

Solutions

FOR PEOPLE IN THE WORKPLACE

Safety Series II

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As we continue our topic of **Personal Safety**, we will address issues of safety while exercising, safety at work, safety while socializing, and scams and frauds.

January often brings new resolutions and one often chosen is exercising. Some things to remember to keep yourself safe.

- Of course if you are just starting an exercise program, you should check with your physician to make sure you are physically able to start your exercise routine.
- If you decide to walk or jog, research the safest areas ahead of time. If it is on the street be sure to dress appropriately wearing bright clothes and reflectors so cars can see you. Use the sidewalk if possible. Twilight and inclement weather are not the best times to walk or run on the street.
- Before you start out make sure someone knows what route you are taking and about how long you will be.
- Have identification on you and don't wear jewelry or carry cash.
- Exercise in familiar areas. If you are traveling, check with the hotel about safe routes or better yet use the treadmill in the hotel exercise area.
- If possible, walk or run with a partner or a dog.
- Vary your route and consider carrying a cell phone.
- Don't wear headsets. You cannot hear approaching danger. This can also add to your "zoning out" making you less alert to your surroundings and making you vulnerable to attack.
- If you cannot find a safe place to walk or run in your area look into joining a health club or your local Y.
- **TRUST YOUR INTUITION.** If you feel something is not right act on it. Get yourself to a populated area, a store, a well-lit area or a house with lights on.
- **USE COMMON SENSE.** If you are unfamiliar with the area don't walk or run by yourself in the dark. Do not choose a busy street with no sidewalks to get your exercise in before



that big meeting. Do not use the local park if you are not familiar with the running trails or dangerous areas.

Personal Safety at Work

Just as we think we are safe at home, many of us believe we are safe at work and for the most part we are. We have to participate in protecting our safety and the following are some areas we may not think about, but are important to maintain a safe environment.



- Keep personal valuables and confidential information locked up.
- If you see a stranger in your area ask for identification and report people you observe in an area they have no need to be.
- Make sure your co-workers know where you are.
- If you have to work alone do all you can to make it a safe experience.
- Report dark areas or things like lights out where you may feel unsafe (stairwells, hallways, seldom used rooms, etc.)
- If you leave work late at night or arrive early in the morning and there are not many people around, contact security or ask another co-worker to buddy up when walking to your car.
- Park as close to your workplace as possible when coming or going at these odd times.
- Remove employee identification when leaving your workplace.
- Report inappropriate or worrisome behavior in coworkers
- Harassment in the workplace is behavior that intimidates, offends, degrades or humiliates people in the workplace. It is not appropriate and should not be tolerated. This behavior creates a hostile environment.
- Gossip and bullying also add to the creation of a hostile work environment, do not participate, tolerate or accept the behavior.

While Socializing

You and a few of your co-workers decide to go out after work for a few drinks and dinner. There are some things to remember when leaving the restaurant. If you meet someone while at the restaurant do not invite them home with you and do not accept a ride with them. **Be aware of**



your surroundings; be alert to anyone who may be following you. Have your keys ready to open the door to your car. If you realize that someone is following you on your way home use your cell phone to call for help or drive to a public place. Never go home, this will alert the other person where you live. Personal ads and meeting people on the internet is an increasingly popular way to meet people. If you agree to meet someone via one of these ways remember some basic rules. Meet the person in a public place; make sure someone knows you are meeting this person. Or better yet ask a friend to come along with you. Do not give out personal information. Someone who has mayhem on their mind can find out a lot with little information. Gather as much information about the other person as you can. If you feel uncomfortable about anything you learn heed the warning! Drinking on the first meeting is not a good idea. Alcohol lowers your inhibitions and decreases your alertness. If you meet someone in a bar be wary of accepting a drink from them. Adding something to your drink is too easy to do. If the person is pressuring you into actions you are not ready for be suspect. Always have a way to get out of a situation. Most people who have had a bad experience while dating say they had a bad feeling somewhere in the beginning of the relationship and chose to ignore those feelings. **TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS AND USE COMMON SENSE** – they are your best allies in these situations.

Scams & Frauds

Scams and Frauds have been around for a long time but with the internet the opportunities for scammers has increased substantially.

Some of the scams popular these days are:

1. “PHISHING” These are messages that may appear in your email from the “system administrator” of major internet sites and financial institutions telling you to perform some urgent maintenance on your account. Be very careful in responding this is how the scammer gets your information and is off and running with your money or worse.
2. “Nigerian Email Scam” This is a message sent to you requesting your help in their getting a lot of money out of their country. They will pay you a few million for your “good Samaritan deed”. You deposit the money into an account and when they get their money out they will pay you. If someone emails you asking for money and it is not a legitimate charity it is probably a scam. Delete it without responding.



3. “You Won a Prize Scam” Recently an ad appeared on TV with a gentleman sitting at the computer and he shouts to his wife that he just won the “Australian Lottery”. Her response is did you buy a ticket? And his answer is no. If you get a call or email telling you won a big prize but they need some personal information, you can guess it is a scam. If you won the prize and didn’t enter the contest they must have all the information they need to send you the prize – right? Wrong! That is how they get your information.
4. “Make millions in Weeks” (stuffing envelopes, buying foreclosures, etc.). You can make \$10,000. The first week! Nothing is that easy, people make money with hard work and whether it is stuffing envelopes or flipping houses it is hard work. The people making money are the ones selling you the idea. They are called pyramid schemes and many are illegal.

There are many other scams and frauds out there and the one thing to remember is “**If it sounds too good to be true it probably is.**” Be very careful when dealing with people contacting you without your inquiry and do not give out any information unless you are sure of whom you are talking to. If you think you have gotten involved with a scam or fraud latent interaction you can contact one of the following resources:

- FTC toll free hotline: 877-FTC-HELP (877-382-4357)
- Internet Fraud Complaint Center (www.ic3.gov/)
- The non-emergency number for your local police department
- FTC online complaint form (www.ftc.gov)

**Call Solutions EAP at 1-800-526-3485 for assistance for all of life's challenges.
It's free, confidential and open to your family members.
Check us out on-line at www.solutions-eap.com**