

# YOUR PREPAREDNESS FACT

*This Week:*



The one thing I have always taught my kids is to be aware of their surroundings as they are out and about. Whether you are out shopping, making a quick trip to the bank/ATM, or walking through parking lots, you need to pay attention to not only those around you, but of the possible situations that could leave you vulnerable. I had three perfect examples present themselves just this past week while running simple errands.

The first was making a quick stop at the ATM machine just outside my bank to get a little cash for the movies. It was just before 4:00 p.m. on a Sunday afternoon and there were a few people ahead of me in line so I felt secure that others were around. My daughter stayed in the locked car with my purse. As I was at the machine, I found myself to be the only one in the area. I felt the urge to be quick. After completing my transaction and was walking around to the car, I saw a man who seemed to appear from out of nowhere across the street. He was walking briskly and crossing the street towards me. He shouted "Do you have some extra cash I could have?" I responded with a firm "No I don't", and quickly jumped in the car, locking the doors and headed out.

A few days later, I had to run some errands during my lunch hour. While going back to my car (keys in hand ready to make a quick exit), a lady had quickly appeared out from around the parked cars and said "Excuse me ma'am, can you help me out? I think she saw that I was in a rush, and asked "Are you in a hurry?" I replied with yes, I only have minutes left of my lunch hour, and I quickly left.

On a different day, after another errand, I had just returned to my car, put my purse down on the passenger seat, and as I was reaching around for my seatbelt, a woman was up against my driver's window asking for money. I nearly jumped out of my skin. I just shook my head no, started my car and carefully backed out. (Yes, my doors were locked).

I am usually pretty good at observing my surroundings, but seems like they are coming out of nowhere ....and suddenly! Am I losing my touch or are they becoming craftier?

Now, you may think me rude or uncaring, but I can't forget what happened to a family member of mine years ago during this same time of year in a store parking lot. Keeping in mind that experience has made me suspicious of anyone approaching me in those situations. This particular family member was approached by a female who proclaimed to have had some trouble with her vehicle. As he stopped at his vehicle to hear the dilemma; he was approached from behind by two men laying in wait. He was attacked and robbed of his wallet. Credit cards and cash were gone. And that was *before* the economy was as bad as it is today.

Desperate times are causing people to go to great lengths to get what they want, and right here in our small community. Does this mean we can't help people out? Certainly not, but I do caution you to be very careful. **You may think that you as a person are not vulnerable, but sometimes just living in a small and trusting community makes you vulnerable.**

# AWARENESS TIPS

- If you will be out during evening hours, park in a well-lit area. Always try to find a parking spot as close to the entrance of where you are going.
- Make a mental note of where you parked. Would-be thieves are just looking for your vulnerability. The distressed “Where did I park my car” look is a dead giveaway that you are elsewhere in thought and not aware of your surroundings, making you an easy target. When I park, I not only make note of what isle, but which side (which direction the headlights are facing).
- Only carry the credit card/s you think you will need; not your entire collection. Now is the season to make a list of all your credit cards, along with contact phone numbers for each card, and keep it in a safe place at home. This will help in the event they are lost or stolen. Been there, done that.
- Be alert and aware of people “hanging around” parking lots/garages, just inside or outside the store or establishment you are visiting.
- Have your car keys ready in hand before you go into the parking lot. Fumbling for your keys also makes you a venerable target.
- If you carry a purse, make sure you have zipped/closed it all the way to avoid pickpocketers.
- Make sure your purse/wallet, bags and whatever you are carrying are secure by your side.
- Hold all cell phone calls/texts until you are locked inside your car if at all possible.
- Once inside your vehicle, lock your doors.
- Be very careful at the ATM machine day or night. Always be aware both before and after you visit the machine.
- As you are parking, whether it’s in a parking lot, side street, or your own driveway, check your surroundings before exiting your locked car.
- Trust your instincts!



Do *YOUR* part for Emergency Preparedness....pass on the information!

Article written by Elizabeth Hall

Resources:

Graphics- [www.pfsafety.com](http://www.pfsafety.com), [www.midsouthkravmaga.com](http://www.midsouthkravmaga.com)