. Follow up by attending crime prevention, self-defense and emergency response courses. "The most important advice I have for everyone in our campus communities is to stay vigilant and stay involved," says Chief Spicuzza; "When you combine individuals who take responsibility for their own safety with professionally trained and equipped officers, you have a very powerful, effective, crime-detering partnership."