



Your Guide to Safety and Security

Crime Prevention for Persons with Disabilities



**CALGARY
POLICE
SERVICE**

Although Calgary is a safe city, many people still fear becoming a victim of crime. Taking some basic security precautions will help you reduce your chance of becoming a victim. *Your Guide to Safety and Security* is a joint initiative of the Calgary Police Service and your community. This booklet is designed to provide personal safety and awareness tips for most people with disabilities.

Personal Safety

When you are away from home it is important to be aware of your surroundings. You should have a plan and trust your instincts. People who look confident are less likely to become victims.

Street Safety

- When you go out, it is a good idea to take a friend or tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return.
- Try to walk in daylight hours or in well-lit, busy areas. Avoid shortcuts through parks, alleys and dark or deserted areas.
- Avoid being alone at night. Use the buddy-system and travel with a friend.
- People with visual impairments are advised to walk close to the centre of the sidewalk when using a white cane to track either a curb or the side of a building.
- If you are suspicious about someone following you, or if someone is bothering you, cross the street and go the other way. During the day, you can go to a school, police station, or another public building that is accessible. During the evening, look for a store or gas station that is open late. You can also go to a lighted house and ring the bell, as if that were your destination.
- If you cannot get to a safe place make noise to attract attention. You can shout or scream if necessary, or yell "fire" to attract attention. If you have difficulty talking or screaming, you can use an emergency alarm, whistle or "screamer" to attract attention. Choose a model that can be turned on with a small movement, and keep it in easy reach. A personal alarm may also be mounted onto a wheelchair for easy access.

- People who are nonverbal can also attract attention or confuse an assailant by doing something unexpected, such as turning their wheelchair in circles.
- Never carry a weapon because it could be used against you.
- If you use an electric wheelchair, ensure it is fully charged before going out.
- If possible, avoid buildings, parks and other areas in which you must rely on a stranger for entering or exiting.
- Before visiting a building or park, call first to find out if it is wheelchair accessible.
- When you are seated, keep your cane, crutches, walker or wheelchair by your side in case you need to leave quickly.

Useful Items

- It is a good idea to carry or wear an identification card with your name, address, phone number and an emergency contact number. The card should also describe your disability or situation. You can keep the card in your wallet, purse or fanny pack, or you can wear it around your neck.
- If you have a cellular telephone, it is a good idea to keep it with you at all times.
- Always wear your medical alert bracelet, necklace or card.
- A small flashlight may also be useful.

Other People

Although many people are generous in offering their assistance, stay alert and be cautious when dealing with anyone you do not know well.

- Look for trusted adults if you need help, like a security guard, police officer, etc.
- If someone asks you for the time or directions, stand a comfortable distance away when answering. It is best to avoid long conversations with people you do not know. You do not have to talk to a stranger if you do not feel comfortable with him or her.
- It is advisable for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing to carry paper and a pencil or use a cellphone to communicate (it is common in the Deaf community to use cellphones).

- Avoid giving anyone you do not know personal information such as your full name, address, and phone number.
- Do not tell a stranger whether you live alone or with other people.
- Do not invite anyone to your home until you know them and feel they can be trusted. Arrange to meet at safe places such as coffee shops the first few times.
- Do not visit somebody's home or accept a ride when you have just met them.

Calgary Transit Safety and Security Tips

All Calgary Transit operators and other personnel, such as supervisors and maintenance staff, have radios and can provide assistance. In addition, uniformed and plain-clothes Protective Services Officers patrol Calgary Transit facilities day and night.

Here are some suggestions for using public transportation safely and conveniently. To find out more about these services or for trip planning assistance, call Calgary Transit Customer Services at 403-262-1000 or go online at www.calgarytransit.com.

