

## **STUDENTS SURVIVAL GUIDE**

### **Safety in the home**

If you live in an inner city area, your chances of being burgled are higher. Areas that have a high percentage of student let properties are well known, as is the fact that students own high value portable items that can be sold on quickly. As students often have/take no control over the security of their homes, they can become a prime target.

### **What preventative measures can you take?**

- Make sure that all external doors are solid and a security chain is fitted.
- Glass panels are especially vulnerable. Glass on external doors should be wired.
- Any vulnerable windows should be fitted with window locks.
- If there are sash windows in the property, then a block can be fitted so that the windows can only be opened a few inches.
- Talk to the other members of the house and club together to purchase other preventative items. i.e. a light timer switch (limited number available free of charge from Advice and Support Centre), a security light, spy hole, door chain or a burglar alarm box (but ask your landlord before making any alterations).

### **REMEMBER**

Thieves will look for portable, high value, easily saleable goods like TV's, videos, Hi-fi's, computers, lap-tops, games consoles, jewellery etc. It is worth you marking all possible items with your postcode and house number. Be sure to back up all your files/photos/music (as it's those you'll miss most if your computer gets stolen – and they are irreplaceable!)

It is also very useful to keep a list of such items and serial numbers, as this will not only be useful for identification but also for your insurance company should you need to make a claim. Take photographs of all your valuable items, keeping receipts of purchase/operation manuals etc. in case of having to make an insurance claim.

Landlords have recently suffered from increased insurance costs, so it should be within their interest to improve the security of their properties. Talk to your landlord and suggest a few ideas, at the end of the day it is not just your possessions being protected it is the items they have supplied and their property.

As a final reminder, do not forget to insure your personal possessions, the landlords policy will not cover your possessions. If you are going away for a certain amount of time, check with your insurance company to see how long you are covered for. The best advice is to take any valuable items with you, leaving your possessions in an empty house is an invitation for burglars.

If you are going out in the evening, try to remember to shut the downstairs curtains. Fit a timer switch so that there is a light on all evening, sometimes a radio left on is a good idea as from the outside a burglar wouldn't know if the house was occupied or not.

Finally, if you are going away for a while then inform the Landlord, a trusted neighbour or friend, they can check the property for you and pick up any post. Don't forget to cancel any milk, bread or newspapers that may be delivered while you are away.

### **Mystery Callers**

These people could be anyone! Be extremely cautious when opening the door, always use the chain or spy hole if you have one. It is vital to check the ID of the caller, if

they say they are from a company or utility service. If you are still suspicious, then contact the company they say they are calling from. If the caller refuses to go away or tries to force his/her way in, then contact the Police immediately.

Never answer the phone by stating your telephone number. Nuisance callers can be very difficult to get rid of. Make sure you try to find out who you are talking to and what they want. Avoid giving anyone your name, personal details or whether you're alone. If unwanted callers persist, inform the Police and the telephone company, keep a record of the date, time and content of each phone call. You could try 1471 to check if the caller withheld their number. This information may help to assist tracing the caller.

### **Night Intruders**

If you are unfortunate enough to wake in the night and hear someone in the property who shouldn't be there, only you can decide how you want to handle the situation.

Remember:

- Try to stay calm with your wits about you.
- Do not confront the intruder, no matter what.
- If you feel confident enough, switch on as many lights as possible and make a noise.
- If you are alone call out to someone, this will make the intruder question how many people are in the house.
- If you have access to a phone, contact the Police immediately.
- Try to stay in a safe part of the house.

## **PERSONAL SAFETY**

### **Out and About**

If you often walk home alone, get a personal attack alarm from your campus shop (limited amount available from the Advice and Support Centre). Carry it in your hand so you can use it immediately.

Carry your house keys separate from your handbag or money and don't put any form of identity on your keys.

If you think you're being followed and you have checked by crossing the street, go to the nearest place where there are other people, a pub or house with lights on.

Do not go in to an enclosed phone box, where you are isolating yourself.

If you take regular routes always try to vary them, keeping to well lit areas. Avoid wooded or secluded areas even if the alternative route is longer.

If you use a wheelchair, keep your valuables beside you rather than at the back of the chair.

If you use personal stereos remember you can't hear traffic or somebody approaching you.

Always walk facing the oncoming traffic; this will avoid anyone pulling up behind you.

If a car stops, don't go close enough to be reached and if you are threatened, scream, shout and set off your personal attack alarm to draw attention to yourself. Run in the opposite direction to the way the car is facing as this will give you vital seconds and make it more difficult for the car to follow you. If you can make a mental note of as many details as possible, this would be a good idea.

