



Neighbourhood Watch
Let's watch out for each other

A guide to

Being safe & connected

in your community



“Hi”

At Neighbourhood Watch Victoria, we believe a connected community is a safer community.

And at the heart of a connected community are neighbours like you and us.

Whether you live in a typical suburban street, a high rise, on a farm, in the city, the country or regional Victoria, knowing your neighbours will help you feel safer, boost your mental health and wellbeing and improve your lifestyle.

It doesn't mean you have to live in each other's pockets, but that you can give each other a wave and smile or feel comfortable enough to ask for and offer help.

A safer community starts with a simple “hi”.

When you know your neighbours you will recognise when there are people in your neighbourhood that perhaps don't belong and spot any suspicious behaviour that you can report to police.

We hope you enjoy the practical tips and handy contact info in this guide to help you get to know your neighbours, protect yourself from crime and feel safer in your home and neighbourhood.

Let's watch out for each other.

From your team at
Neighbourhood Watch Victoria

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Your home

Your home is where you should always feel safe and secure. Most house break-ins are carried out by thieves looking for a situation that's low risk but high in reward. So, take away the opportunity and keep your home and belongings safe.

How safe is my place?

Our free online self-assessment tool helps you check how secure your home is from break-ins and learn how to protect your family and property.

www.howsafeismyplace.com.au



Lock doors and windows

Most burglaries happen in less than 10 minutes. So, lock the door even if you're only out for a short time. If you have window locks, lock those too. Keeping your doors and windows locked stops people coming in if you are in another part of the house, garden or garage. But be careful not to deadlock doors and windows if you're inside, so you can escape easily in an emergency.

Make entries as secure as possible

Fitting all entries with security screen doors provides extra security while also allowing fresh air and sunshine into your home. However, make sure they are to Australian standard so that unwanted intruders are kept out. Ideally, all external doors and windows should have Australian standard locks and solid frames and fastenings.

“Keep it safe, keep it hidden, keep it locked”

Keep your keys out of sight

Don't leave your keys on the inside of locks or just inside the door or somewhere that can be seen through a window. If possible, don't keep house keys and car keys on the same ring. Make it as hard as possible for thieves to break into your home or steal your car.

Leave a spare key with someone you trust

If you have a spare key, don't leave it under a mat, plant-pot or other common hiding spot outside your home. Give one to a friend, neighbour or family member you trust.

Make your home look occupied

Most break-ins happen when a home is empty. If you are away on holiday, or just out for the evening, use timers on lights, TVs and radios so that it seems like there's someone at home. Talk channels are best.

Put valuables where they can't be seen

Keep commonly stolen items like jewellery, televisions, laptops, cash, keys, tablets and phones in places where they can't be seen through the window, so that they don't tempt intruders.

Show people your property is secure

Thieves are put off by visible security alarms and carefully directed sensor lighting. Just make sure they don't disturb your neighbours by going off unnecessarily.

Smart cameras, which connect to your mobile phone via an app, can help you keep an eye on your place while you're out, sending you notifications when the cameras are activated. CCTV can help police solve a crime but won't prevent someone breaking into your home. It's best to use several different methods to secure your home.



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Your valuables

There are many products which can be used to mark your property. They are often inexpensive, can deter thieves and help you get your items back if they're stolen.

Mark items with the letter "V" for Victoria followed by your driver's licence number. This will help police return your property to you if it is stolen and recovered.



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Engraving

Engrave valuable property with a personal identification number. Especially good for tools and large objects like bikes.

UV pen

Quick and cheap. Good for delicate items. Mark with a personal identification number – this will show up under a UV light.

"DNA" marking

There are synthetic clear liquids you can buy which contain a unique code, like DNA. This code is registered to you. The liquid is dotted onto your possessions but cannot be seen with the human eye.

Photographs

If you have something rare or highly valuable, such as jewellery or antiques, take a photo of it. Make sure the background is plain and shows off the item as best as possible. Include a ruler or coin to show its size.

Keep a record

Keep a note of the make, model and serial numbers of appliances, electrical goods, power tools, electronic equipment and devices.

Safe

Consider investing in a solid, fire-resistant safe to store important personal documents, jewellery, and other valuables. Make sure it is well concealed. Those that are fixed to the floor or embedded in the foundations are best.

Insurance

Make sure that you have adequate house and contents insurance which can cover your loss. Keep digital receipts or take a photo of hardcopy receipts and store safely.



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Your garden

Keeping your garden well maintained is one of the smartest ways to deter a burglar.

Trim trees and shrubs

Trim trees and shrubs around windows and doors so thieves don't have a place to hide. Try to ensure your front door can be seen from the street, so your neighbours can see anyone trying to enter. Keep your garden and lawn neat and tidy so that your property looks lived in.

Plants

Placing prickly plants around borders and under windows can be a great deterrent. Be careful they don't conceal windows and entries.

Lock up your tools

Keep valuable garden equipment, tools and ladders marked and locked away so thieves can't steal them or use them to enter your home.

Gravel

Walking on gravel makes a noise – use it on pathways and around windows.

Fences

A low or see-through fence at the front helps mark your garden's boundary and allows neighbours to spot anyone who shouldn't be there. Be wary of having a solid fence as this may provide cover for a thief. At the back, a tall fence (around 1.8m) and vertical posts (up and down) make it harder to climb.

Gates

Keep all side gates locked with a strong padlock or keyed lock. Fit caps on gate hinges so they can't be removed easily.

Sheds

Anchor your shed to the ground and secure it with a strong padlock or keyed lock. Invest in door hinges that have non-removable pins and smooth-headed "carriage" bolts. Cover windows with blinds or curtains and consider installing toughened security glass.



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Around your home

By taking some simple precautions you can reduce the risk of an unwanted intruder targeting your home.

