

February - Crime Prevention for Senior Citizens

Purpose

Persons more than 60 years of age are commonly referred to as Senior Citizens. We know that life expectancy for men and women have increased over the years. Between 1930 and 2010, life expectancy of men has gone from age 58, to age 75. At the same time, the life expectancy of women has gone from age 62, to age 83. In the United States, Senior's represent the most rapidly growing segment of the population. According to the American Crime Prevention Institute, statistically Seniors are one of the group segments least likely to become a victim of crime. Yet that same group has a greater inclination to feel concerned or afraid that they might become a crime victim. Some Seniors are targeted by criminals for specific reasons. We want to help this great generation by providing some specific information to help reduce victimization, and empower these individuals with strategies and tools for success.

Why Senior's

Seniors can become targets of unscrupulous criminals because it is perceived that their financial assets are vulnerable and sometimes abundant. Seniors are often hesitant to report their victimization to authorities or family members, and offenders know this. Some Senior's fear losing the control they once had if they report their victimization. Seniors may not be fully aware of today's technology which is often exploited to assist in the commission of crimes. Those who live alone can be drawn to individuals just for the sake of having someone to speak with. Criminals use these tactics in an effort to gain trust for dishonorable reasons.

Elder Abuse

Elder abuse is a term used to describe physical, sexual, psychological and financial abuses, or neglect, by a family member or other person known to the Senior. It can occur to Seniors who live at home, some of whom receive in-home care by a professional home health care provider. It can also occur while a senior is staying in a nursing home. Notify Law Enforcement if you suspect any abuse or neglect.

Our goal is for the prevention, detection, and intervention of Elder Abuse to sustain and even improve the quality of life for these older adults. Law Enforcement's role is to protect victims, prevent and stop abuse and exploitation, enforce the law, arrest offenders, and provide referrals to other local agencies or resources that can adequately address non-police related needs that must be met.

Door-to-Door Sales Tactics

Seniors are favorite targets of unscrupulous door-to-door salespeople. Citizens who live alone may have a difficult time knowing how to react when faced with a high-pressure door-to-door salesperson or contractor.

To avoid some of these scams, we suggest the following:

- Do not do business with door-to-door salespeople unless you verify they have a local office.
- Contractors should be able to prove they have a contractor's license, and that they are insured.
- Get references that are over a month old and contact those references to verify work quality.

- You should **never** feel pressured to have something done that day. Take the time to reflect on the idea and ask someone you trust about what they think. Carefully consider all possibilities.
- If you are told this is a "1 day only" offer, or that they have "just enough material left over to do a job for you", be very guarded. This is a common tactic used by many offenders.
- Get a 2nd opinion if you are told you need work done immediately, especially when someone else initiates the action. Your situation may not be as bad as the salesperson would like you to believe.
- Make sure agreements for services or estimates are in writing. Review it carefully.
- Verify the identity of the contractor and company and write down their license plate information and vehicle description.

If any offer appears too good to be true, it most likely is, be alert for possible fraud!

Telemarketers

Telemarketing fraud can be defined as using a telephone in a scheme to cheat someone out of their assets by deception and illegal means. This is often done by obtaining someone's personal information (birth date or social security number) or by obtaining someone's banking or financial information (account numbers, or credit card numbers). Here is what we suggest;

- Never give personal information to someone over the phone unless you initiate the call, and you know exactly the person or business you are speaking to.
- If someone tells you they want to give you something for free, then you should not have to pay for it. Scams will attempt this tactic and ask you to pay fraudulent fees or services.
- So-called "Limited Time" offers should not require an immediate decision. Do not be in a hurry.
- Ask the telemarketer to mail you their information so you can carefully consider your options.
- Tell the telemarketer that you will call them back by using your own local phone book, or prior statements, to ensure you know who you are speaking with.
- Know that many telemarketing scams originate out-of-state, and even from other countries. It is virtually impossible for local Law Enforcement to pursue criminal prosecution in these cases.

If you suspect any type of elder abuse or have any questions about a suspicious contact, please call the Glendale Police Department Crime Prevention Officer at 414-228-1753.