On the Bus

- Calgary Transit operates low-floor buses on all routes. These buses feature a ramp that can be lowered to make it easier for customers with mobility issues to board. The nearly flat entry with no steps allows convenient access for everyone including customers using mobility aids such as wheelchairs, crutches and walkers.
- Wait for the bus with other people in a well-lit area. To reduce waiting time at your bus stop, call the Calgary Transit Tele-ride line at 403-974-4000 and enter your four digit bus zone number to find out when the next buses will arrive.
- Persons who use a wheelchair or scooter may travel with an attendant on Calgary Transit for the price of one transit fare. An Attendant Identification Card, valid as one fare payment, will be issued to all who qualify.
- Sit near the driver, if possible. Priority seats for persons with disabilities and senior citizens are located beside the front door of the bus. The priority seating area provides easy access for customers with restricted mobility and makes it easier to communicate with the driver.

- Hold your purse and packages securely on your lap.
- It is a good idea to stay alert and awake on the bus.
- Tell the driver immediately if someone is bothering you.
- When you want to get off the bus, signal the driver by pulling the cable located along the window or push the "next stop" button on the vertical grab bar in the priority seating area. The "next stop" sign at the front of the bus will light up, informing passengers who are deaf or hard of hearing that the bus will stop at the next bus stop. A bell also rings to let other transit customers know the bus will stop.
- Stay on the bus if you notice someone or something suspicious at your stop, and tell the driver about your concerns.

On the C-Train

- All C-Trains are accessible and there are designated parking stalls for persons with disabilities at all C-Train stations with Park-and-Ride lots.
- The centre doors on each C-Train car are wheelchair accessible and are marked with a wheelchair decal. Priority seats for people with disabilities and senior citizens are located by the LRT doors.
- In an emergency on the C-Train, press the red HELP intercom button beside the LRT door to talk to the Transit operator. The HELP buttons beside the centre doors have been placed lower so they can be reached from a wheelchair.
- At C-Train stations and platforms, use the red HELP intercom button if there is an emergency, such as a fire, smoke, vandalism, a medical emergency, or harassment in progress.
- Calgary Transit personnel monitor the stations and platforms using a network of security cameras (located by red HELP button) and respond to requests made on the Transit Help Intercom System.

Tip: While waiting at a C-Train station or platform, stay in view of a security camera and near a HELP intercom. Transit personnel will be able to see what is happening around you.

For more information about Transit Security call: Calgary Transit Customer Services: 403-262-1000 or TTY/TDD Line for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons: 403-262-8087.

Calgary Transit Access

Calgary Transit Access provides transportation to Calgarians who are unable to use Calgary Transit services due to a disability. The service is a shared-ride door to door service, so you may have other customers riding with you in a vehicle. Calgary Transit Access is provided through a partnership with multiple transportation services, all which provide an accessible vehicle for users. Once a potential user submits an application form, an interview is scheduled to determine their eligibility. For more information, or to apply, please visit www.calgarytransit.com.

Protecting Your Valuables

Pickpockets

Beware of pickpockets in busy, crowded places. They can easily take your wallet, money and valuables from your pocket or purse without you knowing it. The best defence is to be aware of what is happening around you and to carry your possessions securely. Pickpockets are most successful when they blend into the crowd.

A common trick is to bump into you or spill something near you to distract you for a moment. Once you are distracted, the pickpocket will act. You can protect yourself from pickpockets by taking these precautions:

- Men should carry their wallet in their front pocket rather than the back.
- In crowded areas, don't pat your wallet to make sure it is still there, that lets people know you have money and where it is.
- Avoid carrying your wallet in a jacket or coat pocket.
- Close your purse or bag and hold it firmly. If it closes with a flap, carry the closed flap next to your body (like a football type hold).
- Avoid carrying your purse slung around your neck or over one shoulder and across your neck. If someone tried to grab it from you, you could be easily hurt.

Tip: Use a fanny pack if you use a wheelchair. Do not hang your purse or bag on the back of your chair. Avoid putting wallets or valuables in a bag mounted on the back of your wheelchair.

Robbery and Purse Snatching

The best prevention from robbery is to avoid unsafe places and to be aware of the people who are around you. If someone demands your money, give it to them.