Having a Neighbourhood Watch sticker clearly visible on your front window or letterbox can put a thief off breaking into your home. Email hello@nhw.com.au to get one sent to you.



Display your house number

Your house number should be clearly visible from the street or road to allow emergency services to locate your house quickly and easily. Painting your number on the street kerb is also a good idea.

Keep the entry well lit

Thieves don't want to be seen, so a well-lit entry and garden will help put them off. Install motion sensor lighting around front doors and driveways, but put it in a spot that won't annoy your neighbours. Consider solar-powered lighting that comes on automatically when it starts to get dark.

Dogs deter burglars

It doesn't have to be a big dog, just one that barks when someone enters your property. Place a "Beware of Dog" sign on your fence or gate. Keep your dog well secured behind fences and gates or inside your locked house. Only get a dog if you have the time and money to care for it and love it as a member of your family. Always consider adopting from a shelter or rescue.

“A well-lit and clear entry can stop a thief targeting your home”

Secure your bins

Keep bins locked in your shed or garage so they can't be used to climb into your house. If you're going away, ask a trusted neighbour to bring your bin in for you. A rubbish bin left out well after rubbish collection can indicate you're not home.

Lock your letterbox

A strong, high security keyed lock is the best way to keep out mail thieves. And if the lock on your letterbox is the same one you've had for years or you've lost the key, it's probably time to upgrade it. It's also best not to rely on the lock that came with your letterbox. Thieves can break into these pretty easily – either by forcing it, accessing a master key or using a key that matches the code stamped on the lock. Get a locksmith to install a specialty letterbox lock.

Make your mail fit

Make sure your letterbox is the right size and shape for your mail. Get one that's large enough to allow your postie to insert your mail all the way in so it doesn't stick out. The mail slot should be big enough for your mail, but small enough to keep thieves' hands out.

Clear your mail

An overflowing letterbox can be a sign that you're not home, so try to empty it at least once a day. A "no junk mail" sticker may also help. Alternatively you may consider renting a mailbox at your local post office.

Protect deliveries

If you're not going to be home when a package is being delivered, be wary of allowing it to be "left in a safe place" outside your home. Consider using a parcel locker or "click and collect" service or having it sent to a different address where someone will be around to receive it for you.



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70% of cars are stolen with their own keys. Car thieves sneak into unlocked homes to steal keys, often without the residents knowing. So, lock all your doors and windows and pop your keys out of sight.



Your car

Modern cars are fitted with lots of safety features that make life difficult for car thieves. You can make it even harder.

Always lock your car

Closing all windows tightly and locking your car is the simplest way to keep it safe. Get into the habit of locking your car every time you leave it, even if you're away for a moment, like when paying for fuel.

Keep your keys safe

Cars fitted with immobilisers can't be hotwired, so thieves need your keys to steal your car. Keep your keys out of sight. Don't leave them in easy-to-access spots such as the ignition, on a key hook or in a dish near your front door or on a kitchen bench. Don't hide a spare anywhere in the vehicle.

Don't reveal your address

Don't leave paperwork in your vehicle that can identify where you live as a thief could work out you're not at home. Personal information could also be used to steal your identity. Write your licence number on your key tag, not your address or car rego number. Use a code word for your home address in your GPS rather than saving it as "home".

Use your garage if you have one

Park your car off the street if you can. Most cars are stolen from the street in front of their home. The best place to keep your car is in your locked garage. If you don't have a garage, then leaving your car in your carport or driveway, behind a locked gate, is the next safest option.

Parking your car

When out and about, park your car in a well-lit area where it can be easily seen. Aim for places where other people will be around when you return.

Don't leave belongings in view

Keep all personal belongings out of sight when you park your car. Take them with you if you can. If not, lock them in the boot. Thieves look for:

- Bags and wallets
- Cash and credit cards
- Mobile phones
- GPS devices
- Laptops and tablets
- Video games and gaming devices
- Portable DVD players
- Tools
- Sports gear
- Garage remote or house keys

Before you leave your car remove your GPS from view and wipe away any suction marks left on the windscreen.

Garage remote

Don't leave your garage remote in your car. Always keep it with you. A thief can use it to enter your home and steal your stuff.

Protect your plates

Criminals steal number plates to put on other cars to commit offences such as petrol theft and burglaries. Prevent them stealing yours by securing your plates with one-way, anti-theft screws. These can be screwed in normally but require a special tool to be removed. You can get them from hardware stores or Neighbourhood Watch Safe Plate Days.

Secure your motorcycle

Park your bike in a locked garage or behind locked gates, rather than in your yard, driveway or on the street. Always use the steering lock and secure your bike to an immovable object or anchorage with a high tensile chain and matching security lock. Use a motorcycle cover to conceal your bike and make sure it's insured.

“The safest place for your car is in a locked garage”



© Maureen Battagiate | NHWVic



Safe Plate Days

Local Neighbourhood Watch groups regularly organise Safe Plate Days at community locations where they will fit anti-theft screws for a gold coin donation. Go to www.nhw.com.au/events to find your nearest event.

Your neighbours

We all want to live in a safe and welcoming neighbourhood. Knowing your neighbours is a key to feeling more settled and secure in your community.

Get to know your neighbours

Don't be a stranger. Give them a wave, say "hi" and introduce yourself. Talk to them, invite them over for a cuppa or barbecue. If people find you friendly, helpful, considerate and approachable, they're far more likely to respond to you in the same way.

Do random acts of kindness

When mowing your nature strip, or blowing leaves off your driveway or footpath, do your neighbours as well. Bring their rubbish bins in on bin day, share excess veggies from your garden or eggs from your chooks. Offer to help them with a DIY project or receive a delivery if they're not home. It's amazing how small gestures like these can foster great neighbourly relations.