Try to refrain from using your mobile phone in the street!

## **Can Men Help?**

Yes, by taking the issue of women's safety seriously as part of everyday life. Unintentional intimidation, be aware of it. Don't walk closely behind a woman walking on her own. Cross the road, which may assure her you're not following her. Don't sit close to a woman sitting on her own. If you're thinking of chatting to a woman be aware of your environment, she won't know you mean her no harm.

Realise innocent actions can appear threatening, staring, whistling, jostling, passing comments etc.

Help female friends and family by walking them home or offering them a lift.

## **Being Prepared for the Attacker**

It is not a very nice thing to think about, but it pays to consider what you would do if you found yourself in this situation. If someone does grab you, you should automatically shout and scream for help. It is sometimes useful to carry with you an umbrella, a personal attack alarm, a can of hairspray or your keys, using such devices can sometimes be enough to make an attacker flee. Please be careful what you take with you; never carry weapons such as a knife or a sharp pointed object.

Self-defence and safety awareness classes may help you feel more confident. The Students' Union run Martial Arts Sessions every academic year. The Athletic Union or local police can provide more information for self defence classes run within your local area.

## **If you have been attacked**

If you have been assaulted or attacked in any way try to get to a safe place and call the police immediately. It can

help the police if you can remember as much detail as possible, such as:

- what the attacker looked like, accent, tattoos etc.
- vehicle type, colour, registration number
- names and addresses of any witnesses

You do not need to go to a police station to report a serious assault, you can be interviewed in your own home. It is a natural instinct if you have been sexually assaulted to want to wash. However, it will destroy vital evidence which could help prove your case and secure a prosecution. An early medical examination is important in the interest of your own health. Try not to wash or dispose of any clothing before being seen by the police.

## **Cars and Bicycles**

### **Bicycles**

Bicycles remain a very popular target for thieves because they are easy to sell on. They should be locked whenever left unattended, even if its just for just a few minutes. Mark the frame with your postcode or have it permanently and visibly marked. Contact your local Police Station for details of their next bicycle 'Post Marking' session.

The best kind of bicycle locks are the solid metal ones, chains are easily cut with the right equipment.

Always lock your bike to something solid like a sturdy railing or gate. If you have quick release wheels, take off the front wheel and lock it to the frame and back wheel.

### **Cars**

If your car is stolen or broken into it means inconvenience, expense and possible increase of your insurance premium.

It is difficult to protect your car from a professional thief but the majority of car crime is opportunist and you can take steps to deter the opportunist thief.

Here are a few useful tips:

- Never leave your car, windows or sunroof open even for a minute, if left unattended.
- Don't leave any belongings in your car. Anything of value or interest like a bag or briefcase may invite the thief to break a window to get at it. They won't know its contents may be of no value or empty. If this is not possible and you need to take belongings with you, lock them out of sight in the boot.
- If your stereo is removable, remove it. All equipment should be marked with the vehicle registration number and serial numbers recorded.
- Never leave plastic cards, mobile phones, chequebook or vehicle documents in your car.
- When parking try to park in well lit areas and always engage the steering lock.

Additional car security is always worth considering.

### **Personal Possessions**

Be vigilant. It only takes a second for someone to take off with your valuables. It is also not fair to say a thief will be someone you don't know. Do not leave your property unattended and be careful at all times.

### **Money and Plastic Cards**

- Don't be an easy target. Carry your wallet in an inside pocket. If someone bumps into you in a busy place, check you still have your purse.

- Cash is an ideal target, so avoid carrying large amounts of cash. Never tell anyone if you do.
- If your plastic card is stolen, notify its loss immediately.
- Never disclose your pin number, not even to the trusted.
- Sign new cards immediately.

### **Handbags**

Never let your handbag out of your sight. Always keep it shut and carry your bag across your body with any opening parts facing towards you. Even in your car, put your handbag out of sight where possible.

### **Passports**

Passports can be easily sold and replacements take time, so only carry your passport if you have to. Many clubs/pubs in the City will ask for ID to verify your age. Please refrain from carrying your passport for this purpose. Try somewhere like [www.validateuk.co.uk](http://www.validateuk.co.uk) where you can obtain a photo card that is nationally recognised as proof of age.

### **Mobile Phones**

Theft of mobile phones is becoming very common, always lock your phone by a code if possible and always keep your phone out of sight. Resist the temptation of using your mobile in the street.

