



United Federation of Teachers

A Union of Professionals

52 Broadway, NY, NY 10004

FROM THE
UNITED FEDERATION
OF TEACHERS:

HOW NOT TO BE
A CRIME VICTIM
IN NEW YORK CITY

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SAFE:
NOT
SORRY!

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION



◆ When possible, use buses rather than subways. There are fewer violent crimes committed above ground because there are many more people around—and that means more witnesses.

◆ When riding the subway outside of rush hours, try to stay in the car with the conductor. If you find yourself sitting in a sparsely populated car and a suspicious-looking person gets on, move to another car. Don't worry about hurting his feelings.

◆ Be aware of your jewelry. Turn your rings so that the stones are facing inside and make

sure your clothing covers any neck chains. Necklaces are easy prey for attackers. (More on jewelry later.)

◆ Always put your Metrocard or a couple of dollar bills in your pocket before leaving your home or workplace. Opening your purse or wallet at the subway change booth (or newsstand or deli) is an invitation to a purse snatcher.

◆ Use green-lighted subway entrances whenever possible. New York City has installed coded lights at subway stations. Look for them before you enter. A red light means the station is only an exit and is not staffed. A yellow light means there is no station agent on duty and the entrance to the station is probably through an enclosed turnstile. (You are more vulnerable here because you cannot back out of the turnstile if you see an unsavory character.) The green dome means the subway station is open and there is an agent who can summon help if you need it.

YOUR AUTOMOBILE

◆ Carry your car keys in your pocket, not in your purse. Have your ignition key ready when approaching your car, so you don't have to fish in your purse or pockets.

◆ Always look in the back seat of your car before getting in. If someone is there, leave immediately and summon the police. If you see someone running from your car, don't go after him. Call the police and provide the best possible description of facial features, height, weight and/or clothing. This makes it easier for the police to trace patterns of rapists and thieves who travel from one area to another. Do not be a hero/heroine.

◆ When your car's tires are changed, ask the mechanic to: a) grease the screws, and b) tighten the lugs by hand. It is often difficult to unscrew the lugs when they are tightened by machine and you are stranded at night on a lonely highway or street.

◆ If you have a CB radio, transmit this message when you need help—even if you are alone: “We are having car trouble and are seeking assistance from a uniformed patrol car. Please do what you can to call the local police and ask them to respond to this call.”

◆ Invest in an inexpensive sign saying, “Assistance Needed—Please Call 911 and Report Location of My Car.” Sold at most automobile stores, the sign can be placed inside your window in an emergency.

◆ Leave some warm socks and a blanket in the trunk of your car. They come in handy if you get stuck on a winter evening and are waiting for uniformed help, which often can take a while.

◆ If you stop for a red light or a stop sign, stop at least $1\frac{1}{2}$ car lengths behind the car in front of you. This gives you room to drive around the car if someone intent on robbery drives up behind you.

◆ When driving, try to avoid getting involved with people in a bogus accident. If you are in a



deserted area and another car taps your rear bumper, open your window a crack and say, "Please follow me to the nearest convenience store (or police station or well-trafficked street) so that we can exchange IDs." Stop at a well-lighted public place and remove your identification from your wallet before getting out of your car.

If the offender's reason for bumping into you was to get you to open your purse or take out your wallet in his presence, he won't follow you. If your car is damaged and the offender drives away, the damage is less important than your safety. If you can copy down the license number, you can still report the accident. By giving the person those instructions, you are not fleeing the scene of an accident.

- ◆ When driving alone, leave the driver's window closed. If it's too warm, open the passenger's window. A common method of snatching jewelry is through an open driver's window. Also, beware of strangers asking directions—a common way of getting you to open a window. And keep your purse on the floor of the car, not on the passenger's seat.

- ◆ Do not leave laundry or packages in the back seat when you leave your car. First, they pro-

vide break-ins and theft. Second, intruders can use them to hide behind or under, preventing you from seeing them when you enter your car.

- ◆ If another driver abuses you with foul language and/or gestures, don't try to get even. Not everyone in the world has as much self-control as you.

PARKING LOTS

- ◆ Do not walk into darkened parking lots alone. Spend a couple of extra moments at work, or wherever you are leaving, and wait for somebody to accompany you to the parking lot.

- ◆ Always trust your instincts. If you see a group of loiterers, you are not being foolish if you cross the street and walk on the other side or avoid entering the parking lot.



