

# NATI NEWSWIRE

## SENIOR SAFETY ISSUES

### Holiday Safety Tips for Seniors

Greg Abbott  
Attorney General of Texas

The holidays are a time when we become busy and more vulnerable to holiday crime.

Be aware that criminals sometimes pose as couriers delivering gifts. Be careful about answering your door to strangers, and use a peephole or latch your screen or storm door if possible.

It is also not uncommon for criminals to take advantage of people's generosity during the holiday season by soliciting donations over the telephone or door-to-door for bogus charitable causes. Ask for identification, and find out how the donated funds will be used. You might want to make your donation to a recognized charitable organization. Remember that many organizations have names that are very similar to well known charities.

### WHEN SHOPPING:

- Stay alert to your surroundings and the people around you.
- Shop with a friend, there is safety in numbers.
- Avoid wearing expensive jewelry.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash.
- Pay for purchases with a check, credit card or debit card when possible.
- Avoid overloading yourself with packages.
- If you return to your car to unload purchases, place them in the trunk of your car.
- Have your car keys in hand before leaving the store.
- Ask mall or store security for an escort if your shopping location does not seem safe.

### WHILE DRIVING:

- Avoid driving alone, especially at night.
- If you shop at night, park in a well-lighted area.

- Avoid parking next to vans, trucks with camper shells, or cars with tinted windows.
- Never leave car unoccupied with the motor running.
- Do not approach your car alone around suspicious people.
- Keep doors locked and windows rolled up in traffic, especially at stoplights.
- Always lock your car.

### PROTECTING SENIORS

A growing group of theft victims are the elderly and disabled people. You might be surprised at who's preying on these individuals... Their caretakers. These victims put a lot of trust in the caretakers but that trust is also stolen.

"You just can't explain how this makes you feel unless it happens to you," Juanita Sellers said. After surgery last November, Juanita Sellers had to have in-home health care. Bed ridden, she had no idea she would be a victim of financial exploitation. In her home, her care giver stole blank checks, cash, credit cards...even irreplaceable valuables.

Janet Wellman is a supervisor with Adult Protective Services in Wichita county. Through investigations, they work to protect the elderly and disabled. Unfortunately, situations like Seller's is not uncommon. In-home care providers are the second largest group to steal. The first group is actually their own adult children. Wellman says they get at least 7 cases a month. "Some of them deny the abuse because they may be afraid of being abandoned or put into a nursing home", Sellman said.

She says emotional manipulation is a key tactic used against vulnerable adults. APS works with banks and will even confront the caretaker. Cases may be turned over to police; some have been prosecuted. In fact, Wellman says just this month they got back \$30,000 for a client.

But as Sellers says, money can be replaced. "It's devastating. I'm still not over it. It's just something that I wouldn't want to happen to anybody," Sellers said.

APS currently has a campaign called, "It's Everyone's Business" to make the public more aware of this growing problem. If you or someone you know has been financially exploited, please call the APS hotline at 1-800-252-5400.

<http://www.kauz.com/home/ticker/4712986.html>

## Phishers troll for Social Security numbers

By David Lazarus , Scripps, Howard—Eagle-Tribune

In an especially brazen attempt to defraud seniors, scammers are sending out bogus e-mails, claiming to be from the Social Security Administration that are intended to dupe people into revealing their Social Security numbers.

This type of scam is by no means new. It's called phishing and typically involves an official-looking e-mail that links to an official-looking (but phony) site that instructs you to reveal confidential info, like your Social Security number or credit card numbers.

Most phishers cover their electronic tracks well and remain on the loose.

What you need to know is that the subject line for the bogus e-mail reads "Cost-of-Living for 2007 update" and that the message ostensibly is informing 49 million Social Security recipients about next year's 3.3 percent increase in benefits.

