

Norfolk City Outlook

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Avoid Becoming a Victim

By Diane Becker
City of Norfolk Staff Writer

So do you have an extra house key lying in the flower pot in front of your house? That's one of the first places a potential burglar may look when trying to break into your home.

"Don't hide your keys in easily accessible areas" is one of the tips in a safety presentation given by City of Norfolk Police Chief Bill Mizner. Entitled "Increasing Your Ability to Be Safe", the presentation was put together by Mizner to help people reduce the likelihood of being victimized. Whether it be taking your purse out of your car even when it's parked in your garage or being more aware of your surroundings, Mizner says there are safety tips that everyone should know.

Safety starts with keeping your passwords and other identification private. Never give personal information to phone solicitors. Even if a caller says he represents your bank or credit card company, there is never a time when they would need you to give passwords or other personal information over the phone or online.



Be very careful using outside ATMs at night or in unfamiliar surroundings. You are an easy target with ready cash for would be robbers.

Mizner says some tips to help protect you on the street include not reading as you stand or walk down the sidewalk. You are also less aware of your surround-

ings and make an easier target when you listen to music as you jog or walk. Walk or jog in the center of the sidewalk facing traffic. It's best to only carry cash and credit cards that you absolutely need in the event that your wallet or purse is stolen.

Keeping your car in good working order and with at least a half a tank of gas in it is always a



good safety practice. Be aware of any suspicious activity when you approach your vehicle. Park in well lit areas of parking lots.

Don't park next to large vehicles as they are easier to hide behind.

As you're driving down the road, keep your windows closed and your doors locked. If someone does try to enter your vehicle, honk your horn to attract attention and drive away. Store your purse and any other valuables in your trunk or somewhere else out of sight.

Never pick up hitchhikers or stranded motorists. Mizner said the best practice is to note the vehicle description and location and call authorities. Don't open your window or door for someone who approaches to ask for directions.

If you have a flat tire, drive on it until you get to a well lit, well traveled area. If your vehicle be-

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comes disabled and help isn't immediately available, put your hood up and stay in your vehicle.

Items that are good to keep in your vehicle are a flashlight, maps, extra warm clothing, a portable fire extinguisher, a first aid kit, and an empty gas can for emergencies.

Mizner said that cell phones are one of the best safety investments you can make. "Anytime you are able to call for help or assistance you have more control over your situation. Just make sure that you keep your phone fully charged," Mizner said.



In the home, he advises that people have good locks on all windows and doors and emphasizes that people use them. Mizner said that, surprisingly, people still leave their doors unlocked.

"It's always best to keep your doors locked. An open door might be an invitation for someone to enter your home," Mizner said.

When someone does knock at your door, Mizner said make sure you know who it is before you open the door. A wide angle viewer on all external doors gives you a chance to see exactly who is at and around entrances before you open the door.

Before you let a repair person come into your house, it's all right to ask them for identification. If a stranger needs to use your phone, tell them to give you the number and that you will call while they wait outside of your home.

Other things to consider in protecting your home are having a dog to alert you of intruders, installing exterior lighting, and possibly installing an alarm system.

In a building, avoid using isolated hallways or corridors. Be extra careful in stairwells and poorly lit or isolated restrooms. Avoid entering an elevator occupied with only one other person. If as-

saulted, hit the emergency or alarm button and press as many floor buttons as possible.

Mizner said that children also need to be taught strategies to keep safe.

"Make sure they know their full name, address, and phone number and how to call 911 and give that information," Mizner said.

Children should also know that they shouldn't accept gifts or rides from strangers. They should go to a store clerk, security guard or police officer if they are lost.

Adolescents also need to be aware of certain safety measures.

They should not share any personal information on the



phone or online. They need to learn what to do in an emergency if they are babysitting or on a date.

People can also minimize the chances of being raped by limiting the use of alcohol or other drugs, recognizing that most rapes are committed by someone known to the victim, and becoming educated about prevention tactics.

"There isn't any way to guarantee someone's safety but there are measures to take to minimize the possibility of being victimized," Mizner said.

For more information or if your group or organization is interested in a safety seminar, contact the City of Norfolk Police Division at 644-8700.

