



VACATION SAFETY

Chesterfield County Police Department, Crime Prevention Unit (804) 318 - 8699

Before You Leave

Preventing crime during family travel starts with making sure your home is protected while you are away. The key is to make your home look as if you never left.

- Keep shades and blinds in their normal positions.
- Stop mail and newspaper deliveries or ask a trusted neighbor/friend to pick them up daily.
- Put timers on several household lights so they turn on and off at appropriate times.
- Arrange to have grass mowed or snow shoveled while you are gone.
- Make sure all your door and window locks are in proper working order—and use them. Activate your home alarm if you have one.
- Do things that suggest someone is home. Ask a trusted neighbor to park in your driveway. Leave a loud radio on (tuned to talk radio) to increase the illusion of occupancy.
- Plan ahead. If you are traveling by car, plan and map your route. Have routine car and tire maintenance performed before you leave.
- Leave copies of your passport, driver's license, credit cards and travelers checks with a trusted family member in case you need to replace them.
- Contact the Police Department (748-1258) to request a vacation keep-check on your home.



Packing for Prevention

Preparing for a family trip requires a lot of planning. You need to decide where you are going, what you will take with you, where you will stay and how you will get from one place to another. Pre-planning can reduce your risk of becoming a victim. Some tips on what to take:

- Clean out your wallet or purse before you go. Take only essential credit cards. Plan to use credit cards or traveler's checks instead of cash wherever possible.
- Pack as lightly as possible. Lots of heavy, cumbersome bags will slow you down and make you more vulnerable.
- Keep a separate record of the contents of checked luggage. Keep anything of value such as medicine and jewelry in a carry-on that stays with you.
- If you are going on an extended vacation, consider shipping large bags to your destination in advance. For the return trip, mail bulky new purchases home or ask merchants to do it for you.

At Your Destination

While you and your family are traveling, it is important to remember that tourists make a tempting target for thieves. Travelers who appear to be lost or distracted, weighed down with bags, carrying cameras, plane tickets, money, and other valuables, are enticing targets for offenders. The best advice for you and your family is to do all you can to blend in with the crowd.

- Don't display expensive jewelry, cameras, bags and other items that might draw attention.
- Check maps before you go out so you can tour confidently.
- Stick to well-lighted, well-traveled streets at all times. Do not take shortcuts.
- Always lock your car when it is unoccupied, even if the stop is brief. Keep valuables out of sight, preferably locked in the trunk. Don't advertise that you are a tourist by leaving maps and guidebooks on the seat or dashboard—keep them in the glove compartment.
- Don't look distracted or lost. Walk confidently and stay alert to what is happening around you.
- Stay alert to staged mishaps such as someone bumping into to you or spilling a drink; a stranger offering to snap a family photo; or, a pedestrian jumping in front of the car and falling so you leap out to investigate. Traveling safely with your family also means sticking together and keeping an eye on your children at all times. Make sure they know where you are staying (name and address). Teach them what to do if they get lost or separated. You might want to agree on a meeting place, just in case. And, by all means, make sure your children know not to accept rides or favors from strangers.