Here is what to do if you think you are about to be robbed:

- If you think someone coming towards you intends to grab your purse, throw your purse away from you. This will get the purse away from your body so that you will not be hurt. It may also attract attention and the thief may change his mind and run. If your purse spills, the thief likely will not wait to pick things up.
- If you are standing when someone tries to grab your purse, sit down. This will protect you from being knocked down.
- Scream "fire" if someone grabs your purse. More people will respond to you if you yell "fire" instead of yelling for help. It may also frighten the thief away.
- If you do not need to carry a purse, leave it at home. Carry your identification card and small amounts of money in your pocket.
- Record your credit card numbers at home. Report lost or stolen credit cards to the credit card company immediately. If you think your card has been stolen, call the police as well.

Shopping

It is easy to relax your guard when you are in a familiar store or shopping centre. Remember, a thief could be looking for a chance to steal your things. It only takes a few seconds to grab an unattended purse.

- Do not leave your purse or wallet in the shopping cart, or hanging on your wheelchair or scooter.
- When paying at a store counter, be sure to keep your purse or wallet with you. Do not leave it on the counter unattended.
- Only carry as much money as you need. If you must carry a large amount of money, do not expose it needlessly. This could attract a thief.

Banking

If you go to the bank with a cheque, deposit most of it. If someone thinks you will have a lot of money with you, they may wait outside the bank to rob you. Other tips for protecting your money include:

- Get money orders or write cheques for all large amounts.
- If you receive monthly cheques, wait a day or two before cashing them.
- If possible, authorize direct deposit. Thieves know when people receive their cheques and may be waiting at the bank that day. Try to avoid falling into a routine that could tell a thief where you'll be.
- Try to use bank machines during daylight hours, not at night. If you must use a bank machine at night, it is best to use one in a store or gas station that is open 24 hours.
- If you are carrying a large amount of money, keep it in several places. Do not carry all of your money in your wallet.
- If you need to carry a lot of money over an extended time, such as during a vacation, be sure to get travelers cheques.

Valuables

A thief may want to steal something other than your money, such as your purchases or jewelry. If you have been shopping, do not carry a see-through shopping bag. Your purchases may attract a thief. If the shopping bags are thin, ask to have your purchases double-bagged. Be sure to keep packages and purses closed so the contents cannot be seen. Tuck your jewelry into your clothing or put it in a secure place before going out. If expensive jewelry is visible, someone may want to grab it.

Home Security

While no home can be made completely burglar-proof, everyone can take some simple steps to make their homes more secure.

Improving home security

- Close and lock your doors and windows, even when you are home or in the backyard. Burglars look for homes that are easy to get into.
- Trim trees and bushes that could hide burglars.
- Make your house appear lived-in, even when you aren't there.
- Make sure emergency personnel can easily see your address from the street, even at night.
- Garages are a favourite target for burglars. Keep your garage locked and put curtains on the windows so a burglar cannot look for items to steal or check if your car is inside.
- Install lights near your garage and entrances to keep the area well-lit.
- Doors and door frames should be made of solid wood or steel, which are stronger than hollow-core doors.
- Secure all outside doors with deadbolt locks that can only be unlocked with a key.
- Have a peephole viewer installed on your entrance door.
- Keep a record of what you own, including serial numbers or unique features, so it can be identified if stolen.

If your home is broken into

Signs of burglary are a broken window, an unlocked door, an open door, or something that looks, sounds or smells different or strange. If you think your house has been burglarized, leave immediately and go to a neighbour's house to call the police. Remember, the thief could still be inside and you do not want to confront him or her. If you are confronted by a criminal inside your home, do not resist. Your safety is more important than any valuables or money the thief may take.

Do not touch anything until the police have checked your house. Give the police a list of missing items and their serial numbers so they can return your property if it is found.

