

Refuse To Be A Victim

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Lancaster Farming Staff

READING (Berks Co.) — Do you fear being mugged?

Are you afraid your car or house might be burglarized?

Deputy Sheriff Jackie Weaknecht believes one can refuse to be a victim.

"A victim's personality plays a key role," Weaknecht said about the chances of being victimized by a criminal. "Criminals want an easy target. You stand a much better chance of preventing criminal attack if you make yourself difficult to prey upon."

In a recent presentation at the Berks County Cooperative Extension, Weaknecht wiped out preconceived ideas people have about criminals and about personal safety.

"Criminals want to blend in with the crowd, and try to gain your trust," she said. "You can't easily identify them."

Physical Security

To protect oneself, Weaknecht offered the following advice:

It's a known fact that when frightened, people's motor skills leave them, and they become all thumbs.

Jackie Weaknecht
Deputy Sheriff

- Be alert and aware of your surroundings, especially when leaving shopping malls, because criminals know you are probably carrying cash, checkbooks, credit cards, or valuable merchandise.

- Make eye contact with strangers.
- Wear shoulder bag strap across your body. Money belts are even better, but fanny bags can easily be removed.

- Don't lay down packages.
- Keep packages in front of you.
- When walking in a parking lot, have one hand free with keys out and ready.

- If you see someone who makes you feel uneasy, don't walk toward them. **Car Security**

Weaknecht recommends looking beneath your car before entering it. In some instances, criminals are known to hide beneath the car and grab the ankles of the victims.



Deputy Sheriff Jackie Weaknecht explains the importance of having a personal safety strategy in place before you need it. "You stand a much better chance of preventing criminal attack if you make yourself difficult to prey upon," she said.

- Get in the car and lock it immediately.

- Start the car. If necessary, you will be prepared to leave immediately. Weaknecht said, "It's a known fact that when frightened, people's motor skills leave them and they become all thumbs."

- Keep anything of value out of sight in a locked car. Desperate criminals are known to break inside a car when spotting loose change.

Home Security

At home do not leave a wallet or money lying in an area that can be easily spotted from a criminal looking in a window.

Recently a rash of home invasions have been happening even while the homeowner is at home. A common scam is for someone to ring the doorbell and distract the homeowner while a partner in crime enters through a rear door and grabs jewelry, money and other valuables.

- Do not open the door to a stranger. Weaknecht recommends installing a wide-angle door viewer to identify people on your doorstep.

- Never tell a stranger you are home alone. Do not broadcast your plans in public where others can overhear.

- Keep trees and shrubbery around your home well-trimmed. Overgrown bushes and trees provide excellent hiding places for criminals. Instead plant

defensive shrubbery (bushes with thorns, stiff, spiky leaves) around the home, especially beneath windows.

- Never hide a key under a mat, in a flower pot or other easily accessible place. Criminals know all the hiding places.

Phone Security

- Do not give information to strangers on the telephone.

- If you have an answering machine, do not announce your name and number as part of the message. Weaknecht explained that criminals sometimes dial numbers randomly, and may not remember which number they dialed unless repeated by the answering machine.

- Consider keeping a separate line or cellular phone as a security device. Criminals often taking a phone receiver off the hook, which renders other units on the line inoperable. A cellular phone in your bedroom is a good precaution.

- Never give important information such as credit card numbers when using a cellular phone. For less than \$100, anyone can buy scanning devices and listen in on cellular phone conversations.

Weaknecht recommends the 3-hour course, NRA Refuse to Be A Victim, which is available throughout the U.S. For information about courses in your area, call 1-800-861-1166.

Hunters, Hosts Must Keep Safety In Mind

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — When Pennsylvania deer season begins on Nov. 27, an estimated one million hunters will head for the woods. Both hunters and landowners need to keep safety in mind.

Many hunters use the property of farmers and other landowners," said Earle Robbins, Tioga County extension director for Penn State Cooperative Extension and certified hunting safety instructor. "Cooperation and mutual understanding between hunters and hosts is the key to keeping everyone involved safe and satisfied."

If hunters are guests on your property this year, make sure they are responsible and mature. "If you have any doubts about the behavior of hunters who ask to use your land, it's probably best to say no," Robbins warns. "Make sure your guests know how you expect the land to be treated and ask if they have any questions about the property or your expectations."

Check your property before letting anyone use it. "Walk around your land before the season starts and look for hazards," Robbins says. "Your

guests aren't as familiar with your land as you are, so you may see dangers they wouldn't. Warn hunters about hazards and post warning signs if needed. If you want parts of your land left alone, say so."

Hunters never should assume they have a right to hunt on property not posted with "no trespassing" signs. "Always ask permission to hunt on private property," Robbins says. "Hunting and trapping are privileges in Pennsylvania. A license does not entitle you to trespass on private lands."

If you get permission, ask the landowner about potential hazards on the property and whether any sections are off-limits. "Always obey the owner's rules and respect his or her property," Robbins says. "Behave the way you would like a guest to behave in your home."

Hunters must strictly follow Pennsylvania Game Commission rules on safety. Wear at least 250 square inches of fluorescent orange material on the head, chest and back. Camouflage fluorescent orange may satisfy this regulation if the total orange content is at least 250 square inches.

Remember that it's illegal to hunt

within 150 yards of any occupied residence, camp, industrial or commercial building, school or playground without permission. This creates a safety zone roughly the size of one and a half football fields."

Always follow basic gun safety rules. "Handle a gun as if it's loaded, even if you're positive it's not," he says. "It's an extremely bad idea to cross a fence or stream with a loaded firearm. Unload it and place it through the fence before you go over or under. Never stand a loaded gun against a tree, wall or vehicle where it could be knocked over and discharged. Unload it and place it on a flat surface instead."

Finally, Robbins advises hunters and their hosts to promote safety by reporting violations and injuries to the Pennsylvania Game Commission as soon as possible. "If you have questions about specific hunting regulations, contact the game commission." Robbins also recommends "A Digest of Pennsylvania Hunting and Trapping Regulations," published by the game commission. "It's an excellent summary of regulations and offers many safe hunting tips," he said.

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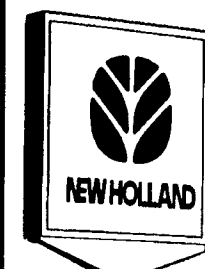
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