◆ Notify police of any possible incident. They can establish patterns and be of great help.

◆ Parking lot owners are obligated to provide adequate lighting. If you use a dark parking lot, ask the police community services squad to investigate and speak to the owners. If your employer is the owner, you and the union should discuss this with management.

STREET SAFETY

◆ When walking in the street after a day's work, do not bend your shoulders and drag yourself home. As tired as you are, stand up straight, look stern and walk tall. A person with a determined gait and alert eyes is not as tempting a target as one who looks exhausted.

◆ Don't walk next to buildings or next to the curb, if possible. Walk in the middle of the sidewalk so that robbers lurking in doorways or riding in cars or scooters can't grab you easily.

◆ If you see a suspicious-looking person coming toward you, cross the street.

◆ Always keep your pocketbook on the side of your body away from traffic and wait on the curb for the light to change. It's very easy for somebody to reach out of a car window or jump out of a car and grab your purse or jewelry when you're on the traffic side of the sidewalk or standing in the street.

◆ Wear your pocketbook over your shoulder—not with the strap over your head and across your chest. If someone is going to rip it away, there's no reason for your neck to be injured. However, clutch your bag in front of you to discourage a rip-and-run.

◆ Don't keep valuables in your purse, shoulder bag or wallet. Carry only items for which you would not be willing to give up your life, for example: change, cosmetics, tissues and other personal items. Do not carry large sums of money. Do not carry irreplaceable photographs or documents. Do not carry your keys in your bag. Above all do not fight for your pocketbook. Let them have it.



◆ If someone pulls to the curb to ask directions, stand at least five feet away. You can answer any question in a loud voice. There's no need to walk over, bend into the car, and say "Sure, how can I help you?" You might be helping an assailant get your pocket-book or wallet.

◆ If you work in the same area every day, eventually you will see police officers on patrol. Smile, say hello, let them know that you are a school employee or a nurse who visits this area regularly and tell them your name. A friendly wave on subsequent days or an officer walking with you can deter a criminal from attacking you.

◆ A rule of thumb: No lights, no entry. If you must enter a darkened area to visit someone, go to a telephone, call and ask to be met downstairs.



ELEVATORS

◆ Look up. When you're on the ground floor in a lonely office building or apartment house and the elevator door opens, chances are the elevator has been working its way down from the upper floors. Lean in, press B or subbasement, and step back out.

Elevators usually tend to go to the bottom of the cycle before reversing their direction. Thus, a thug waiting in the basement will be greeted by an empty elevator when the door opens. The elevator is now in an up cycle and you can enter when it returns to the first floor.

◆ If, when you are riding in an elevator, someone gets on and your instinct tells you he or she might present a problem, get off. Again, don't worry about hurting anyone's feelings.

◆ If someone is standing in the elevator when the doors open and you are alone, you can let it pass. If the person inside asks, "What's the matter?" you can always say, "Oh, I left something in

my car” or “I have to see somebody on another floor” or “This elevator is not going in my direction.” Any excuse or no excuse. Chances are, if this is an innocent rider, he or she won’t notice or be angry with you, and if he or she is, so what?

◆ If the ceiling cap is missing from the elevator, do not get on. Sometimes perpetrators ride on top of the car, hoping that someone will get in alone. Wait for other passengers and travel in numbers. Notify the building superintendent or security that the cap is off.

◆ Be sure you look in the convex mirror in the upper corner of the elevator before you get in. If you see someone you don’t like, don’t enter. Better bruised feelings than a bruised head.

◆ The first place you should look when you get into an elevator is the floor selection panel, which also has the emergency stop and alarm buttons. Stand near it.

◆ If you are attacked, reach out and press some floors as well as the alarm button. Do not try to point with your finger; instead, use your entire hand to press as many buttons as possible.

◆ When the elevator stops, scream “Fire” rather than “Help” or “Rape.” Some people prefer not to respond to a cry for help, but everybody wants to know where a fire is and will come running. There’s safety in numbers.

◆ Whenever available or possible, ride an operator-controlled elevator rather than a fully automatic one.

JEWELRY

◆ All of us like to dress up. But why wear jewelry to work? If you can leave it home, do. Anyway, jewelry is often a danger when providing patient care or working with children, and all too often jewelry is damaged by the regular use of detergents and chemicals at work.

