



**Neighbourhood Watch**

Let's watch out for each other

**merrifield**

**MAB GPC**



# Community Safety Guide

Your handy guide to home security and crime prevention



# Home security - living safely



Your home is where you should always feel safe and secure. There are some simple ways to reduce the chance of crime and intrusion by an unwelcome stranger.

## Houses and homes

- Lock all windows and doors when leaving the house, even while outside gardening.
- All external doors should be fitted with deadlocks and have peep-holes to identify visitors.
- Install a security screen door and always have it locked.
- All windows should lock with a key or have security grilles.
- Keep a spare key with a trusted neighbour, not hidden somewhere near the house.

## Fences and gardens

- Make sure fences do not provide a hiding place for burglars. Trim trees and shrubs around windows as well.
- Maintain your garden so your house looks lived-in.
- Make sure all side gates are locked with a strong padlock.
- Install sensor lights to illuminate the grounds around your house and your front door.

## Dogs

- A dog can be a deterrent for burglars. Place a "Beware of Dog" sign on your fence or gate.
- Your dog should be kept secure behind gates and fencing.

## Garages and sheds

- Lock your garage and shed to prevent the theft of tools, which could be used to break into your house.
- Padlock larger objects, such as ladders, to a solid object.

## Marking valuables

- Engrave all valuable property with a personal identification number. Use the letter V as a prefix, followed by your Drivers Licence Number. For more delicate items use an Ultra Violet pen.
- Items which cannot be marked, such as jewellery and antiques, should be photographed. Place a ruler next to them to indicate their size.

- Record details such as serial numbers, make and model of all items of value.

## Going on Holidays

- Have the post office hold your mail for the duration of your holiday. Cancel any newspaper deliveries. Ask a friend or neighbour to clear junk mail from your letter box.
- If you are going for an extended period of time, have a trusted friend or neighbour mow your lawns and take your bin out and back in again.
- Install a timer to turn on lamps and a radio or television, to make it seem someone is home.
- Close all curtains so no one can see into your house.
- Lodge an Absence from Residence form with your local Police Station.



# Neighbourhood disputes



We all want to live in a safe and welcoming community. However there can be issues which cause neighbourhood disputes.

## These include:

- Noise
- Large parties
- Animal and pet behaviour
- People's behaviour
- Parking of vehicles
- Trees and gardens
- Bordering fences
- Invasion of privacy

If excessive noise or unruly behaviour is causing you concern for your safety or the safety of your neighbourhood, contact your local police station.

The police will consider the circumstances and use their discretion to enforce the law. They can direct the person or persons causing the offence to take necessary action to stop causing the disturbance. This direction remains in force for 12 hours.

## How to prevent neighbourhood disputes

- Get to know your neighbours. Say hello and introduce yourself.
- Consult with your neighbours before

doing anything which may impact on them and their quality of life.

- Listen to your neighbour's concerns and consider them seriously.
- When a person feels they have been listened to and understood, problems are often easier to work through and resolve.

## Resolving disputes

### Step 1 - Have a discussion

- Approach your neighbour in a casual, non-threatening way.
- Calmly present your views and try to understand theirs.
- Clarify the issues of concern.
- Consider appropriate solutions.
- Reach a mutually acceptable and workable agreement between you.

### Step 2 - Try Mediation

- If all parties agree, you can come together with a trained professional mediator. They will be impartial and will use skills and techniques to bring about a satisfactory solution.

- Contact a professional mediator to establish whether they are able to assist in resolving the dispute.

### Step 3 - Legal Action

- Taking legal action to resolve a dispute is a serious and possibly expensive decision to make. Consult a legal practitioner for advice and guidance before proceeding.

## Holding safe parties

1. Register your party with the Police. The more information you give them, the better they can help you if required.
2. Download a Party Safe Kit from [www.police.vic.gov.au](http://www.police.vic.gov.au)
3. Politely inform your neighbours of the date the party will be held.
4. Have a guest list so you know who is invited, to prevent gate crashers.
5. It is illegal to serve alcohol, in your home, to people under the age of 18 unless you have the permission of their parent.