A great way to keep in touch with your neighbours and share information is to start a WhatsApp chat group for your street.



Holding safe parties

1. Register your party with the police at www.police.vic.gov.au – the more information you give them, the better they can help you if needed.
2. Download a Party Safe Kit from www.police.vic.gov.au
3. Let your neighbours know the date and time of the party.
4. Have a guest list so you know who is invited, to prevent gate crashers. Don't advertise it on social media.
5. It is illegal to serve alcohol, in your home, to people under 18, unless you have their parent's or guardian's permission.

Keep the noise down

Be sensitive to the noise you make in your home and yard. Things like loud music, using a lawn mower or power tools, blaring televisions, barking dogs and noisy parties can annoy neighbours, particularly late at night or early in the morning.

Party respectfully

If you are going to have a party, let your neighbours know ahead of time and tell them what time the party will finish so they'll know when to expect some quiet. It's good to invite them, if you can.

Keep an eye on their place

If your neighbours are going away, offer to keep an eye on their place, clear their mailbox, water their garden, feed their pets or put their bins out.

Be a responsible pet owner

Pets can be a big bone of contention between neighbours. Always clean up after your pet, don't let them stray into your neighbour's yard and try to stop your dog from barking excessively.

The Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria is a free and confidential mediation service.



Phone: 1300 372 888 in Melbourne or find the closest regional office at www.disputes.vic.gov.au

Handle conflict thoughtfully

If you have disagreements with your neighbours, it's crucial to handle them tactfully. Always try to resolve the problem directly with your neighbour first, by having a face-to-face chat. Don't use text messages or email which can be easily misunderstood.

Preventing neighbourhood disputes

Consult with your neighbours before doing anything that could affect them or their quality of life. Listen to their concerns and consider them seriously. When a person feels they have been listened to and understood, problems are often easier to work through and resolve.

- Approach your neighbour in a casual, non-threatening way.
- Calmly present your views and try to understand theirs.
- Clarify the issues of concern.
- Consider appropriate solutions.
- Reach a mutually acceptable and workable agreement between you.

Mediation

If you and your neighbour can't agree, you can meet with an impartial professional mediator to help resolve your dispute.



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On your farm

Farms are relatively easy targets for thieves because they're often isolated and easy to access. By being vigilant about security, you can protect your livelihood.

Lock up your tools to prevent thieves being able to use them to force open other storage areas.



Keep sheds locked

Try to position sheds where they can be seen from your house. Build them from strong materials with heavy duty roller doors or metal gates and good quality padlocks. Consider installing sensor lights and security alarms.

Fencing and gates

Regularly check your boundary fences to ensure they're in good condition. Gates should be strong, mounted securely to corner posts and locked with heavy duty chains and padlocks.

Protect your fuel

Lock your fuel tank with a strong padlock, ideally at the cut-off valve. When you're not using the tank, close and lock the valves and switch off the pump. Place your tanks where they can't be seen from the road. Consider installing underground tanks if you don't already have them.

Secure your firearms

Make sure your firearms are registered and secured in locked cabinets that meet legal requirements. Lock up ammunition and magazines separately. Don't leave firearms unattended or in unlocked vehicles, or store cabinet keys in spots that are easy to access.

Storing firearms

If a property is unoccupied or rarely visited, or you're going to be away for a long period, consider storing your guns with a firearms dealer or trusted licence holder.

Deter trespassers

Place "no trespassing" and "private property" signs at entries to your property, along boundary fences and access roads to paddocks. Put up signs warning that equipment is marked and the property has alarms and security cameras.

Safely store chemicals

Ensure chemicals and fertilisers are stored in their original containers and secure them in a locked shed.

Keep good stock records

Keep accurate records of all your livestock, including ID, numbers, purchases, sales, births and deaths. Make sure National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) tags are correct and up-to-date and tag animals when they're young. Keep receipts of any purchases.

Keep an eye on your stock

Check your stock, and the paddocks where they are grazing, regularly. Count and recount them. Keep gates closed and locked. Take photos and videos to help identify them.

Stockyards

Position loading ramps and stockyards where they can't be seen from the road. When they're not being used, keep them locked and stored separately.

Grain and produce

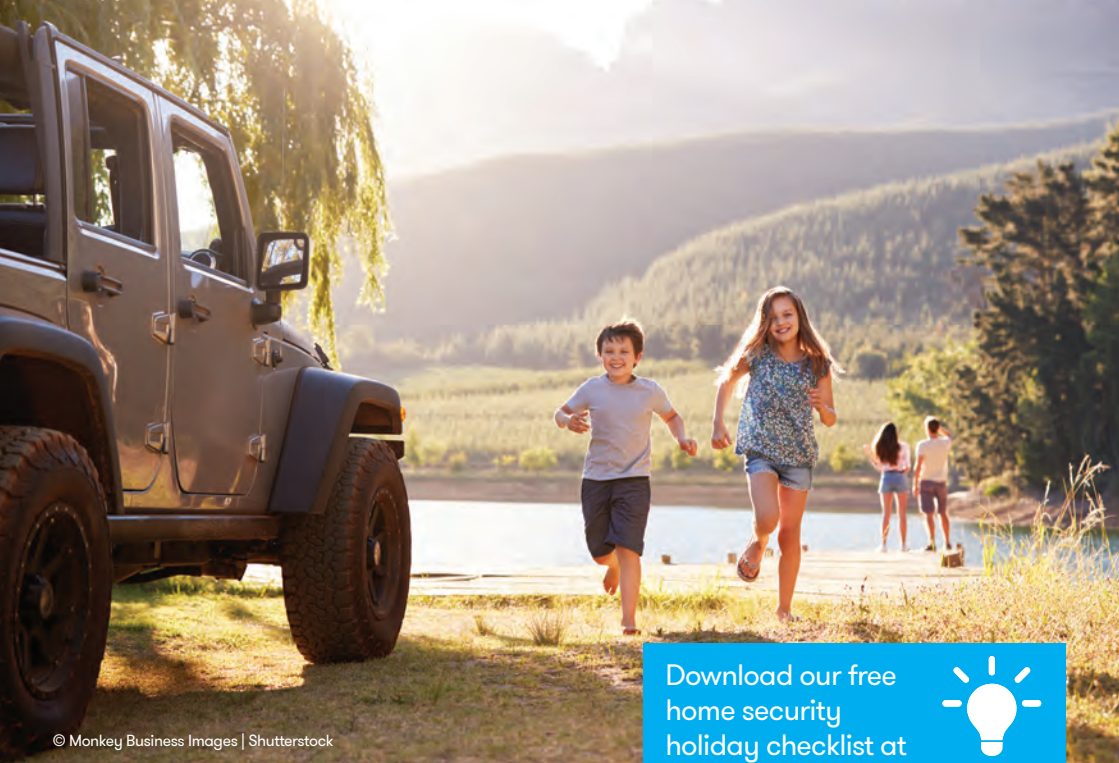
Never leave storage bins or loaded trucks unlocked or unattended during harvest and make sure augers and other loading equipment can't be used when you're not around.