The catch is a line that says the Social Security Administration needs to update your personal info and that if this isn't completed in short order, "we will be forced to suspend your account indefinitely." E-mail recipients are then directed to a Web site that looks like the official Social Security site, where they're told to register for a password by providing their Social Security number as well as bank account and credit card info.

"You should never provide your Social Security number or other personal information over the Internet or by telephone unless you are extremely confident of the source to whom you are providing the information," said Patrick O'Carroll, Social Security's inspector general. And even then, it's seldom a good idea. Not these days.

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## Getting older-and better-behind the wheel

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PORTLAND — I call it Geezer Driving Camp. It's in the AAA building in Portland, in a cluttered classroom. I'm taking a "driver improvement program" aimed at helping us old folks — age 50 + — to remember some of the things we've forgotten during 30 or 40-plus years of driving.

Within the first hour I learn something I hadn't known. It's a simple way of adjusting the outside rearview mirrors to reduce to almost nothing the dreaded blind spot. Right from the beginning, our instructor Rayette drops a cluster bomb of statistics.

Elder drivers are the highest risk drivers except for the true scourge of the highways, the 16-24-yr-old males. But the 60-and-older group is the fastest growing. The U.S. Census Bureau predicts that by 2030, one in five drivers will be over 65 years old.

After sobering us with statistics, Rayette assures us that we're doing the right thing to take the class because, listen up now old folks: Things have changed. One example: We were taught the normal position of our hands on the steering wheel was the 10-2 position, hands on either side as if the wheel was a clock, the left hand at the 10 o'clock position, the right hand at the 2 o'clock position.

Scientific research has shown that placing your hands in the 8 o'clock and 4 o'clock position, with both hands on the lower half of the steering wheel, is less fatiguing and offers more control.

One thing everyone over 50 has in common is a growing difficulty seeing in the dark. The fact is that if you are over 50 you need three times more light to see in the dark than when you were 16 years old. Not only can you not see as well in the dark, but your eyes have a lower tolerance for oncoming lights and glare, and it takes eight times longer for a 55-year-old to recover from glare than a 16-year-old.

Driver education still teaches student drivers to focus their eyes on the right side of the road when blinded by oncoming lights. But technology has disrupted the natural order of things.

The new high intensity discharge (HID) lights are those bright blue headlights that look like they belong on a spaceship. They emit twice the light of regular halogen headlights, which make them handy for the driver but a problem for drivers of other cars on the road.

Another problem we didn't have 40 years ago were SUVs and light trucks, whose headlights ride higher than most sedans. According to AAA, headlights on those vehicles average about nine inches higher than headlights on regular passenger cars.

One tip passed on that may seem obvious is to clean both sides of the windshield. We tend to clean the outside, but at night it's often the inside of a windshield that disrupts vision. Another option is self-dimming mirrors. As glare becomes brighter the mirror grows darker automatically.

Most of the advice handed out during the refresher course could be reduced to a simple command: Pay more attention to your driving. Limit distractions. Don't have a heart attack or stroke while you are behind the wheel (thanks for that advice). The six hours spent reviewing safe driving tips was time well spent and well worth the \$20 fee.

John Male, of the Bureau of Highway Safety, which offers its own driver's education class called the Maine Driving Dynamics, said that many drivers over 55 come into such classes not expecting to learn much.

"What don't we know, those of us who've been driving for 40 years?" he said. "But then we come out of these classes and realize how much we take for granted. We learn that it's not so much what we know that's important as much as our attitude and the information we receive."

What's important is to adapt to the changing physical limitations that come naturally with aging. The biggest obstacle often is the refusal of elders to admit they are older (the "who me?" syndrome). Since our numbers on the roads and highways will be rising with the approaching "age wave," it's imperative we practice what we preach and pay attention.

AAA is just one agency that offers mature driver classes. Classes are also offered throughout the year by the Bureau of Highway Safety, AARP and the National Safety Council. Male suggests the easiest way to find a schedule of safe driving courses is over the Internet.

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