

## Personal Protection

Many employees must park their vehicles a distance from their worksites, resulting in a walk to and from work. Walking alone, especially at nighttime, can be dangerous in even the best of locations. Good planning, vigilance and preparedness will help you protect yourself from harm.

You may already be aware of how to avoid putting yourself in a dangerous situation or how to react if you find yourself in one, but it never hurts to remind yourself of the steps to take in order to keep yourself safe.

Here are some easy steps you can take to protect yourself:

- Park your vehicle in a well-lighted area. Never park next to large vans. If you happen to find one next to your vehicle after leaving a store, especially one without any rear windows, enter your vehicle from the passenger side. It's very common for attackers to pull victims into their vans while they are trying to get into their vehicle.
- Whenever possible, avoid walking alone by using the buddy system. Keep in mind that walking late at night is more dangerous, because fewer people are around.
- Always utilize situational awareness by knowing your surroundings. Keep your head up and scan your surroundings as you walk. Keep an eye on the people in front of as well as behind you.
- Leave your headphones at home. Listening to music while you are walking distracts you from your surroundings and prevents you from hearing someone approaching you.
- Choose large streets and more populated walkways. Walking down small, deserted streets raises your risk of being robbed or assaulted.
- When walking, keep away from large bushes or doorways where someone could be lurking. Always walk near the curb, and avoid the use of short cuts.
- If you think you are being followed, head to an open store, restaurant, lighted home, or approach any other individuals who happen to be walking in the area.
- Walk with confidence and project an attitude of calm and purpose. Walkers who look like they know where they are going are less likely targets.
- Act on your gut feelings. If someone gives you a bad feeling, tell them clearly to leave you alone, and walk away.
- If someone in a vehicle stops and asks for directions, give directions from a distance. Do not approach a vehicle which has stopped to ask you directions.
- Carry your vehicle keys in your hand as you walk. Having your keys ready when you reach your vehicle means you get in more quickly, and a key clutched between your fingers can be a weapon, if needed.
- When approaching your vehicle look under, in between and inside before entering it. Immediately lock your vehicle doors and windows once you are inside. Don't waste time checking your packages, adjusting the radio, or making phone calls in your car; leave as soon as you lock your doors.
- Always keep the doors of your vehicle locked while driving. Many attackers enter a vehicle with a drawn weapon while they are at a stoplight.