Machinery and equipment

- Store machinery in a locked shed, if possible, or grouped together outside. Ensure it can be seen from your house.
- Keep machinery locked; remove the keys and keep them with you.
- If machinery needs to be left onsite overnight, put it where you can see it from your house.
- Consider disabling unattended machinery by removing the battery or distributor cap.
- Keep an inventory with a description, a record of serial, chassis and model numbers and a photo or video. Keep invoices and receipts to help with identification.
- Engrave or mark your equipment with a "V" for Victoria, followed by your driver's licence number. Options to mark property include hard etching, welding, painting, metal punching, chemical marking or microdot technology.

Store any equipment that can be quickly and easily loaded onto a ute, such as power tools, generators, fencing materials and motorbikes, in a locked shed.





Download our free home security holiday checklist at www.nhw.com.au/holiday and fill it out as part of your trip preparations.



Going away

Most break-ins happen when there's no-one home. Before you go on holiday, take time to secure your home. Making your house look occupied is a good way to put off unwanted intruders.

Lock up

Make sure all doors and windows are shut and locked, including sheds, garages and gates. Remove any spare keys you have hidden outside the home and keep any spares out of sight inside the house.

Don't broadcast your holiday

Don't announce on social media that you're going away. You can post your holiday snaps once you've safely returned home. Set your social media accounts to "private" or "friends only" and delete any followers you don't know.

Make it seem you're at home

Get timer switches for your lights and radio or television. Make sure the lights come on in the living areas of your home, and not in the hallway, for example. Tuning your radio to a station which is mostly talking is better than a music station.

Cancel deliveries

Cancel any regular deliveries such as newspapers and food boxes.

Light up with sensor lights

Install motion sensor lights around the entry to your home if you don't already have them. Before you head off, test that they're working and angled correctly. Consider getting solar-powered sensor lights.

Ask a neighbour

Ask a neighbour you trust to keep an eye on your property. Tell them when you're going and when you'll be back. Ask them to:

- park their car in your driveway to make it look like you're at home
- clear out your letterbox
- open and close blinds at appropriate times of the day
- put your garbage bins out on collection day.

Redirect mail

Arrange for Australia Post to hold or redirect your mail. Put a "no junk mail" sticker on your letterbox.

Let police know you'll be away

Register your absence from home with Victoria Police. Visit www.police.vic.gov.au/home-and-property to register online or you can download and complete an "Absence from residence" form and take it to your local police station. Remember to let police know when you've returned home, especially if you come back earlier than planned.

“Whenever you're away, make your house look like you're at home”



Out and about

You're entitled to feel safe wherever you go. There are some simple things you can do to protect yourself when you're out.

4 tips to stay safe

1. Stay alert and be aware of your surroundings.
2. Keep valuables light, held tight and out of sight.
3. Give the impression that you are calm, confident and know where you're going.
4. Trust your instincts. If it doesn't look or feel right, it might not be.

Public transport

- Choose a well-lit and clear walking path and stand where you can be seen.
- Know where safety features such as emergency buttons, CCTV cameras and public transport staff are located.
- If you feel unsafe, alert the Protective Services Officers, public transport staff, police or other passengers to help.
- If you feel uncomfortable with the person near you, change seats or carriages.
- At night, sit close to the driver.
- Plan ahead to avoid long waits for transport, especially at night.
- If you'll be returning at night, park your car as close to the station or stop as possible, in a well-lit area. If you feel unsafe walking to your car, ask a Protective Services Officer to accompany you.

Keep your bag safe

Carry bags close to your body. Ensure they are zipped and closed securely, including any external pockets. Never leave your bag unattended in a shopping trolley or on top of a pram. In restaurants, at the cinema and public events, or on public transport, place your bag on your lap rather than on the floor or the seat beside you.

Walking around

Try to walk with friends or stay near a group of people. Take well-lit, busy streets, carry a mobile phone and a personal alarm with you and try to keep both hands free. If you're wearing headphones or earbuds, keep the volume low enough to hear surrounding noise or keep one ear free. If a vehicle pulls up suddenly beside you, turn and walk in the other direction.

Enjoying a safe night out

Before you go out, plan how you'll get home safely. Always carry your ID, phone and enough cash or a card to cover any unexpected emergencies. Keep an eye on your drink and stay within your limits. Walk with others if you can and stick to well-lit busy areas. Only accept lifts home with people you trust and ask the driver to wait until you're inside.

