

Protecting Our Parishes, Missions, and Schools

Parking Lot – Personal Safety: STAY ALERT!

On any given day, you can find yourself walking in a parking lot (or parking garage) to and from your vehicle. Personal Safety requires you to be on constant guard and always be aware of your surroundings. Here are some recommendations to help increase your personal safety in and around your car.

Parking

- Park in a highly visible, well-lighted area and be mindful of suspicious activity. Report any lights out or suspicious persons to appropriate personnel, management or police.
- Always carefully note where you parked so you don't spend unnecessary time walking around a parking lot looking for your car.
- Always lock your car doors, even BEFORE you buckle up, both when driving and when parked.
- Never leave your keys in your car, and/or the motor running, whether you're at the gas station, in a "parcel pick-up" area, stopping at the ATM, or dropping your child off at the Day Care Center.
- Limit the amount of time you spend "idle" in your car.
- Never leave valuables in your car. If you're out shopping and must leave your packages in the vehicle, keep them locked in the trunk, out of sight.

Walking to your car

- Any person walking alone, male or female, is potential prey for assault. Shop with a friend or family member whenever possible.
- Walk purposefully and look confident. Assertive body language can help prevent an attack. Don't slouch, keep your head up. Look as though you would cause uproar if bothered.

- Try not to carry a lot of packages at once, as this makes you an easy target.
- If you carry a purse, don't dangle it by your side in such a way that a thief can run by you and grab it. Carry your purse close to your body, preferably in front.
- When possible, wear shoes and clothing that will not hinder an escape. Sneakers are best; shoes with low heels are your second best bet. Keep a pair in the car if you're going to be out shopping on your way home from work. If you wear high heels, and are pursued, kick them off and run barefoot.
- As you walk, observe those around you. Notice if there are any strangers sitting in parked cars or standing in your pathway. If so, choose an alternate route and, by all means, avoid them!
- Stay away from isolated or poorly lit areas. Avoid walking near shrubbery, which can hide attackers.
- Always be alert and aware. Have your car keys in your hand and be ready to unlock the door without delay.
- As you approach your car, look under it and around it. Before getting in your car, look in the back seat and on the floor.
- Don't place your purse or package(s) on the roof of the car while loading other items.

If you are approached

- If someone suspicious approaches your car, honk your car's horn. It's one of the loudest and fastest ways to scare someone off or let others know that your need help.
- If a car approaches you while you are walking, and you are harassed by the occupants, scream and run in the opposite direction, so that the driver will have to turn around to pursue you.



- If you feel that you are being followed, walk or run quickly to a lighted area, store, building, or where crowds of people can offer help if needed. Know where to go for help – gate house, Security Office, police station, firehouse, etc. Do not go home!
- It's a good idea to keep a police whistle on your key chain. If you feel your personal safety is being threatened, follow your instincts. Do anything you can to draw attention. Don't be embarrassed. Scream, yell, or blow your whistle.
- While in your vehicle look around 360 degrees before unlocking your door to get out.
- Make sure no one is in your blind spots or behind the vehicle before you exit.
- Shift your attention to looking around the surrounding area.
- Exit the vehicle and go directly to the residence.

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