



AMHERST POLICE DEPARTMENT

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SENIOR SAFETY

In the 2011 Stats Canada census, Nova Scotia had the largest percentage of population over the age of 65 in the country at 16.6%. Population over the age of 65 accounted for 20% of the population of Amherst and 20% of Cumberland County. Seniors are being targeted by criminals and with a significant portion of our population being seniors, there is an increased risk for this type crime to occur. In past articles I have used the term target hardening, to describe taking action so you are not an “easy target.” Education and awareness is an effective method to achieve target hardening.

Here are some tips from the Amherst Police Department which can make you a more difficult target for criminals. Remember the criminals most often look for the easy target.

AT HOME

- Do not open your door to strangers if you are not comfortable doing so.
- Do not disclose to strangers, when you are home alone.
- Consider installing a peephole so you can see who is at your door.
- If someone asks to use your phone, offer to call the number for them instead of allowing them inside to use your phone. Remember most people now have cell phones.
- Keep your shrubs and flowers trimmed so that they do not offer a hiding spot for thieves attempting to gain entry into your windows.
- Make sure that your residence is locked at night.
- Keep your curtains drawn at night.
- Install motion sensor lighting in your front and backyards.
- Do not hide spare house keys in an obvious location.
- If you are not comfortable with a phone call, hang up.
- **Do not hesitate to call the police if you have any concerns with suspicious persons at your residence, or suspicious phone calls, mail, or e-mail.**

WALKING

- Always walk in well-lit areas at night.
- Avoid walking alone.
- Do not display large amounts of money in public.
- Be aware that carrying a purse on one shoulder makes it very enticing for someone to grab your purse and run off. Carrying your purse across your neck opens yourself up to serious injury if a criminal does attempt to steal your purse. There is no foolproof method to safe guard your purse during a purse snatching. The best course of action is to make sure if you become a victim of a purse snatching, that the encounter does not leave you injured.

DRIVING

- Keep your vehicle well maintained to avoid mechanical breakdowns.
- Always lock your car door when you are in your vehicle.
- Before getting into your vehicle, check the back seats.

In 2012 Amherst Police Department and the Cumberland County Senior Safety program hosted a *Senior's Police Academy* for anyone 55 years or older. Sessions were held one day a week for 6 weeks, through October and November. Some of the topics included, Frauds and Scams, Falls Prevention, Healthy Living, Self Defence, and a Taser demonstration. We are offering the Academy again this fall. The formal registration has not begun however if you interested in attending you call me at 667-8600 or Cumberland County Senior Safety Program Coordinator Cheryl Laliberte at 667-7484 and we will add your name to a contact list for when the official dates are confirmed.