# Fraud, identity theft and e-crime



Identity theft is a type of fraud where a person steals money or goods by pretending to be somebody else. Having your identity stolen and used this way can be both financially and emotionally devastating.

## Credit card fraud

- Keep credit cards and debit cards secure. If you have more than one card, never carry all cards with you. Never keep PINs with the cards.
- At ATM or EFTPOS locations, always shield the keyboard with your hands when typing your PIN.
- Try to use the same ATM each time so you may notice changes in the appearance of the machine.
- Never let your card be taken out of your sight to process a transaction, such as at restaurants.
- Check your statements regularly to make sure there is no unusual activity.
- Immediately report lost or stolen cards to your bank.

## Cheque fraud

- Write business and personal cheques yourself. Always make them payable to a particular business or individual and not to cash.
- Keep your cheque book under lock and key.

## Identity theft

- Secure all personal information at home in a lockable filing cabinet or in a safe. Remove all personal documents such as utility bills and registration papers, from your car.
- Ensure you have a lockable letterbox. Only post mail at secure locations and official post boxes.
- Make sure your mail box is large enough to accept your normal amount of mail.
- If you are going away, have your mail held at the post office for the duration.
- Follow up on all bills which do not arrive on time.
- Make sure you know who you are dealing with when handing over personal information. Check the identification of door knockers.
- Destroy all personal information before putting bills and bank records in the bin by using a paper shredder.

## E-crime

- If you do not recognise the sender of an email, treat it as spam. Do not run or open any files contained within the email.
- Banks NEVER ask you for your login and password details via email. Never answer these emails.
- Secure your computer with firewall software and up to date virus protection software.
- With internet banking, change your passwords regularly, or obtain an online banking key from your bank.
- Check your account regularly for unusual transactions. Report these immediately to your bank.
- Use passwords on all your accounts. Do not use obvious words such as the name of a child or pet. Include numbers, CAPITAL LETTERS and ASCII symbols such as -&^%\$#.
- Keep a list of your passwords on a device NOT connected to your computer.
- Do not share passwords and identification numbers with anyone online.
- Only shop online with reputable companies with secure payment systems such as Paypal.



# Pedestrian and passenger safety



There are many ways you can increase your personal safety when walking, using public transport, taxis, or riding in cars with your friends.

## Safety using public transport

- Whenever possible, travel in a group or sit in the company of others if travelling on your own.
- At night, sit as close to the driver as possible.
- If you are harassed or insulted, complain loudly and draw attention to yourself. Advise fellow passengers of the situation
- Check the timetable in advance to avoid long waits for transport, especially at night. If you are continuing your journey by car, leave your car as close to the station or stop as possible.

## Pedestrian safety

- Plan your route before heading out and be observant while you are walking.
- Walk close to the kerb, on the footpath, facing oncoming traffic.
- Carry a mobile phone with you at all times.
- If wearing headphones or earbuds for an ipod or other music player, do not have the music too loud. Always be able to hear surrounding traffic.
- Tell someone where you are going, or if possible, walk with a friend.

- Always try to cross roads at pedestrian crossings or traffic lights.
- If you are walking with a bag use one with shoulder straps and carry it in front of you.
- Carry credit cards and your drivers licence separate from cash.
- Avoid isolated areas and short cuts if they are not well lit.
- Carry a noise maker, whistle or personal alarm.
- If you are given a lift home, make sure it is with someone you know. Ask the driver to wait until you have gone inside.

## Passenger safety in a taxi

- Book a taxi in advance rather than catching it at a rank or flagging one down
- If you must use a taxi rank, try to use one with a Rank Marshal.
- If travelling alone always sit on the left hand side in the rear of the taxi.
- Check the driver's identification and write down or try to remember the name and number.
- Give clear directions to your destination and always be aware of your surroundings.

- If you are not travelling on the agreed route, end your journey as soon as it is safe to do so and get out.
- If you feel unsafe, change your destination to the nearest safe place such as a well-lit convenience store, and end your trip. Contact the police.

