

Developing a Personal and Home Protection Plan

At its most basic level, a personal protection plan is designed to help keep us physically, legally, financially, and morally safe. Our ultimate goal should be to avoid violent encounters in the first place by developing an acute awareness of our surroundings, and by making intelligent decisions about our actions, behavior and precautions.

“The only guaranteed method of surviving a violent encounter, is to avoid it in the first place” – says Santiago Cuellar, Firearms Instructor and Silver Lakes Resident.

1. Be Aware of your surroundings

“We must be what the industry calls condition Yellow, whenever we leave our homes” – says Cuellar.

In Condition Yellow an individual is aware of their surroundings, and is not distracting themselves with any electronic device or other distraction. They not only observe the area to their front, but also swivels their head to look to their sides and directly behind them. And they make momentary eye contact with anyone within their “danger zone.” Their posture, eyes, and demeanor say, “I am alert” or “I see you”.

2. Avoid dark areas and blind spots

Criminals count on an easy escape with no witnesses! Sticking with the crowds is one of your best methods of avoiding violent crime. Regardless of how convenient a shortcut might seem, or however safe you might feel heading to your car late at night all alone, that’s the kind of behavior that criminals count on to find easy victims.

When approaching blind spots at the corners of buildings or when approaching trees, tall bushes, concrete pillars, or vehicles, give them a wide berth. Turn to observe the hidden area as you approach. Plan routes through well-lit areas rather than routes with little or no light.

3. Tips for Personal and Home Protection

Personal Security

- There is safety in numbers. When in public, travel with a companion.
- Move faster than the crowd and be a people watcher.
- Always be in condition yellow.
- Never go to a stranger’s house alone and never allow a stranger into your house when you’re alone.

- When dining out, don't take a seat with your back to the door and know where the exits are. At the first sign of trouble, leave the area.

Automobile Security

- Keep valuables out of sight and do not leave paperwork in your car with your home address.
- Note where you parked your vehicle and be observant of the immediate area when entering or exiting your vehicle.
- Be especially observant when loading the car or buckling in children.
- Lock your vehicle immediately upon entering.
- Leave room to maneuver when you come to a stop.
- Be a courteous driver—allow other drivers to merge, don't tailgate, keep off the horn, and keep any negative gestures to yourself.
- If you are involved in a fender bender, call the police and stay in your vehicle until you can evaluate the situation.

Home Security

- Keep doors locked and the garage door closed, even when at home.
- Have ample exterior lighting—don't be the only house on the block with the lights out.
- Leave an interior light on a timer.
- Use good quality door locks and add a deadbolt and/or a hotel type "throw over" lock to both front and back doors.
- Get an alarm system and set it religiously, especially when at home.
- Keep driveway clear of newspapers, etc... especially when home.
- Consider getting a dog. Not an attack dog, just a dog that will bark at the first sign of an intruder.

Phone Security

- Use caller ID and don't answer calls from unknown numbers.
- DO NOT give out personal information, such as whether you live alone, whether you have a security system, etc.
- Keep a cell phone in your bedroom so that you can call 911, even if your home phone becomes disabled.

“Most violent crimes can be avoided by using some on the tips above. Our communities will be safer when we become less attractive to criminals, by refusing to be victims to crime” says Cuellar.

Santiago and Jael Cuellar are residents of Silver Lakes as well as Firearms Instructors, and owners of Godspeed Firearms School. They are willing to offer Silver Lakes Residents Home Defense training at a special Silver Lakes rate. For more information on how to obtain training feel free to visit their website at www.godspeedfs.com or call them at Call (754) 444-6007.