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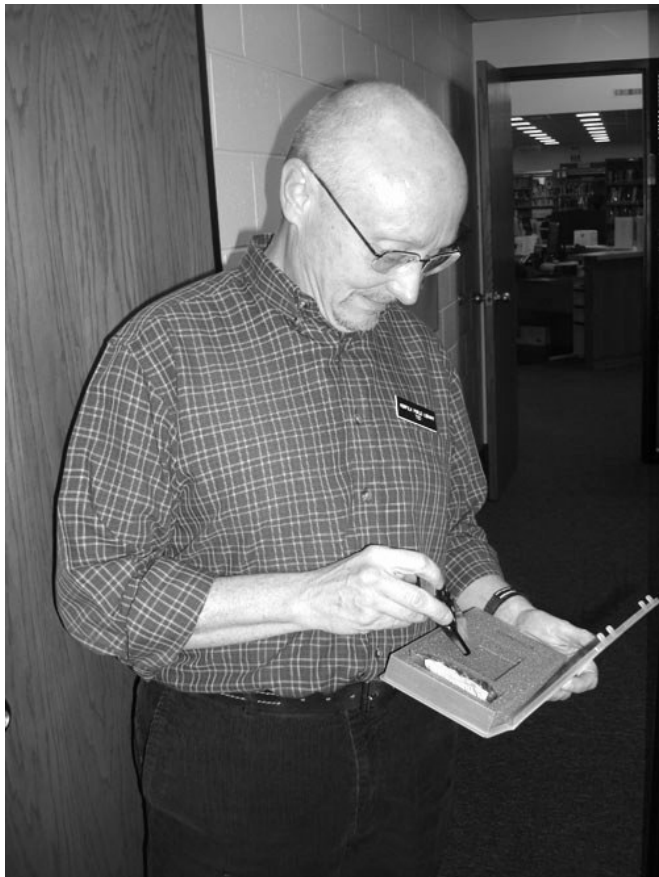
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Many Options at the Library

The lawn work is done. No weeds to pull in the garden. Now is the time to read that book you've been wanting to on the Bestseller's List or try a Mongolian recipe or two. The Norfolk Public Library is the first stop to make when starting up your winter reading.

Although it seems like winter would be the busy season for staff at the library, City of Norfolk library director Ted Smith says it's gotten to be not much different than any other time of the year.

"The funny thing about a library is that it doesn't have any slow time anymore. We are busy in the summer with the children's summer reading program. In the winter many people re-



Library Director Ted Smith is shown loading an MP3 Book

turn to reading and we still have a lot of kids that come in all year round. We pretty steadily see about 26,000 items checked out per month throughout the year. We have about 300,000 items that are checked out per year. We're one of the busiest libraries in the state," Smith said.

More than ever, the Norfolk Public Library has something for everyone. If someone wants to read a bestseller, they always have copies of both fiction and non-fiction editions. There are usually multiple copies of some of the bestsellers. If those are off the shelves, with a library card, a patron can put a reserve on a book. When the book is back on the shelf, the library staff will send them a letter and will save it for seven days. It can be kept for two weeks and, if no one else has asked for it to be reserved, can be kept for up to six weeks.

"We have about eight copies of the Da Vinci Code because it was on the bestsellers' list for 1 ½ years. It was always checked out until finally the rage wore off," Smith said.

Besides traditional paper books, there are also books on CD, a couple thousand music CDs, many DVDs and some VHS tapes to check out.

"A lot of Christmas music gets checked out this time of year," Smith said.

The library also has "hundreds and hundreds" of cookbooks that are very popular year round. Around Christmas, people start checking them out to find holiday cookies and desserts.

"We also have a lot of crafty books on quilting, knitting, anything having to do with crafts. Those circulate pretty well all year, too," Smith said.

Many people also choose winter to read how-to books, remodeling books and peruse through house plan books. There are also 4000 different magazine titles online to choose from.

Smith said one of the fastest growing areas of the Norfolk Public Library is books on CD.

"People spend a lot of time in their vehicles and like to listen to a book as they drive down the road. They can get 2 or 3 books listened to in a month," Smith said.

As baby boomers age and find their eyesight waning, the library is also stocking more and more large print books.

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There are other new formats for books being added to the library. Smith is looking into providing MP3 books to library patrons. By signing up on the library's website, people would be able to download books onto their MP3 players. The digital book could also be burned onto a CD. The patron would then listen to those books before they became digitally locked after three weeks.

Many people have already signed up for access to over 26,000 ebooks the library makes available from their website at <http://ci.norfolk.ne.us/library>. Patrons must first obtain a user name and password at the library.

"We get anecdotal stories all the time from

people who use the ebooks. There are bookmarks you can place on the screen and a place for notes to type in the margins. We are a twenty-four hour a day library," Smith said.

Smith also is looking into MP3 books which are not books but MP3s that are checked out that have the book's content on them. The person doesn't need to use their own MP3 player but listens to the book player then checks it back in two weeks later.

"A lot of people use the library and we're happy about that. There's nothing better than a good book," Smith said.

Whether it be hard covered or over the car speakers.