## Passenger safety with your friends

- Check to see that the driver of the vehicle is licensed to drive.
- Make sure they have not been drinking alcohol or taking illegal drugs before you begin your journey.
- Do not distract the driver during the journey.
- Always wear your seatbelt. On the spot fines apply.
- Keep all arms and legs inside the vehicle.
- Do not carry more passengers than are legally allowed in the vehicle.
- Do not ride in the boot of the vehicle.
- If you are a passenger in a car with friends, make sure that the driver is licensed to drive and not affected by alcohol or drugs.



# Personal safety when driving



Cars are essential for many people. They can make your life easier but they can also be dangerous. Here are some car safety tips for when you are driving, and when you are outside your car.

## Before you start

- Make sure your car is roadworthy.
- Practise the RACV's **"POWER"** check – **P**etrol, **O**il, **W**ater, **E**lectrics and **R**ubbers (tyres) once a week.
- Learn how to change a tyre; know where your spare tyre and tools are located.
- Know your route and always carry a map.
- Carry a small torch in the car for emergencies.
- Make sure your mobile phone is fully charged before you leave.

## During the journey

- Always obey the road rules.
- Never pick up a hitch-hiker.
- When driving alone, keep all doors locked and windows closed.
- Keep your personal belongings hidden and off the passenger seat.
- If you are in an unfamiliar place, try to remember landmarks and street names around you.
- If you think you are being followed, drive to your nearest police station, petrol station or well-lit convenience store. Contact the Police.
- Be courteous on the road and forgiving of other drivers' mistakes.

- Be aware of the needs of other road users such as large trucks, cyclists and pedestrians.
- If you are involved in a road rage incident do not stop and do not get out of your car. Get the registration number of the other vehicle and report it to the police.

## Parking your car

- When parking your car use a well-lit and easily visible area where other people will be around when you return to your car.
- Always lock your car, even if you are away only for a moment.
- Never leave your valuables or small change visible when you park your car.

## Returning to your car

- If it is dark, or you are unfamiliar with the area, ask a friend to accompany you.
- Have your car keys handy for a quick entry.
- Check your back seat before getting into your car.
- Avoid onlookers when putting goods into your boot.

## Breaking down

- Think before you act. Has your car broken down in a safe position? Are you able to direct roadside assistance to your vehicle?

- Try and park your vehicle on the hard shoulder, or emergency lane.
- Put your hazard lights on.
- If in a busy location, safely exit the vehicle.
- Phone for help and wait for it to arrive.

## If you have a collision

- If a person is injured or the vehicles are in a hazardous location, phone **000** and ask for assistance.
- Any collision involving injury, damage to property where the owner is not present or a hit and run **MUST** be reported to the police.
- If it is a small collision with no injury to people or property, make sure you exchange contact and registration details and report the incident to your insurance company as soon as possible.





# Domestic/family violence



Violence Is Not Acceptable. No one should have to put up with it. No one should ever feel afraid or hurt in their own home. Violence in the home is a crime.

## Violence includes:

### Physical Violence

- Being punched or kicked.
- Having your belongings stolen or damaged by force.
- Sexual abuse and assault.
- It also includes cruelty and harm to family pets.

### Emotional Violence

- Making threats or blackmail against you or your family.
- Speaking to you in a way which is intimidating and/or frightening.
- Bullying behaviour, putting you down and degrading you.
- Stalking and making continuous unwanted approaches.

### Economic Violence

- A person controlling your money and keeping you financially dependant upon them.
- Demanding money from you in a threatening manner.
- Lending you money and then enforcing difficult repayments.

### Social Violence

- Insulting or teasing you in front of others – public bullying.
- Isolating you from family and friends.
- Controlling what you can do, what you can say, and what you can wear.

## Sexual Violence

- Coercing you to participate in sexual acts against your will, or when you do not wish to.

## What to do if you are experiencing violence

- **Call 000 and request immediate police assistance.**
- Report all cases of violence and abuse to the police. They can apply for an intervention order on your behalf.
- Contact one of the support services listed in the “**What to do if...**” section at the back of this booklet.

