



**CHIEF GARY HICKEN** PRESENTED BY THE SARATOGA SPRINGS POLICE DEPARTMENT  
 www.saratoga-springs.net 1307 N. COMMERCE DRIVE SUITE 120 SARATOGA SPRINGS, UT 84045 (801) 766-6503

**Stranger Danger – Strategies for Educating Our Young People About Dangers**

**January 2010**

Are strangers *really* dangerous? The reality is that most aren't and most every person you and your child come in contact with is a good, law-abiding member of the community. Unfortunately, the facts also tell us that some strangers are bad and do commit crimes.



As an adult you may be able to detect that a particular person is suspicious and someone to stay away from. For children it is more difficult to differentiate between the "good" and "bad" people. This comes from their first few years of life as they learn to treat adults with respect and to do as instructed by adults. The adults who commit crimes against children know this all too well and use it to their advantage.

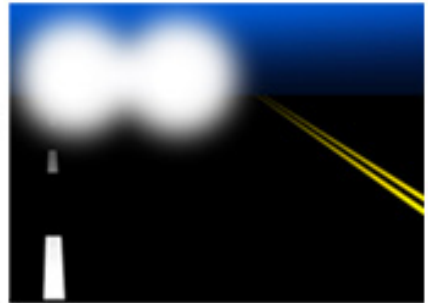
While we don't want to "scare" our children needlessly, we do need to give them the tools to have a safety mindset and leave a little decision making up to them. To start with, they should have a general understanding that they are not to interact with strangers unless their parent or guardian is there and lets them know it's ok. They must also understand that in those special circumstances it is appropriate (and ok with you) to ignore and walk away from an adult.

Children need to know that in some cases they need to "run" away from the danger or the suspicious person and in some of the most dire situations they may need to take physical action to get away or at least yell and scream for help to gain the attention of others.

We need to be honest with them and teach them that sometimes "bad" people tell very believable stories and other things to make them believe they are o.k. Communication is power, especially among children and their parents so they must feel comfortable reporting to you or other trusted adults when something has happened or they have had a stranger encounter.

**Someone's Following Me! Now What**

Fortunately, we see it a lot more in the movies than in real life, but for some there are times where the "movies" come to life. Imagine driving late at night and you see a set of distinctive headlights right behind you. You feel nervous so you take a right turn, then a left turn and another right. The same headlights are still behind you; now what?



In many cases, these types of suspicious circumstances turn out to be someone you know, but in rare cases it's not. Sometimes it's a form of "road rage" where a driver feels offended because of a driving maneuver that you've made and they feel the way to intimidate you or drive home their point (no pun intended!) is to follow you and make you nervous.

Don't stop! In the event it is someone you don't know, make sure that you don't stop to talk with them. Go to the nearest law enforcement station or other emergency services facility (i.e. fire station). If you are unable to find a public safety facility or you feel the situation is getting very suspicious, call 9-1-1 from your cell phone or better yet, call the local law enforcement agency direct.

local law enforcement agency direct.

Don't go home! In the event the person following you isn't an acquaintance, don't show them where you live by going home. If you can't find an emergency services facility and you don't have a cell phone with you, go to the most public place possible (i.e. shopping mall), park your vehicle and go into a business and ask to use their phone.

## **HOME SECURITY 101** Inspection Time!

*An Expanded Home Security 101 Edition...for the New Year!*

The holidays have wound down, the boxes have hopefully been put away and now it's time to decompress! With the busyness of December behind us, now is the perfect time (and a great start to the new year) to check the security of your home. The following is a *quick check* do-it-yourself home security inspection that will help you keep your home safe and secure in 2010.



**Start with the outside of your home.** Keep in mind that this isn't only relevant to single-family homes – these tips are relevant to all housing types.

- Lighting** – Is there sufficient lighting to illuminate your front door area, parking areas, walkways and backyard? Are all of your lights in working order and are they in a position that prevents them from being tampered with?

- Tip: motion detectors are great for deterring criminals and alerting you that someone is in a particular area.

