



SAFE LIVING

Safety Resources for Off Campus Living

This Student booklet, developed by the Crisis Management / Safety and Security Department, is intended to serve students as a helpful resource for living off-campus.

While most neighborhoods around our campuses are relatively safe, crimes can and do occur in the best of neighborhoods. Use common sense to keep yourselves, your belongings and your homes safe.

We have made every effort to insure the accuracy of this resource. Please note that it is advisory in nature and not a definitive statement of the law. Questions about the law's application should be directed to a respective specialist.

Take a few moments to read over this publication and Stay Safe!

In case of emergency call "911"

The tips outlined below are useful for anyone living off-campus in any town. Off-campus housing is not immune to criminal activity. However, common sense precautions can reduce your vulnerability to both personal and property crimes.

Personal Safety- General

- Do not walk alone. Walking with one other person reduces your chances of being assaulted by 70%.
- Avoid walking through dark streets or alleys. The shortest route is not always the safest route. Avoid short cuts.
- Pay attention to your surroundings. Do not walk while talking on the phone or with your I-pod in your ears. Listen and pay attention.
- Be aware of deserted laundry rooms, parking lots, etc., especially at night.
- Only walk or jog in well-lit, populated areas. Vary your route.
- Shred documents that have personal information on them.
- Report broken locks, dead lights, overgrown shrubs, etc. to your landlord immediately in writing.
- Walk in the middle of a sidewalk to avoid people hiding in parked cars, bushes, or cars pulling up and abducting you.
- Ignore strangers who call out to you.
- Be aware of your body language. Walk confidently and briskly.
- Never hitchhike.
- Do not traverse unfamiliar neighborhoods.
- If you are being followed on foot, do not be afraid to cross the street or change direction. Enter a well-lit store or knock on a door and call the police. Join a group of people. Do not go home.

- If you are being followed in a car, turn around and walk the other way. Go down a one way street. Get the license and call the police.
- Always let a friend know where you are going and when you expect to return.
- Have your keys out before you get to the door.
- If you are on campus and need assistance, immediately contact Campus Security, a CRT member, staff member or university employee.
- Stay sober and coherent. People under the influence of a substance are much more likely to be the victim of a serious crime or to victimize others.

Before Renting

Before renting an off-campus apartment, consider surveying the residence to ensure that it has the following security-related features and consider the following:

- Does the apartment have metal or solid core wooden entry and exit doors? Are these doors equipped with deadbolts or shielded doorknob locks? Are the locks and strike plates mounted securely? Have the locks been rekeyed since the last tenant moved out? Does the entry door have a peephole? Is there an alarm system?
- Can visitors be observed without opening the apartment door either through a door peephole or window?
- Are all first floor, fire escape, or other accessible windows equipped with locks? If equipped with security gratings, can they be opened from the inside for emergency exit?
- Does any outside vegetation block doors or windows from public view? Does the vegetation provide places of concealment at entrances and along walkways?
- Test lighting; Is there adequate lighting at the building entry doors and along walkways? Are the outer doors kept locked at all times?
- Does the apartment have a smoke detector and at least two emergency escape routes?
- Research local crime statistics; It is advisable to review sex offender information in close proximity to future residence- see for example <http://www.fbi.gov/scams-safety/registry>.

- For crime rates, statistical and demographic data by zip code or city name- see <http://www.city-data.com/> or <http://www.moving.com/real-estate/city-profile/>
- Remember- You can always call your local police department for additional information
- You can use Google Maps or similar sites to identify potential threats or hazards in proximity to future residence. It is also recommended to identify the nearest fire and police station, as well as your nearest hospital.
- Assess the location to weather related risks. Consider registering to email and text weather alerts via your smartphone- service offered <http://www.weather.gov/subscribe> and <https://inws.ncep.noaa.gov/>
- Play it safe while apartment hunting- let people know where you are going, be aware of your surroundings, use a buddy system if possible.

Home Safety Tips

- Always keep doors and windows to your apartment locked, especially when you are alone or sleeping or the apartment is left unoccupied (even if only for a few moments). Most burglaries involve unlocked doors, so locking up is the single most effective action you can take to reduce theft.
- Do not leave the exterior doors of your building unlocked or propped open. When entering or exiting, make sure all doors are securely locked. If you see a door that is not secure, make sure you lock it.
- Do not allow strangers into your building or apartment. Observe visitors through your door peephole or window prior to opening the door. Have repair or service personnel show official identification and confirm their presence with the person requesting the service. Delivery persons should remain outside to await the person requesting the delivery.
- Report all obscene or harassing phone calls to the police. If someone calls with the wrong number, never give the caller your name, address, or number that they have called.
- Report all strangers seen wandering inside or loitering outside your house or apartment to the police.

- Never loan anyone your key. Nonresidents—even close friends—do not have the same level of concern for the security of your house. Do not leave your keys unattended in your room or apartment. Do not put your name or address on your key chain. If keys are lost or stolen, report the loss immediately to the police, and have your locks changed. At night always have your keys ready before you get to the door.
- Have your local police telephone number posted near all telephones in case of emergency. Program it into your cell phone too.
- Always keep your windows covered at night and leave lights on in two or more rooms. Never reveal to a visitor or telephone caller that you are alone. Call out in a loud voice, "I'll answer it!" when there is a visitor at the door to imply that you are not alone.
- Do not use your first name on mailboxes or in telephone directories. Use your first initial only.
- Be aware of deserted laundry rooms, common lounges, basements, parking garages, and elevators, especially late at night. Consider using or entering these areas when others are around.
- Try not to enter elevators with a stranger. Stand next to the control panel. If confronted by an assailant, push the emergency alarm and as many floor buttons as possible (do not push the stop button).
- Immediately report malfunctioning doors, windows, security gratings, lights, overgrown shrubbery, etc. to the person responsible for maintaining your residence.
- Avoid walking alone at night, but if you must, stay in well-lighted, open areas.
- Stay sober and coherent. Persons under the influence are much more likely to be the victim of a serious crime or accident or to victimize others.