If you see a suspicious person outside your home, call the police. If someone enters your house while you are there, call 9-1-1. If you have to leave the telephone, do not hang up. The emergency operator will be able to hear what is happening. Take notice of the criminal's height, weight, age and the style and colour of clothing. Paying attention to these things will help you give a good description to the police. If you cannot call 9-1-1, scream or use a personal alarm to get your neighbour's attention and scare the thief.

If you are able to get out, go to your neighbour's house or a safe place in the community as quickly as possible.

Giving Police a Good Description

The police depend on descriptions given by victims and witnesses to assist them in catching criminals.

A good description includes as many physical characteristics as possible: sex, race, age, height, weight, build, complexion, hair colour, hair style, beard/mustache, eye colour, type and colour of clothing and any special features the person might have such as birth marks, scars, or tattoos.

If possible, also describe the suspect's vehicle, licence plate number and note if they have any weapons.

Visually impaired people may describe smells, sounds, textures, the sound of footsteps, or the culprit's voice, which may be helpful to police.

Automobile Safety

If you are a wheelchair user who drives, be careful in parking lots if you need extra time to enter and exit your vehicle. When possible, park in spots marked with the disabled symbol. If these spots are full, park in a well-lit area close to the building. Avoid deserted areas in parking lots. If needed, talk to owners of businesses you visit often and request that additional disabled parking spaces be established close to entrances.

You can apply for a disability placard for your vehicle at any provincial registry office. In Calgary, you may also call The City of Calgary Citizen Services at 3-1-1 to find out if you are eligible for a designated parking zone in front of your house.

Other Suggestions

Preventing Abuse

Be cautious when hiring an attendant. Conduct a thorough interview, check references, and communicate house rules to your new employee.

Remember, if you are not satisfied with the service you are receiving, you may choose to hire someone else. If you suspect that you or someone you know is a victim of abuse, sexual harassment or neglect, help is available.

For information or help, call:

Calgary Police Service: 403-266-1234 (24 hours)

Distress Centre: 403-266-1605 (24 hours)

Seniors Help Line: 403- 264-7700 (24 hours)

Fraud or High-pressure Sales

Be wary if someone offers you a special deal if you sign "right now." To avoid being talked into purchasing something you do not want or cannot afford, tell the seller you cannot make a commitment to buy that day. Do not sign anything or give a deposit or post-dated cheque. Private messages through email and social media are common in the Deaf and hard of hearing community. Be aware of sales and contest prizes offered.

Telephone Fraud

If a deal sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Be suspicious of unusual offers, free prizes for contests you have not entered, and requests for your credit card number over the telephone. Say "No" to anyone who sends you a card or calls asking for money or if someone is offering:

- Recovery of money you have lost in past swindles, which will require you to send more money.
- A free prize or travel that requires you to pay a fee for handling, or taxes or requires you to call a 1-900 number to claim a prize.

- Gemstones, foreign lottery tickets, work-at-home schemes, medicines or medical devices “doctors don’t want you to know about,” vitamins, subscriptions you have not ordered, land investments, income tax refunds or other “found money.”

How to Report a Crime

It is extremely important to always report a crime - even a crime that was attempted and did not succeed. By reporting an incident right away, you give the police a greater chance of arresting the criminal. Also, reporting crime helps the police determine areas that need extra attention.

EMERGENCY CALLS: 9-1-1

TTY/TDD Line for Emergencies: 403-233-2210

Call 9-1-1 to report:

- A crime in progress
- Violence or a threat of violence
- A traffic accident where injuries are involved
- Fire
- A medical emergency

Don't Hang Up

When calling 9-1-1, stay on the line. The operator will ask you questions about the situation. Stay calm and answer the questions. As you are talking, this information will be given to the emergency personnel who are on their way to help.

- If you have a disability and you are involved in an incident, tell the 9-1-1 operator and the police officers what your disability is.
- Others may not realize you have a disability. By explaining your disability to a police officer or others offering help, you may be able to avoid misunderstandings.
- Be sure to tell the other person if your disability may cause slurred speech, difficulty hearing or understanding questions, or difficulty remembering details.