- Shrubs** – Are your shrubs and foliage trimmed to prevent places of concealment and allow for visibility of your doors and windows from the street?
- House Numbers** – Are they clearly visible from the street at night and during the day?
- Fences and Gates** – do you have appropriate fencing (and is it secured) to prevent persons from accessing areas of your yard that you don't want someone in?
- Second Story Access** – Just because a door or window is above the first floor doesn't mean a burglar can't access it! Make sure those doors and windows are locked and secured and that there are no easily accessible items for getting burglars up to those access points (i.e. ladders, garbage cans to stand on, trellis work, etc.).

**Now it's time to move inside.** Begin at your front door and progress throughout your home.

- Exterior Doors** – Are the doors solid (not hollow), do you have a "peep" hole that allows you to see outside in each direction and is your door equipped with a deadbolt lock?

- Tip: Deadbolt locks are an important component of door security, but what makes them most secure is the condition of the strike plate (the opening that the bolt goes into). Make sure that the bolt fully goes in and that the screws holding the strike plate are long enough to go completely through the trim and *into* the wall stud.  
- More Tips: Double doors should be secured with one door being "stationary" by using slide bolts on the top and bottom, and the free-swinging door equipped with a deadbolt.

- Windows** – Check each window and confirm that they close and lock securely. If not, replace the locks or add additional locking devices.

- Tip: Sliding glass windows can in some cases be lifted out of the track – be sure to check and make sure that they can't be "lifted" out. A good corrective measure is to open the window, put a sheet metal screw straight up in the track and don't screw it in all the way. This takes up the gap between the sliding window and the top track, which prevents the window from being lifted up and out.

- Sliding glass doors** – Check that they securely lock and are not subject to being lifted out of their track (see "windows" tips above).

- Interior lights** – Do you have at least one light on a timer that will come on when you are not home during your "normal" hours of activity?
- Home Inventory** – Make sure that you note everything of value: make, model, serial number, location in the home and if possible a photo.

For the items you found that don't quite meet the security needs of your home and your family, be sure to address as soon as possible. A secure home is a deterrent to burglars!

### Do you have their number?

Program into your cellular phone the direct telephone number of the police and sheriff's departments of the cities you frequent. While 9-1-1 from your cell phone will work in an emergency, it depends on your location what agency will answer the call and they may need to transfer it if they aren't the right agency for your location. Having the direct emergency number for the cities you travel in will help expedite emergency services!

### Kids and Restrooms



That feeling of dread... Mom is out with her son for the day and he makes the expected request; "I need to go to the bathroom!" The problem may be that the child is just old enough that it isn't appropriate to take them into their restroom of the opposite sex.

While in most every case restrooms are safe, there is always the lingering safety issue because you just don't know who may be inside and what their motives are. To tackle the bathroom issue, here are a couple of quick tips:

- ✓ Talk with your children about safety in the bathrooms. Encourage them to use the stalls and lock the stall door behind them. If they don't feel comfortable with a person in the bathroom they should immediately exit.
- ✓ Let your child and those inside the restroom know that you are there. As they walk in, talk in a loud voice indicating that you will be at the door waiting for them. You can also talk to them from the door by reassuring them that you are there and asking them if they are ok. This will make them feel safer and let any would-be criminal know that mom or dad is right outside!

---

Happy New Year! Make a New Year's resolution to check the [Monthly 2DO List](#) each month and take the moment or two needed to follow our safety tips to a safe and happy 2010!

### The Monthly 2do List



### Check Those Messages... *outgoing messages!*



Your answering machine or voicemail can tell a lot more about you than you may have thought. The key to your answering machine out-going message is simple...keep it simple! A message indicating that you are on a trip and out of town provides just the information a would-be thief is looking for.

Likewise, if you don't want unknown callers to know that you have a child in the house don't use them in your outgoing message. Keeping a simple message that leaves the caller thinking you *may* be home and just not picking up the phone is your best bet!



**THE CRIME PREVENTION CONNECTION  
SERVICE TO UTAH POLICE DEPARTMENTS  
IS THROUGH A GRANT PROVIDED TO THE  
UCOPA BY THE UTAH COMMISSION ON  
CRIMINAL AND JUVENILE JUSTICE.**