## Stop being violent

If you use violence at home and are hurting those around you who you love, you need to recognise the signs of violence, and how you can help yourself.

### Ask yourself:

- Who is affected by my violent behaviour?
- Does my behaviour hurt anyone physically or emotionally?
- Do you want safe and secure relationships with people, or do you want those you love pushed away and afraid of you?
- What do I need to do to keep my family safe from violence?
- Is there anything I should avoid so that I stay in control and do not become abusive?

## Talk to someone:

- Stopping violent behaviour is not always easy. Having someone to help and support you is a good idea.
- You do not have to do this by yourself. Counsellors and youth workers can be very helpful in finding ways to help you overcome violent behaviour.
- Look in the “**What to do if...**” section at the back of this booklet for contact details of those who can help, in your area.

## Family violence hurts the kids as well

- It is **AGAINST THE LAW** for children to be hit, see violence or hear violence in the family home
- Children and young people are scared by family violence. They have the right to feel safe and secure in their own home and not live in fear
- Exposure to violence in the home can lead to violent behaviour in a child's own life, at school and in their social life and can cause long-term harm to a child and their development.

*If you do not feel safe at home, there are many services to help you. See the phone numbers in the “**What to do if...**” section at the back of this booklet.*



# What to do if...



Do you know what to do in an emergency?  
If you witness an incident who do you call?  
What should you do? Above all else, you must try to remain calm.  
You can think and act better if you are calm and aware of your surroundings.

## Burglary

- If you suspect the burglar is still inside DO NOT enter the premises.
- Call 000 and await the arrival of the police at a distance, where any intruders will not be able to see you.
- If you are sure the burglar(s) have left, call Victoria Police 000 or Crimestoppers 1800 333 000 and report the incident.
- DO NOT TOUCH anything the offenders may have touched as they may have left fingerprints.

## Fraud

### Identity Theft

- Report the matter to Victoria Police **000**.
- Contact VicRoads, your bank and credit card providers.

### Credit Card Fraud

- Contact your bank immediately to cancel all cards so they cannot be used.
- You may be asked to report this theft to the police.

## Personal safety

- If you are on the street, or in a public place, and feel your personal safety is at risk, seek assistance from bystanders and/or call police on 000.
- Wait for police in a public location with high visibility.
- If you are in a place of residence and feel your personal safety is at risk call the police on 000 immediately.
- Lock all doors and windows and do not let anyone in.
- If you are involved in a road rage incident do not stop your vehicle. Do not get out of your vehicle. Get the registration plate number of the other vehicle and report it to police.
- If you are followed by the other vehicle DO NOT drive home. Drive to a police station or service station where you can get help and attract attention.
- Your vehicle provides you with some protection. DO not get out of your vehicle if you do not feel safe.

## Family & domestic violence

- **Call 000 if you need immediate police assistance**
- Go to your local police station and report any incidents
- Important support services for Domestic Violence:
  - Safe Steps: **9928 9600** or **1800 015 188** (toll free)
  - Intouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence: **9413 6500**
  - Victim's Support Agency: **1800 819 817**
  - Kids help Line: **1800 55 1800**
  - Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault National Helpline: **1800 737 732**
  - Men's Referral Service: **1300 766 491**
  - Federation of Community Legal Centres: **9652 1500**
  - Women's Legal Service: **8622 0600** or **1800 133 302**

## Neighbourhood disputes

- To obtain information on mediation of disputes, contact the Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria: **8803 8533**

# Important local contact numbers

- The Northern Hospital: **8405 8000**
- Nurse on Call: **1300 60 60 24**
- Craigieburn Police Station: **9303 4433**
- Craigieburn SES: **9256 9700**
- Kalkallo CFA: **8746 1400**

My local police station: \_\_\_\_\_

My Local GP: Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Ring **000** for all genuine emergencies requiring immediate attendance by police, ambulance or fire brigade.

**For more hints and tips to prevent crime  
when home or away, visit [www.nhw.com.au](http://www.nhw.com.au)**

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