### **Fire Safety**

Fire is certainly a risk when people are sharing a house such as a typical student let. Student properties that are not accredited by the university may not have appropriate fire fighting equipment (i.e. smoke alarms, fire blanket etc.) so if this is the case, it is vital to come to some sort of agreement with the landlord to obtain these items. This is to be taken seriously, the precautions could save your life.

## **Accredited Properties and Fire Safety**

If you have acquired your property from the University's accommodation list then the landlord has a duty to provide a suitably sited fire blanket, which is to be installed in the kitchen. Suitably sited mains operated smoke detectors should be located on each story of the property. A "thumb turn" lock should be fitted to the inside of all doors including the front and rear external doors, this is for easy access in the event of a fire. Finally, all electric wiring must be certified and inspected by a qualified NICEIC contractor.

**Most people who die as a result of fire are killed by a combination of carbon monoxide and a lack of oxygen (asphyxia).**

## **Preventive Measures**

Getting rid of faulty wiring, portable appliances and inflammable materials should be the top priority for any landlord. The provision of a smoke alarm system is ideal but it should be regularly tested and maintained to keep the mechanism in good working order. It is also advisable to have a fire door fitted to the entrance of the kitchen, this should contain a fire for up to 30 minutes giving occupants a protected means of escape.

It is a good idea for all tenants to get together and practice their own fire drill, you may not think it's worth it, but a fire could break out at anytime and you need to be organised and have the drill well planned.

## **Fire Safety Check List**

- 1. Check all electrical wiring - is it frayed or old?**
- 2. Look for disclaimer on inflammable materials (see furniture and furnishings regulations)**
- 3. Ask the landlord to arrange for an electrician to do an inspection.**
- 4. Does the property have a protected escape route?**
- 5. Is there a clear and adequate means of escape if a fire starts? (Check third floor rooms for escape exits)**
- 6. Are fire detectors fitted?**
- 7. Are there details of how to use the fire blanket and how to test the smoke alarms?**
- 8. Is there anything you would consider to be a danger or a hazard?**

## **Electrical Safety**

Your landlord has the duty to maintain all electrical appliances, sockets and wiring. If you detect a problem with the circuit, i.e. sparks when switching off appliances or hot plugs then, inform the landlord immediately and try not to use the appliance/socket.

To be safer (and Environmentally Friendlier!), try to remember to switch off all electrical appliances and unplug them when not in use. Never leave appliances on overnight.

If your accommodation was from the University's Accommodation List or through the University's Residential Services Office then certain minimum standards for electrical installations will have to be adhered to.

The kitchen must have at least three double switched socket outlets. The lounge or communal area should have two doubles and each bedroom is required to have two double or four single switched sockets.

## **Portable Appliances**

A qualified electrician who has the necessary competence to carry out such testing must test any portable appliance. Each item should be labeled to indicate when it was tested and who carried out the test, known as PAT testing. The landlord detailing the items checked should keep appropriate records.

## **Electrical Safety Checklist**

1. Make sure there are no wires exposed from walls, floors and ceilings.
2. Check socket outlets are not damaged and there is no damp around that area.
3. Any appliances supplied by the landlord/lady should be working properly and in a safe condition.
4. Check to see if any wiring is exposed outside the plug.
5. The NICEIC registered electrician (or equivalent) should inspect the wiring.
6. Are these sufficient and suitably positioned sockets to avoid overloading (try to avoid multiple adapters)?
7. There must not be any sockets in bathrooms, near sinks or washbasins.
8. Bathroom light switches must have a pull cord for use.
9. Portable cookers should not be used.

## **Gas Safety**

For details on gas safety. Please pick up a copy of the blue leaflet 'Gas Safety' from the Advice and Support Centre. It is a landlords legal obligation to have an up to date Gas Safety Certificate. If in doubt, ask to see it!

## **USEFUL NUMBERS**

### **Police**

Wolverhampton	01902 649000/649025
Walsall	01922 439010
Telford	01952 290888
West Midlands Police Central Control	0845 113 50000

### **Hospitals**

Wolverhampton – New Cross	01902 307999
Walsall – Manor	01922 721172
Telford – Princess Royal	01952 641222

### **Victim Support Schemes**

Wolverhampton	01902 572500
Walsall	01922 644000
Telford and Wrekin	01743 362812

### **Environmental Health**

Wolverhampton	01902 552813
Telford	01952 202716
Walsall	01922 652128

Dealing with Nuisance Calls      0800 666 700 –  
Freephone

Rape and Abuse Line      0808 800 0123 - Freephone

Victim Support Line      0845 3030900

Violence Helpline      0845 702 3468

Domestic Violence  
Helpline (24 Hours)      0808 2000247