Non-Emergency Calls: 403-266-1234

TTY/TDD Line for Non-emergency Calls: 403-296-0443

You can either call our 24-hour telephone line or visit a police district office to report non-injury accidents, suspicious activity, crimes where the criminal is no longer present, or to request information.

You may be asked to go to a police office to make a statement. District office locations are listed on the Calgary Police Service's blue page (near the front of the Telus white pages telephone book) or at www.calgarypolice.ca.

Victim Assistance

If you are a victim of a crime or trauma, contact the Victim Assistance Unit of the Calgary Police Service at 403-428-8398. They offer support, information and referral services, and will assist you through the criminal justice system.

The Hub

In support of community engagement efforts, The Hub Messaging System is a community automated notification system that delivers vital information to residents and business owners within the City of Calgary.

Users can receive messages on their landline or cell phone. Messages are prepared and delivered by the Calgary Police Service through email, voice, and text messaging. Community members can register online and choose which messages they would like to receive. Message types include information on community events, existing Amber Alerts, missing persons alerts, neighbourhood crime alerts, or crime prevention information.

For more information or to register go to www.calgarypolice.ca.

Social Media

For updates on crime or public safety concerns, you can follow the Calgary Police Service on Twitter (@calgarypolice) or Facebook (Calgary Police Service).

Vulnerable Person Self-Registry

This voluntary self-registry allows citizens of Calgary to register vital information pertaining to vulnerable family members or other persons in their care. The vulnerable person may register themselves in order to assist police in the event of an emergency or contact with police or a peace officer. Your privacy will be protected and the information you provide will only be used by first responders to help you or your loved one when you are in danger. For more information or to register, visit www.calgary.ca/disabilityvpr.

Emergency Alert ID cards

Persons with disabilities face numerous challenges on a daily basis, but in cases of emergency those challenges are amplified when emergency responders struggle to obtain information quickly to assist them in handling the incident at hand. The Emergency Alert cards are an initiative of the Calgary Police Service and disability organizations. Emergency Alert ID cards are about the size of a driver's license. They feature a photo of the person and their emergency contact information. The back of the card contains information about the individual's disability, level of communication, special considerations, behavioural concerns, safety concerns, medical conditions, type of medications and any potential side effects.

In situations where a person with a hidden disability becomes lost or confused, these cards provide important information for anyone who may find them. This includes how to reach their loved ones or emergency contacts. Hidden disabilities such as mental illness, developmental or neurological disabilities, can often be misconstrued as alcohol or drug induced impairment, limiting public assistance to the person in need.

It is very important that people requesting a card are involved with the organization that is issuing the card. Occasionally the issuing organizations may be contacted in urgent situations.

Contributors

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Association
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SABIS
Southern Alberta Brain Injury Society



**Canadian Mental
Health Association**
Calgary
Mental health for all

Quick Safety and Security Tips

- Avoid being out alone at night.
- Stay in busy, well-lit areas. Avoid dark, deserted places.
- If you are suspicious of someone, trust your instincts.
- Scream or use a personal emergency alarm to attract attention.
- Do not accept a ride from someone you've just met. Meet at a public place, not at the stranger's home.
- Wait for the bus with other people in a well-lit area.
- Carry your valuables securely. Hold your purse or use a fanny pack.
- Do not leave your wallet or purse unattended or in a bag at the back of your wheelchair. If someone demands your money, give it to the thief.
- Avoid carrying more cash than you need that day.
- Keep records of your credit card numbers in a safe location and report lost or stolen cards.
- Go to the bank or bank machine during daylight hours.
- Be wary of sales and contest prizes offered over the telephone. Remember, if something sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- If you are victim of crime, report it at once so police will have a better chance of arresting the criminal.
 - **Emergency Calls:** 9-1-1
 - **Hearing Impaired line:** 403-262-8087
 - **Non-Emergency Police Calls:** 403-266-1234
 - TEXT 9-1-1 or 3-1-1 for additional information