Using an ATM

Use ATMs located inside buildings, supermarkets or other busy locations. Make sure no-one is hovering nearby and shield your PIN. Don't count your money in public; place it in your wallet or bag straight away.

Taxis and Ubers

Check the driver's identification and note down their name and number. Give clear directions to your destination. If you're not travelling on the agreed route, or feel unsafe, end your trip as soon as possible and get out, or change your destination to a safe place close by, such as a busy store. If travelling alone, always sit in the rear left-hand side.

Road rage

If you are involved in a road rage incident, don't stop or get out of your car. Your vehicle provides you with some protection. Note the registration number of the other vehicle and report it to police. If you're followed by the other vehicle, don't drive home. Drive to a police station or service station where you can get help and attract attention.



When out with friends, stay together and take care of each other. Make sure everyone has a safe way to get home.





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Scams

Scammers try to trick you with promises of easy money, fabulous prizes, miracle cures or true love, or with threats of huge fines, or cancellations. Knowing how to spot a scam is your best defence.

Securely register your phone numbers with the Do Not Call Register to reduce the number of unsolicited telemarketing calls and texts you receive. Call 1300 792 958 or visit www.donotcall.gov.au



Does it pass the scam test?

- S**eems too good to be true
- C**ontacted out of the blue
- A**sking for personal details
- M**oney is being requested

Protect your personal info

Never give your personal, bank or card info to a cold caller or enter your details via a link received in an unexpected text or email. If in doubt whether it's legit, contact the organisation directly using a phone number from a previous bill or statement, or their official website, and check if it's genuine.

Accessing accounts

Scammers can make an email or text message look like it's coming from a real company, so be alert. Banks and the ATO will never ask for your log-in or password details via email or send you a hyperlink to access your online account. They will direct you to log into your account using their official website or app.

6 steps to stay ahead of scams

1. Don't share your personal, credit card or bank info.
2. Delete suspicious texts and emails, close pop-up windows and don't answer calls from "unknown" numbers.
3. Don't click on links or open attachments from unexpected texts, social media messages, or emails. Delete them.
4. Check the email or web address against a legit one you have received from the business or organisation.
5. Check the offer or request direct with the organisation independently using an email or phone number you have sourced yourself.
6. Do an online search using the exact wording in the offer, or the number the call or text came from. Well-known scams can be found this way.

Dating and romance

Be wary of people you don't know approaching you online. Do a search of the person's profile pic and name in Google. Romance scammers often re-use the same few images and name variations. Be careful of sharing sensitive photos and personal info with someone you haven't met in person. If they ask for money, just say no. Refuse requests to move the conversation to a private channel.

Phone scams

Legit companies usually won't call customers out of the blue to report computer viruses or internet service issues or ask you to verify account passwords or bank details. Nor will they ask you to pay debts using pre-paid gift cards. If a call is a recorded message or "robo-call" claiming to be a business such as NBN Co, hang up – don't press "1" or follow any instructions.

Doorstep scams

If someone unexpectedly knocks on your door and tries to sell you products or services or asks for money. Don't feel pressured to give them cash or sign any agreements on the spot. Take some time to think. A reputable trader or charity will be happy to give you time to decide and won't mind you wanting to research them first.

Scam emails

If you don't recognise the sender of an email, treat it as spam and delete it straight away. Don't open any files in the email or click on any links, especially if they're asking for personal details or money. Check the "from" email address against a legitimate email you have received from the business or charity.

What to do if you've been scammed

- 1. Report**
the scam to Scamwatch at www.scamwatch.gov.au
- 2. Notify**
your bank or financial institution if you've sent money or shared card details; or the relevant platform (eg, eBay, Facebook) if it happened on social media or an online marketplace.
- 3. Tell**
your friends, neighbours, family members and colleagues about scams you become aware of.

Sign up to receive free scam alerts from Scamwatch at www.scamwatch.gov.au





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Staying safe online

The internet is one of the most useful resources we have, but it's important you know how to stay safe when surfing the web and communicating online.

Protect your device

Install anti-virus software and anti-spyware and keep them up to date. Keep your Wi-Fi network private and password protected and be careful when using public hotspots. Keep software, apps and operating systems up-to-date, or allow them to update automatically, so any security improvements are installed as soon as they become available.

Use complex passwords

Create unique passwords or passphrases on all your accounts. Include a mix of numbers, lowercase and uppercase letters and symbols such as “&, %, # or \$”. Don't use your birthdate or obvious words such as the name of a child or pet. Don't share passwords and user IDs. Don't reuse banking, email or social media passwords on other accounts.

Keeping kids safe online

Use the parental controls that your internet provider supplies. Have children use devices in a shared room so that adults can monitor what they're doing. Familiarise yourself with the websites your children are using and make sure they understand how to stay safe online.

Online quizzes

Those little tests, games and quizzes that appear in your social media feed may seem like harmless fun but be wary of taking part. You may unwittingly give a scammer access to your account or share details that others can use to hack your account or guess passwords.

If you're a victim of cybercrime, report it to ReportCyber at www.cyber.gov.au

10 internet safety tips for kids

1. Don't give anyone your password, name, address, the name of your school or any information about your family.
2. Don't talk to strangers on the Internet.
3. Don't agree to meet anyone in person that you've met online.
4. Don't fill in a profile that asks for your name and address.
5. Don't visit a chat room without a parent's or guardian's permission.
6. Don't stay online if you see something you think your parents wouldn't like.
7. Don't post pictures of yourself without your parents' permission.
8. Don't download or install anything on your computer without your parents' permission.
9. If you have any questions about something you read, ask your parent or guardian.
10. If you are being bullied online, or someone makes you feel uncomfortable, don't respond. Tell a trusted adult and block the person or leave the chat.