◆ If you wear earrings, don’t wear the big dangling ones. The last thing you want is for a thief to yank them off through your earlobes.

◆ If you must wear jewelry, make sure it is obviously costume. If jewelry looks real to your friends, it also looks real to muggers and thieves.



IF YOUR PURSE OR WALLET IS STOLEN

◆ If your keys are stolen, the first person to call is a locksmith. Even if all your valuables were in your stolen purse with your keys, don't err on the side of frugality—change the locks in your house.

◆ Always leave a set of house keys with a trusted neighbor so that you can gain entry to your home while waiting for a locksmith.

◆ Make photocopies of all your credit cards and place them in a safe place in your house. This will help you file reports quickly and avoid financial losses if the cards are stolen.

◆ Whether or not you are aware that your keys have been stolen, never enter your home if you



live alone and find the door ajar. Go to a neighbor's house and call the police.

TELEPHONES

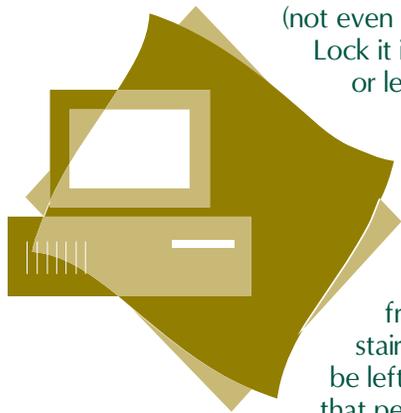
◆ Messages on answering machines, especially for single people, should be, "You have reached..."

and then give either your first name or the last four digits of your number. "We are sorry that we cannot come to the phone right now..." etc. If possible, have a male voice record the message.

◆ Children should never reveal to a caller that they are alone in the house. They should be instructed to answer the telephone in a way that indicates that an adult is "not able to come to the phone right now," but will call back soon.



OFFICE AND WORKPLACE SMARTS



- ◆ Never leave your purse unattended on your desk (not even for a minute).

Lock it in a drawer or leave it with someone you trust.

- ◆ By law, certain entrances from internal staircases must be left unlocked so that people are not trapped in a stairwell.

In your building, learn which floors are open so that you can escape if you see people on the staircase who don't belong there.

- ◆ Immediately notify the personnel department, security office or supervisor's office if people are where they should not be.
- ◆ If working late or coming in especially early, find out if anyone else will be around. Alert the security guard that you'll be there.
- ◆ Be sure the door to the floor is locked. Don't buzz people in unless you're sure they belong there.
- ◆ Be extra careful if the restroom is accessible to strangers or in an out-of-the-way space.
- ◆ Ask for identification from any stranger who asks for confidential information and from any delivery or repair person who says he or she must remove equipment or tries to enter a private area.
- ◆ If someone behaves or looks particularly suspicious, especially after normal working hours, call building security.
- ◆ Keep emergency phone numbers — police, ambulance, fire and building security — posted near the phone.

ATM PRECAUTIONS



- ◆ Getting money from an ATM is a great convenience. It's also an opportunity area for thieves and scammers. Use your eyes, ears and instincts to assure your safety. You should feel comfortable when you enter and leave.
- ◆ Try to find an ATM that is well lit and has a security surveillance camera, as most do these days. Use the mirror that many ATMs provide to keep alert to people behind you.
- ◆ If someone inside makes you uncomfortable, leave or don't enter.
- ◆ If you go to an ATM room at night, bring along a friend.
- ◆ Make sure the entry door is securely locked when you enter and exit. Don't open the door for anyone.
- ◆ Prepare yourself in advance. Fill out a deposit or withdrawal slip at home. If depositing money, have it in a sealed envelope. After a withdrawal, put your money, receipt, card and wallet into your pocket or purse before leaving the ATM.
- ◆ Memorize your PIN so that you don't have to take it out of a wallet or purse when you need it.
- ◆ When entering your PIN, block anyone's view of the machine with your body so what you're entering can't be seen by someone behind you. If you think someone is looking over your shoulder, cancel the transaction and leave.
- ◆ Guard your card. Report loss or theft immediately. If unauthorized ATM transactions show up on your statement, notify your financial institution immediately.
- ◆ If you use a drive-up ATM, keep your engine running, lock all doors, open only the driver's window.
- ◆ If walking to your ATM, stay alert and don't linger near the machine.