

Top Crime Prevention Tips from the SAPS

Property related crime accounts for the vast majority of crime reported. Help to protect your property by following these safety tips.

1. Never leave items of value unattended

Wallets, cell phones, backpacks, calculators, and laptop computers left alone in a public area make up a significant amount of theft. Always secure belongings or take them with you. If you buy luxury goods cut up the boxes and dispose of these in tied black bags.

2. Always lock your door (even when you are inside)

Most of each years' housebreaking involve entry through unlocked or open doors or windows, some into occupied houses. Close and lock doors and secure windows when you leave. Also keep doors locked and windows secure when you are in your residence, especially at night, to avoid having an intruder enter.

3. Never prop open Exterior Building Doors

Propping open building doors creates a perfect opportunity for criminals to enter residences, offices etc. undetected. Often buildings are occupied even though the building is closed and locked. Any passer by can enter through the propped door, sometimes creating a risk to the building occupants.

4. Never Publish Personal Data Online or in local Newspapers

Be aware that anything published on the Internet or in a newspaper becomes a de facto public record, including phone numbers, addresses, bank accounts, and photos. This information can be used in committing the crimes of fraud, theft, harassment or assault. Do not post your personal information online or in newspapers, or accept unsolicited emails requesting personal information.

5. Immediately report anyone trying door handles or suspicious persons entering buildings.

A significant amount of theft occurs when criminals enter unlocked doors. The criminal may walk the halls of buildings, including residences, trying door handles, or enter an occupied room, then claim to have the wrong office or house. Both of these are not normal activity. Call the police right away if you witness someone trying door handles or a stranger entering your office uninvited. Protect yourself and other around you by reporting this activity.

6. Never open the door automatically whenever the bell rings or if someone knocks.

Job seekers, beggars, and "door to door" sales representatives present a threat to the community. They come asking for work or food and try to sell items to you. This enables them to determine if you have money in your house and to peek into your house and see what valuables there are or what jewellery you are wearing.

Do not entertain such persons and do not open the door for them. Ensure that you stay out of their reach to prevent being grabbed through a closed gate.

Domestic workers, garden staff and children are often approached by robbers who act as telephone repairmen or municipality inspectors and many other jobs/professions. In an effort to gain entrance robbers use a cellphone and make as if they are talking to the owner of the house so as to put pressure on unsuspecting victims to open the gate or door. Those who may be alone on the property should be made aware of these scams.

Emphasise the need for security to your domestic workers so too ensuring their safety. Arrange with people who remain at home on how you will inform them if there is a need for them to open the house for deliveries, maintenance work or repairs. Always use the same procedure and inform the companies involved that they will not gain access unless you have made a specific arrangement.

7. Mark personal or household assets with microdots

The theft of unmarked personal items or household goods is a growing problem for the SAPS as they are easy to take and to resell and cannot be traced back to the lawful owner if recovered. By fitting assets with microdots the police will be able to trace the owner and return the stolen goods. The fitment of microdots to assets deters theft thereof as thieves know that it increases the chances of recovery and tracing the item back to them.

8. Record serial numbers and/or take photographs of your goods.

Whilst one of the advantages of datadots is that the goods can be traced back to the owner you should as a minimum record serial numbers where appropriate. A quick method is to photograph the goods. This can also be effective where the goods can be visually identified.

9. Know your neighbours and build a relationships of mutual trust and support.

It is always best to arrange with persons living in the same street as you to be ready at all times to come to the assistance of one another in dangerous or suspicious times. Exchange phone numbers or signally methods when you find yourself in distress. Your strength always lies in how many people are able to support you in an emergency. When going away inform them.

10. Install the best security you can afford.

For example security gates, burglar bars, etc. Keep the gates locked and if possible fix a door viewer and latch chain. A watchdog is a good early warning system. Keep it visible as a deterrent but beyond the reach of strangers.

11. Know your emergency numbers and immediately report any suspicious activity.

Suspicious activity often indicates that the person is about to commit a crime. Reporting activity such as persons trying door handles, soliciting products, looking into car windows, loitering around dark areas, continuously walking up and down streets of office passages, stopping to ask uncomfortable personal questions, loitering or kneeling in bike racks, trying to conceal bolt cutters, screwdrivers, slim jims, etc., or attempting to follow you into a locked door. Also report and activity that seems out of place and makes you feel uncomfortable.

12. Always check the identity of strangers.

Check the ID's of persons who visit your residence or place of business for deliveries or repairs. When employing someone request their ID and make a copy thereof for safekeeping. Check their previous employment reference and security clearances at the police.

13. Always keep your keys safe.

Do not leave keys in a hidden place for domestic staff or children. Robbers often stake out a house and will find out about these hiding places. Do not give keys to people who do not live on the property or to anyone unless absolutely necessary. Always keep your keys safe to prevent duplication thereof. Never leave your house keys under a doormat or in a pot plant. Once you have locked your door from the inside remove the key and put it in a safe place.

14. Good lighting

Make provision for good outside lighting, but switch the lights off during the day. Outside lights that are on during the day and post that is left in the gate are signs of no-one being at home. Don't leave your gates, garage, front or back door open or partially open – it serves as an invitation to burglars.

15. Keep cash and valuables in banks or safes.

16. Store your firearm in a safe.

Some specific Safety Hints for Wilderness Residents and Visitors

- Do not employ casual workers without a reference. Take photographs of all employees or of their I.D. books. It could be to your advantage to identify them if required.
- When walking in the streets, avoid displaying expensive jewelry, cameras and other valuables. Keep your cellphone out of the public eye, and your handbag closed and zipped
- Always lock the doors of your vehicle, keep the alarm activated and windows closed. Do not leave goods visible in the car. Lock them in the boot. Park your vehicle in places that are well lit at night.
- Ensure that all doors are locked at all times, and that windows are closed when you are not at home, especially during the night.
- When you go to sleep at night, make sure all the doors are locked and windows closed.
- Report suspicious-looking people and motor vehicles in your area to the station or roving van.
- When leaving your house while on vacation, report it as vacant at the police station. You should also inform your neighbours, and ask them to keep an eye out.
- **The community has a very good relationship with the SAPS. A monthly Police Forum is held on the last Monday of each month at 17:30 , Wilderness Hotel.**

Please contact the Wilderness police for further enquiries on 044-877-0011 or 082-444-4326.

The sector commander is Capt. Davids and his deputy is W.O. Boshoff.