Don't overshare

Don't post details such as your full name, date of birth, phone number and address on your social media accounts. Adjust your privacy and security settings so you can screen new friend and follow requests and be sure you're only sharing your posts and profile info with people you know and trust.



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Pop-up windows

Ignore pop-up windows that appear on your screen claiming your computer has a virus or you've won a prize. Close the window straight away. Don't click on any links. Scammers use these to trick you into installing malware or spyware on your device. You can also install a pop-up blocker extension for your browser.

Online accounts

If you need to check or update an online account, such as your banking or myGov account or a streaming service, never use links sent to you in emails or texts. Log into your account using the official app or by typing the web address in your browser.

Remote access

Never allow anyone to access your computer remotely, even if they claim to be from a well-known company such as Telstra or the NBN Co. If you get an unexpected call about your computer and they request remote access, hang up immediately.



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Identity theft

Identity theft is where someone steals your personal info and uses it to falsely obtain money, credit or goods. You can make sure it doesn't happen to you.

Keep personal info private

Never give bank account details, debit or credit card details, online account information, passwords or copies of personal documents to anyone you don't know or trust. Use passwords that would be difficult for others to guess and have different ones for each account.

Secure your info

If you need to keep any documents that have identifying information, store them in a lockable cabinet, safe, or password-protected hard drive. Keep your letterbox securely locked and remove any personal documents from your car.

Shred personal papers

Shred all documents containing personal information, such as bills and financial statements, and put them in your recycle bin. Cut up expired debit and credit cards, licences and Medicare cards.

Avoid using public computers or public Wi-Fi hotspots to access your online banking or myGov account or to provide personal or credit card information over the internet.



“Your personal information is valuable. Don't be pressured into giving it away”

5 ways to protect your identity:

1. Don't give anyone your personal info unless you're sure they're legit.
2. Don't be pressured into giving away your info.
3. Lock your letterbox securely.
4. Shred sensitive documents before throwing them out.
5. Check your credit report at least once a year with recognised credit reporting bodies.

Protect yourself on socials

Be careful how much personal info you share on social media, either via posts or in your profile. Scammers can use details such as your name, date of birth, location and pets' names to guess your account passwords or even set up a fake profile with your name and photo to scam your friends and family. Make your accounts and post settings private.

Keep track of key documents

Follow up on bills or replacement credit or debit cards which don't arrive on time. If your passport or driver's licence has been lost or stolen, contact the organisation that issued it straight away. If you move house, tell your bank and credit card company immediately and use Australia Post's mail redirection service.

Keep your cards safe

Arrange with your bank to pick up new or replacement cards and PINS from a branch rather than have them mailed to you. If your cards are lost or stolen, call your bank or provider immediately to cancel them.

Beware of fake requests

If you receive an email, text or social media message asking you to update or confirm your personal details by clicking on a link or opening an attachment – don't! Delete it straight away. The safest way to access your account is via the company's official website or app.

Recovering your stolen identity

If you think your identity may have been stolen, it's important to act quickly.

1. **Notify your bank**
2. **Report it to Victoria Police**
Call the Police Assistance Line on 131 444 or report online at www.police.vic.gov.au
3. **Contact IDCARE**
IDCARE is a free service that can help you develop a plan to repair damage to your reputation, credit history and identity. Visit www.idcare.org or call 1800 595 160.
4. **Apply for a Commonwealth Victims' Certificate**
You can present this certificate to government agencies, businesses and banks to re-establish your credentials or remove fraudulent transactions from their records. Visit www.homeaffairs.gov.au



Online Shopping

Buying things online is easy and convenient, but some sellers are just out to rip you off. Here are some simple ways to protect yourself from the fakes.

Shop securely

When you shop online, look for the padlock symbol and “https” in the browser bar, which shows the website is secure. Shop from known and trusted retailers. If you need to create accounts with online stores, make sure you use strong and unique passwords.

Have you been scammed?

1. Try contacting the retailer or auction service first.
2. Seek a refund from PayPal or a charge-back from your bank.
3. Report scams to Scamwatch at www.scamwatch.gov.au
4. Leave a review or feedback to alert other buyers.

Spot fake websites

Scammers will set up fake websites that look like genuine online retail stores. Be cautious of unbelievably low prices, missing privacy policies or refund information, or limited payment options. If you suspect a seller might be bogus, research them first and search online for genuine customer reviews.

Pay safely

Use secure ways to pay, such as PayPal, where the seller never sees your card or account details. If you do pay by card, use a credit card rather than a debit card and don't save the card info with your account. If possible, avoid paying in advance by bank deposit or via a non-secure method such as wire transfer, money order or Bitcoin.

Do your homework

When using online marketplaces, look at other buyers' feedback for the seller and inspect the item first if you can. If you're going to meet a buyer or seller in person, take someone with you. Choose somewhere neutral, in a public place that's busy and well-lit. If you need to pay in advance, try to pay via PayPal, rather than a bank transfer.

Fake tradies

Fake tradies are dodgy tradespeople who offer to do repairs at cheap “today only” cash rates, then disappear with your money, leaving work badly done or unfinished.

Check a tradie's details

Always ask for the tradie's full name and registration or licence details (if applicable), then check these with the relevant industry authority. Don't rely on ID Badges as these can be faked. Call their business on a number you have sourced yourself, to see if the person works for them. A trustworthy tradie will happily answer your questions.

Obtain quotes first

Don't be pressured into signing an agreement on the spot. Get 3 written quotes from established tradies. An honest tradie won't mind giving you time to decide.

Always do research

Do plenty of research into a company before dealing with them. Ask family and friends for recommendations and seek out genuine customer reviews from a few different independent review sites. Don't rely on glowing testimonials on the company's website.