Protecting Your Property

- In your apartment, keep such valuables as currency, wallets, jewelry, and purses out of plain view. Do not leave valuables unattended in common areas such as laundry rooms and lounges.
- Engrave property such as computers, stereos, other electronic equipment, etc. with your driver's license number and state. This will aid in the recovery of your property if it is stolen.

- Avoid carrying large sums of money on your person. Open a savings or checking account rather than allowing large amounts of money to accumulate in your room.
- If your bicycle must be stored or parked outside, make sure that it is secured to an immovable object with a high-quality locking device; a "U-lock" device and removing your front tire is recommended.
- Make sure your car is always locked and that any valuables left in the vehicle are locked in the trunk or placed out of view.
- Investing in apartment or theft insurance is usually a good idea, depending on the value of your belongings.

Fire Safety

- Fire safety is the resident's responsibility. Inspect your apartment and communicate any fire hazards to your landlord in writing.
- Most fires occur at night when apartments are most heavily populated.
- Smoking is the number one cause of fatal apartment fires. People drop cigarettes on furniture or in wastepaper baskets. Do not allow smoking in your apartment. If you do, provide them with large ashtrays and check behind furniture and check cushions before going to bed. Do not smoke in bed. Make sure cigarettes, pipes, etc. are extinguished before emptying ashtrays into the garbage.
- Do not leave paper or combustibles by heaters or open flames.
- Do not block exits.
- Explore your dwelling and identify all of the possible exits.
- Keep exit and stairway doors closed at all times.
- Never use an elevator in a fire. Use the stairs.
- Do not overcrowd your apartment with people or belongings. Your apartment should not exceed legal capacity.
- Make sure your apartment has safety devices including sprinklers, extinguishers, and smoke detectors.

- Check for electrical hazards including worn electrical cords, overloaded extension cords and outlets, broken appliances, and exposed wiring or outlets.
- Do not run cords under carpets, over doors, over nails, or in high traffic areas.
- Use heavy duty extension cords.
- Never store flammable liquids in your apartment or car.
- Make sure your apartment has smoke detectors outside of every bedroom (and inside if you sleep with the door closed). Change batteries twice a year and when they beep or die.
- Boiler rooms, hallways, each floor, special exits, etc. should be equipped with smoke detectors.
- Follow the manufacturer's testing and cleaning instructions for all smoke detectors. Test them at least once a month.
- Create an evacuation plan with your roommates. Post it in public places so your guests know it too. Decide upon a meeting place outside.
- Never re-enter a burning building. Let the fire department know if someone is left inside.
- Do not burn trash.
- Do not place space heaters near curtains, furniture, or plastics. They should be at least 3 feet away.
- Make sure space heaters are turned off and unplugged before leaving the room.
- There should be two possible exits from every room in your dwelling.
- If a breaker trips or a fuse blows, find out why before just flipping the breaker or replacing the fuse.
- If you have a fireplace, make sure it has a screen. Keep rugs, curtains, and fire starters away from the flame.
- Make sure nothing is stored by your heater or furnace.
- Extinguish candles and incense before you leave the room if you choose to use them.
- Do not leave the stove unattended.

What Is Suspicious?

You should be alert to anything that seems even slightly "out of the ordinary" for the area or time of day in which it occurs.

The most obvious things to watch for and report are:

- Strangers entering your neighbor's room or apartment when it is unoccupied;
- Strangers on your block trying doors to see if they are locked;
- Screams heard anywhere, anytime may mean an assault or robbery is in progress;
- The sound of breaking glass or other loud, explosive noises may mean an accident, burglary or vandalism;
- Persons around bicycle racks carrying bolt cutters and tools;
- A person running—especially if carrying something of value—could be leaving the scene of a crime.

While these situations described above could have innocent explanations, your police department would rather investigate crime-prone situations than be called when it is too late. Your call may save a life, prevent an injury, or stop a criminal act.

Assist Your Police Department

Be aware of your surroundings. Safety and security are everyone's responsibility. You can reduce the possibility of becoming a crime statistic by being alert to your environment.

Your safety and security ultimately depend on you as an individual for their effectiveness and success. You must take responsibility for your own safety. You must be security conscious at all times for your benefit and for that of others.

PLEASE REMEMBER that some of your neighbors may not be students and may have a different lifestyle. Keeping this in mind, it is important to recognize how your behavior affects the people around you. Your behavior, positive or negative, reflects the entire community.

Respect Your Neighbors

Here are some tips to ensure you have a positive off campus experience:

- All hours should be considered 'quiet hours'
- Avoid loud music and large parties
- Maintain your property
- Make sure your smoke detectors are working
- Dispose of trash properly
- Be friendly and introduce yourself to your neighbor(s)
- Comply with local, state and federal laws

While living off campus you are part of the community and you will be held to the standards of that community just like other community members. An off-campus living experience is an exciting time. Along with this new experience come new responsibilities to the neighborhood community you are entering. Please keep in mind that this is your home; don't do anything you wouldn't do in your own home!

For more information, please visit your school's "Safety and Security website"