

Safety at home, in your car and out-and-about

We live with constant safety and security concerns. These fears are even more pronounced when you are a woman or when it comes to children and family. Fears around being hijacked with our children in the car, children or other family members being kidnapped or being robbed are just some of our worst fears.

Many of us have increased security on our children's cell phones, at our homes and in our cars but what else can you do to ensure the safety of your family?

Auto & General offers ten practical tips on the steps you can take to feel safer and more secure:

1. When at home ensure your home security is sufficient, this includes having security gates fitted on all doors, having burglar bars on windows and including perimeter protection such as high walls and electric fencing. If your home has a security alarm ensure it is linked to an armed response unit and is in working order.
2. Ensure that all security gates are locked, even if you are at home.
3. When traveling, use a GPS to not get lost in an unknown or unsafe area. Be aware of your surroundings and limit your distractions. Should you be followed, travel to the nearest police station for assistance. Park in a well-lit, safe area and when travelling at night slowdown as you approach a red robot for it to turn green by the time you reach it, this avoids you having to come to a complete stop.
4. Set the home address in your smartphone, GPS, and other devices to an address near your home, but not to your actual home address. If someone steals your phone or breaks into your car while you are away from home, you do not want them to know where you live. At the same time, enable remote wipe for your smartphone. If it is stolen, you want to make sure that any sensitive information on your phone - from which, for example, your children's schedules may be able to be determined - is wiped.
5. Always let a friend, family member or work colleague know where you are, where you are going and when you have arrived at your destination.
6. Avoid driving with your windows open, keep the doors locked and lock valuables out of sight.
7. Going out for an evening with friends, be mindful of what you drink and how much as alcohol clouds judgement. Don't leave your drink unattended and ensure you pour for yourself.
8. Many hijackings happen just as you are entering or leaving your home. Having a well-lit, shrub-free driveway and an electric gate (that can switch to a battery during power failures) can help you get in and out safely. Use the remote to close the gate behind you, rather than waiting for the self-timer. This limits a criminal's window of opportunity.
9. Teach your children to always be aware of their surroundings and to limit distractions, such as checking or talking on a cell phone, when walking. In addition, caution them not to overshare their whereabouts on social media.
10. In emergency situations use flashlights for light - not candles. Do not use candles for light during power

failures caused by wind-related weather conditions until after the adverse weather has passed. Besides the fact that candles can be dangerous in general (especially if there are children in the home and/or if the candles are carried around when walking through the house), strong winds can hurl objects through windows - creating situations where candles are exposed to wind that can knock them over and start a dangerous fire.

Remember, it's not about living in fear, but rather understanding your circumstances, trusting yourself, and making the right choices to keep yourself and your loved ones safe.