7 ways to outwit fake tradies:

1. Seek recommendations and advice from family and friends.
2. Don't be pressured into making a decision on the spot.
3. Shop around for a quote that's right for you.
4. Check to see if the tradie or company is legit before committing to the work.
5. Use reputable tradespeople who provide written quotes and don't ask for payment in full, up front, in cash.
6. Ask for contact details of previous clients, so you can check references.
7. Don't sign any agreement until you're ready.



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Family violence

Family violence in any form is unacceptable. No-one should feel afraid in their own home. Knowing what family violence is and where to get help is vital.

What is family violence?

Family violence is when an intimate partner, family member, carer, housemate or former partner demonstrates a continuous pattern of threatening, controlling, coercive or abusive behaviour towards you.

This repeated abuse may make you feel scared for your safety, attack your self-worth, restrict your freedom and stop you from living your life as you choose. It can involve threats to you, your children, your pets or family members. Family violence is not just physical or sexual abuse. It can include many types of abuse which are harmful and unhealthy.

Family violence hurts kids as well

Children have the right to feel safe and secure in their own home and not live in fear. Studies show that living with violence at home can cause long-term physical and emotional harm to children and can potentially affect their development.

Types of family violence

Physical

- punching or kicking you
- strangling or choking you
- using force to steal or damage your belongings
- sexually abusing and assaulting you
- causing or threatening cruelty, death or injury to a pet or animal
- intentionally damaging, or threatening to damage, property
- unlawfully depriving you or your family members of their liberty

If your partner uses violence while you are pregnant or soon after birth, you will need additional and immediate support.

Economic

- controlling your money and keeping you financially dependent upon them
- demanding money from you in a threatening way
- lending you money and then enforcing difficult repayments.

Emotional or psychological

- threatening or blackmailing you or your family
- speaking to you in a way that is intimidating, abusive and/or frightening
- bullying, putting you down and degrading you
- stalking and making continuous unwanted approaches
- causing a child to hear, witness or be exposed to the effects of violent, abusive or threatening behaviour
- using social media and technology to frighten or shame you

Social

- insulting or teasing you in front of others
- isolating you from family and friends
- controlling what you can do, what you can say, and what you can wear

Sexual

- coercing you to participate in sexual acts when you don't want to

“You have the right to feel respected and safe in your relationships”



Credit: © Nenitorx | Dreamstime

Family violence support

Whatever your situation, it's important to know that help is available. There are a range of support services you can reach out to if you're experiencing violence at home.

If you are experiencing violence

- Call Triple Zero (000) if you need police immediately.
- If English is not your first language, call Triple Zero (000) and tell them your language. They will connect an interpreter.
- Reach out to one of the support services listed here.
- If you can't report the violence or seek help yourself, tell a friend, family member or neighbour as they can contact police or a support service on your behalf.

If you suspect family violence

If you are concerned for the safety of a neighbour, friend or family member, you can reach out to police or one of the support services listed here. It doesn't have to be an emergency.

However, if you become aware that a person is in immediate or urgent danger because of family violence (for example, you overhear loud threats of physical harm made against your neighbour by their partner or parent), you should immediately call the police on Triple Zero (000).



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What happens if I call for help?

If you contact police, they will take steps to ensure that you and your family are protected and will connect you with support services. These services are available to help you feel safe and supported and to assist people using violence to change their behaviour.

Safety at home

Safety planning is thinking about things you can do to be safer when living with violence or abuse. The best way to make a safety plan is with the help of a support service. Some of the things you may wish to consider include:

- Speak to neighbours you know and trust. Ask them to call police on Triple Zero (000) if they hear violence or abuse.
- Have a safe place to go if you need to leave.
- Keep a list of important numbers in your wallet or mobile phone that you can call in an emergency, such as local taxis, crisis accommodation and the local police station.

Services to support you

safe steps

(7 days a week, 24 hours)
Crisis support, information and referral to safe accommodation (refuge) for women and children.
Phone: 1800 015 188 (toll free)
www.safesteps.org.au
Webchat: www.safesteps.org.au/chat

© X

1800 RESPECT

(7 days a week, 24 hours)
Confidential information, counselling and support service.
Phone: 1800 737 732 (toll free)
www.1800respect.org.au

© X

Women's Information and Referral Exchange

(Mon to Fri: 9am to 5pm)
Free information, support and referrals for women.
Phone: 1300 134 130 (cost of local call)
www.wire.org.au

© X A

Kids Helpline

(7 days a week, 24 hours)
Free, private and confidential telephone and online counselling services for children and young people aged between 5 and 25.
Phone: 1800 551 800 (toll free)
www.kidshelpline.com.au

©

Mensline Australia

(7 days a week, 24 hours)
Free and confidential counselling, information and support for men.
Phone: 1300 789 978 (cost of local call)
www.mensline.org.au

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inTouch

(Mon to Fri, 9am to 5pm)
Free and confidential information, cultural support, and support services for women from migrant and refugee backgrounds, their families and communities.

Phone: 1800 755 988 (toll free)
www.intouch.org.au

X

Men's Referral Service

(Mon to Fri: 8am to 9pm; Weekends: 10am to 3pm)
Anonymous and confidential counselling, information and referral service for men taking responsibility for their violent behaviour.
Phone: 1300 766 491 (cost of local call)
www.ntv.org.au

© X

Legal Aid

Phone: 1300 792 387 (cost of local call)
www.legalaid.vic.gov.au

Women's Legal Service

Phone: 1800 133 302 (toll free) or (03) 8622 0600
www.womenslegal.org.au

- © Live chat function, if you don't feel comfortable calling.
- X Quick exit button, if you need to close the page quickly
- A Browse anonymously option, so it won't appear in your search history

Connect with Neighbourhood Watch

At Neighbourhood Watch Victoria we do loads of good things to help people feel safer, more connected to their community and enjoy a better quality of life.

