

# Safety Tips for Seniors

## When at home

- ▶ Women who live alone should list only their last names and initials in phone directories and on mailboxes.
- ▶ Be sure to lock doors in the day, even if you're home, or if you leave for a few minutes.
- ▶ Never open the door before asking visitors to identify themselves. This includes repair and delivery people, as well as police officers. Use the chain bolt when checking identification.
- ▶ Inside and outside lights give you a great deal of protection. Leave lights on at night, even when away from home. Change the location of lights periodically.
- ▶ Leave a light on near the door you will use when you return home after dark – use timers. Have your key ready so you can open the door immediately.
- ▶ If a stranger asks to use your phone, offer to make the call instead. Never let a stranger enter your home.
- ▶ If you notice a door or window was forced open or broken while you were out, do not enter your house. Use a neighbor's phone immediately to call police and wait outside until they arrive.

## When walking

- ▶ Be aware of your surroundings. After exiting a vehicle at night, look to see whether you are being followed. If you see someone suspicious, cross the street. If necessary, crisscross from one side to another. If you feel you are being followed, don't be afraid to run. If you see a house with lights on, knock on the door and ask for help.
- ▶ Maintain a secure grip on your purse. Do not carry it by the handle or let it hang off your shoulder. Place one end of the purse in the palm of your hand and the other in the bend of the elbow, holding the purse firmly against your body.
- ▶ Walk near the curb and avoid passing close to shrubbery, dark doorways and other concealed places.
- ▶ Avoid shortcuts, especially through backyards, school yards, parking lots and alleyways.
- ▶ A good rule to follow is "only carry as much money as you can afford to lose."



Assemblyman

**DAVID I.  
WEPRIN**

## Safety & Crime Prevention Tips for Seniors

## For more information

**NYS Attorney General  
Consumer Helpline**  
800-771-7755  
[www.ag.ny.gov](http://www.ag.ny.gov)

**Federal Trade Commission\***  
Consumer Response Center  
877-FTC-HELP (382-4357)  
[www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov)

**NYS Department of State  
Division of Consumer  
Protection Helpline**  
800-697-1220  
[www.dos.ny.gov/  
consumerprotection/](http://www.dos.ny.gov/consumerprotection/)

\*Note: Scammers have been making phone calls claiming to represent the National Do Not Call Registry. The calls claim to provide an opportunity to sign up for the Registry. These calls are not coming from the Registry of the Federal Trade Commission and you should not respond to them.

Dear Neighbor:

Unfortunately, we live in a time when crime cannot be taken lightly. Every day we read headlines and hear stories reminding us our streets are not as safe as they used to be. It pays to be on your guard, but that doesn't mean you need to be afraid—just aware.

All you need to remember is that there are certain necessary precautions you can take to minimize your chances of being a crime victim.

Inside this brochure are helpful crime prevention tips. Please adhere to these suggestions as often as possible. Additionally, telemarketing scams have also become more prominent and sophisticated. Telemarketing scams bilk billions of dollars from consumers each year.

To stop these unwanted calls and protect consumers, the state Legislature created a law establishing the statewide Do Not Call Registry. This law prohibits telemarketers from making unsolicited phone calls to anyone listed on the registry.

New York residents, who were already listed on the NYS Registry, were also automatically listed on the National Do Not Call Registry when it was created. For those who would like to be listed on the Do Not Call Registry, go to [www.donot-call.gov](http://www.donot-call.gov) or you can call 888-382-1222.

If you have any questions on this or any other matter, please contact my office.

Sincerely,



David I. Weprin  
Member of Assembly

## The “telemarketing sales rule”

- Telemarketers may only call between 8 a.m. and 9 p.m.
- They must tell you they are selling something and who's doing the selling before they make their pitch.
- It's illegal for a telemarketer to call you back after you've told them not to call.
- Before you pay for any products or services, you must be told of their total cost and restrictions.
- It's illegal for telemarketers to block their identification on your caller identification service.
- Telemarketers cannot call consumers on the Do Not Call Registry to schedule an appointment for a face-to-face sales presentation.

# Phone Scams

## What you can do to avoid being scammed:

- Don't ever send any money or give out personal information or your credit card or checking account numbers to any person or company you do not know or are not familiar with.
- Ask the telemarketer to send additional written information about the company and its products and services to you, and always take the time to thoroughly investigate the company before responding to any unsolicited offer.
- Don't make a hasty purchasing decision.
- Proceed with caution if the caller uses “high-pressure” language, such as “act now,” “send your money today” or “we need your credit card or bank account number right away.”
- Call your local Better Business Bureau, consumer protection agency, and state attorney general's office to check on the telemarketer before accepting any offers or solicitations.
- Report suspected scams to law enforcement.
- If you are not interested in the offer, interrupt the caller and say you are not interested. Ask the caller to take your name off his or her list if you don't want to be called again.
- Don't be intimidated by the caller, and don't be afraid to hang up the telephone.
- Report questionable telemarketing companies to the Better Business Bureau and send a detailed complaint to the Federal Trade Commission.

## What you should know about telemarketing scams

While most telemarketing pitches are made on behalf of legitimate organizations offering bona fide products and services, many sales calls are fraudulent. According to the Federal Trade Commission, consumers lose billions a year to telemarketing fraud.

Telemarketing scams range from fraudulent charity appeals, to bogus vacation and prize awards for small cash “deposits,” to shady investment lures.

Committing telemarketing fraud is easy for unscrupulous promoters, since they have access to telephone directories, mailing lists and a list of consumers who have been scammed before.

For example, under high-pressure tactics, unwary consumers may be asked to respond to a fraudulent promotion by sending a “prepayment” or “refundable” deposit. If you are the unfortunate victim of a scam, you will be very disappointed when you find out that your prize or investment was misrepresented, and is overpriced or worthless.

## Tips for spotting a scam:

Be suspicious when:

- The company has a name that is intended to sound like a government agency or a well-known company.
- You must act on the offer the same day. The scammers declare to the victims that they have an outstanding balance with them, and demand that the victim has 30 minutes to “pay the outstanding balance” by way of a green dot prepaid debit card.
- The telemarketer acts like he or she has done business with you before.
- The company is unwilling to send you written information on the offer.
- The caller asks you for your credit card number as identification.
- Someone asks for your calling card or credit card number to qualify you for a prize.
- A telemarketer asks for your Social Security number so you can purchase products or qualify for prizes.
- You have to pay a fee before you receive complimentary goods or services.