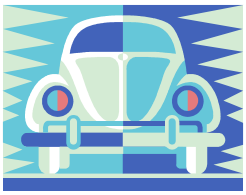
Awareness Can Be a Life-Saver

It is very important to pay attention at all times to whatever is going on around you. It takes time to get used to being aware. Some people feel they are being paranoid when they first begin practicing awareness, however, with time it will develop into a natural habit. The following are some common sense tips that can help you increase your awareness of safety considerations.

Awareness in Your Home

- Think every time before you leave your name, address or telephone number in public view or give out information regarding your daily routine.
- When you go on vacation, let a friend know when you leave and when you plan to return so someone is aware of your itinerary should you end up missing. Do not advertise your planned return home by putting a note on your door telling your whereabouts. If you will be gone more than a week, put a stop on your newspaper delivery and have your mail held at the post office.
- Use lights at all entrances, inside and out, and keep your garage well-lit. Keep garage door shut and locked at all times.
- Leave lights on in various parts of the house if you will be coming home after dark. Buy timing devices that activate lights, radios, etc.
- Do not depend on your dog for more than an alarm. If you have a prowler – the prowler is often prepared to deal with dogs.
- If you hear a prowler, turn on all outside lights and call law enforcement. Alert your neighbors.
- Keep curtains closed and shades drawn at night.
- Ask for identification of service personnel before opening the door. If you have not requested service, do not invite them in.
- Do not allow children to open the door.
- Do not allow a stranger in the house to use the telephone, regardless of the emergency. Offer to make the call for them.
- Do not depend on a chain lock on your door. Use a peephole to check on visitors while keeping the door closed. Call through the door if necessary.
- Be aware of places attackers might hide, both inside and outside of your home.
- Trim bushes and shrubbery so no one can hide in them.



Awareness in Your Car

- Check the interior of your car before getting in. Consider purchasing a small flashlight for your keychain for checking at night.
- Keep a flare and a "CALL LAW ENFORCEMENT" sign in your trunk to use in case of an emergency.
- Keep change to make telephones calls in your car.
- Keep your gas tank between half and full.
- Keep all valuables locked in the trunk.
- If your car runs out of gas or breaks down, raise the hood and remain inside with the doors locked, the windows up and use your cell phone to call for help.
- Have your keys in your hand ready to use before you go outside. Fumbling in your purse en route to the car or at the door provides a would-be assailant the opportunity to approach you.
- Park in well-lit areas near your destination.
- Always lock your car when you leave it, even if you plan to be gone only a short time.
- Avoid leaving personal objects in open view in your car.
- Be aware of anyone in the vicinity of your car in a parking lot.
- Be familiar with your own frequently traveled routes. Know the location of 24-hour businesses and of the local law enforcement departments. Vary your route home.
- Most car-jackings happen in neighborhoods, places with a high trust-level for the driver. Keep your awareness up.
- If you are being followed, drive to the nearest law enforcement station or open business. Honk your horn repeatedly to attract attention. DO NOT DRIVE HOME.
- If someone signals from another car that something is wrong with your car, drive to the nearest service station. Do not stop to check your car until the other car drives away.
- If anyone demands your car from you, cooperate. Keep the assailant informed as you move deliberately and quickly. ("Okay, let me unbuckle my seat belt." "My child is in the back seat, please let me get her out.")
- When stopping behind another car, always stop far enough away so that you can see their rear tires touching the ground. This will give you enough room to maneuver your car in an emergency.
- If you are driving someone home, wait until she has entered the house and signaled for you to leave. Before leaving the car, establish a signal for "everything is fine," and one for "I need help, call law enforcement."

– These tips courtesy of IMPACT Personal Safety of Los Angeles (800.345.KICK, 310.360.1096 and http://www.impactpersonalsafety.com/) and Prepare, Inc., of New York (800.442-7273, 212.255.0505 and http://www.prepareinc.com/).