Get involved

- Subscribe to our eNews
- Follow us on social media
- Volunteer at local Neighbourhood Watch activities
- Support your local group
- Attend one of our events
- Partner with us

About us

We've been around in Victoria since 1983, encouraging, advising and educating people on how to protect themselves from crime, keep themselves, their family, their home and belongings safe, get to know their neighbours and feel part of their community.

We believe in a caring, inclusive society, where people trust and respect each other, are safe from crime, feel less afraid and isolated and enjoy a good quality of life.

What we do

We support individuals and groups to create safer, stronger, more active communities. Thanks to our thousands of volunteers and groups in communities across Victoria, we're able to share information, run events and activities and work in partnership with Victoria Police and other local organisations to prevent crime and help people feel safer.

Join us

People get involved with Neighbourhood Watch for many different reasons, whether it's to improve security around their home, wanting to make their neighbourhood safer, be part of a local group and meet new people or make a difference in their community.

Anyone is welcome – you just need to be willing to work alongside your neighbours and fellow community members to help make the place where you live safer and friendlier. How much of your time you give, is totally up to you. So, get in touch. We're ready to welcome you.

Connect with us

hello@nhw.com.au
www.nhw.com.au/connect



© Maureen Bathgate | NHWVic

Local groups

We have more than 190 Neighbourhood Watch groups across metropolitan, regional and rural Victoria. Each group's activities are based on what they can do, what makes the biggest impact in their community and the advice of local police. Some of the programs and activities our groups undertake include:

- Creating and distributing community newsletters
- Safe Plate events

- Community safety forums and expos
- Marking valuables to deter thefts
- Graffiti removal and prevention
- Sharing local crime data and crime prevention information
- Running junior Neighbourhood Watch programs in schools

Find your local group at
www.nhw.com.au/groups



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Who to call when

When something unexpected happens, it can be tricky to know which service is the right one to call. So, we've put together this handy guide to help you out.

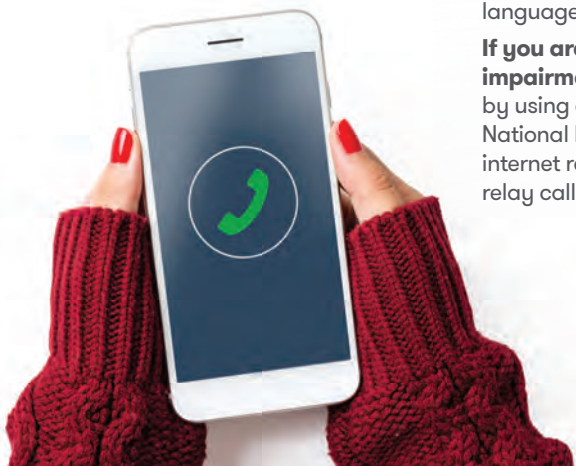


Triple Zero - 000

Call Triple Zero (000) if you need immediate fire, police or ambulance assistance, if a crime is happening right now, if life or property is being threatened, if someone needs urgent medical help or if you see flames.

If English is not your first language, call Triple Zero (000), then once you have been transferred to the emergency service you need, ask for an interpreter in your preferred language.

If you are deaf or have a speech or hearing impairment, you can make an emergency call by using a TTY to call 106. You can also ask the National Relay Service for a captioned relay, internet relay, SMS relay, video relay or voice relay call to be transferred to Triple Zero (000).



Report suspicious activity

Behaviour is suspicious, not people.

Just because someone you don't know is walking down your street or sitting in a car, doesn't mean they're suspicious. But if they are looking into multiple car windows and trying door handles or going through home mailboxes or trying to enter your neighbour's house when you know they're not home – that's suspicious.

It's when a person is doing something that seems unusual and out of place from what's normal.

If you see suspicious behaviour, report it to police as soon as possible.

Recording some of these details may help police catch a crook:

- time
- date
- location
- what happened
- description of suspicious vehicles, especially any features such as damage, colour, bumper stickers, rego number and modifications
- description of suspicious people

Only take photos if you can do it safely.

Victoria SES - 132 500

Call the Victoria SES during a storm or flood if a tree has caused structural damage to your home or vehicle or is preventing access to your home, if your roof is damaged, or if your property is flooded or about to flood.

If someone's life is in danger, call Triple Zero (000)



Crime Stoppers - 1800 333 000

Or report at www.crimestoppersvic.com.au

Call Crime Stoppers to report crime information confidentially, provide information about people, incidents or vehicles of interest to police or information that could prevent a crime.

If the crime is happening now, call Triple Zero (000)

Police Assistance Line - 131 444

Or report at www.police.vic.gov.au

Call the Police Assistance Line to report non-urgent crimes and events anytime, anywhere eg: theft, property damage, lost property or to register a party or absence from residence, or for general police enquiries.

Complaints about neighbours

Call your local council

If you have an issue with your neighbour that is not related to criminal behaviour, try to talk to your neighbour first. If the problem persists, and it relates to a local law issue, call your local council. If it's related to criminal behaviour, call the Police Assistance Line on 131 444.

If it's about a loud party in the early hours and it is happening now, call Triple Zero (000).



Neighbourhood Watch
Let's watch out for each other

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram

Subscribe to our eNews

Volunteer with a local group

Participate in a local event

www.nhw.com.au

hello@nhw.com.au



Disclaimer: This guide has been prepared by Neighbourhood Watch Victoria to educate the public in how to protect themselves from crime and reduce their risk of becoming a victim of crime. This guide does not guarantee that all security risks have been identified or that the person reading this guide will be completely secure and free from criminal activity if all recommendations are followed.