Winter Fire Safety

By Diane Becker
City of Norfolk Staff Writer

Winter is a time when people are eager to use their woodburning stove, fireplace or holiday candles. City of Norfolk Fire Chief Shane Weidner said that although fire safety is something to keep in mind year-round, winter provides its own special challenges.

"Woodburning stoves can be especially hazardous," Weidner said. "A person needs to make sure there isn't any creosote or soot buildup in the chimney from burning green or wet wood,"

Before a homeowner lights the first load of wood in his woodburning stove or fireplace, Weidner said he should have the chimney inspected.

"At least once a year, a chimney cleaning professional should look at the

chimney and make sure there aren't any obstructions. Professionals can run a light, sweep or chain in the chimney that would detect any nests or creosote buildup," Weidner said.

There can also be bats and rodents living in a chimney.

"It's good to have a rain cover or screen on top of the chimney to keep the rodents and leaf debris out but it has to be removable," Weidner said.

Remodeling, wind or the settling of the house itself can shift the flue and make it break open or gap. The result can be carbon monoxide that leaks into the home and causes carbon monoxide poisoning.

When wood is not burned completely, the resulting smoke



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contains a number of chemicals, one of which is carbon monoxide (CO).

Each year, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, more than 200 people die from CO poisoning, related to the use of combustion appliances, including woodstoves, in the home.

CO is odorless and colorless. Exposure to CO reduces the blood's ability to carry oxygen. EPA recommends installing a digital CO detector if anyone uses a woodstove or fireplace. A digital CO detector displays the concentration of CO parts per million (ppm) and makes a warning sound that gets louder as the concentration increases.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends the following safety measures for woodstove use:

- Keep all flammable household items—drapes, furniture, newspapers, and books—far away from the woodstove.
- Start fires only with clean newspaper and dry kindling. Never start a fire with gasoline, kerosene, charcoal starter, or a propane torch.
- Do not burn wet or green (unseasoned) logs.
- Do not use logs made from wax and sawdust in your woodstove or fireplace insert – they are made for open hearth fireplaces. If using manufactured logs, choose those made from 100 percent compressed sawdust.
- Build small, hot fires. A smoldering fire is not a safe or efficient fire.
- Keep the doors of the woodstove closed unless loading or stoking the live fire.
- Regularly remove ashes from the woodstove into a metal container with a cover. Store the container of ashes outdoors on a cement or brick slab (not on a wood deck or near wood).
- Keep a fire extinguisher handy.

Weidner said that a new source of heat, corn stoves, has become increasingly popular in the Norfolk area.

“They are a nice option to a woodburning appliance from a safety standpoint. They are hands down safer because they have forced air chimneys and a tightly sealed burning area. Even the ashes are less likely to be hazardous than from a woodburning appliance,” Weidner said.

He added that corn burning stoves do have to be vented according to directions and that the vent should terminate at least one foot away from the siding.

Other winter hazards include letting a running vehicle “warm up” inside of a garage. Weidner reminds people to never have a vehicle idling in a garage or enclosed area.

“Some people forget they’ve left the engine running and the carbon monoxide fills the garage and goes into the house,” Weidner said.



Lit candles are another fire hazard. With the holiday season approaching more people are apt to light candles in their home.

“Just don’t leave a room that has a lit candle in it. If you’re going to use candles only use them if they can be supervised and attended to by an adult. Glass enclosed candles are

best but any sort of breeze can still flow a decoration into it and cause a fire,” Weidner said.

Besides checking heating sources, it’s also necessary to have a smoke alarm in every bedroom and to have at least one fire extinguisher on every level of the home and an additional one in the kitchen. A fire escape ladder is recommended for people who live in a two story home. Carbon monoxide alarms also help protect families from carbon monoxide poisoning.

Keeping warm this winter also requires keeping in mind the safety measures that go along with it.

Snow Removal in Norfolk

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) it's going to be a mild winter temperature-wise. Northeast Nebraska is still supposed to have normal precipitation which means an average of 30 inches of snow may fall this winter. The City of Norfolk Street Division is ready for it.

Snow removal is a big task for Jim Koch, Transportation, Building and Grounds Director for the City of Norfolk, who coordinates the operation.

With 135 miles of streets that include 102 miles of concrete, 25 miles of asphalt and 20 miles of alleys, the twenty people in charge of snow removal have a huge task. One change this year to the division is that a snowplow operator position was not filled so that a supervisor will now be in a snowplow.

Even before the first snowfall, street division staff has been out on the streets in October spreading liquid salt on trouble areas after a heavy frost.

The street division uses a mixture of 28% salt, 14% coal slag and the rest gravel to make icy streets safer. Although there is enough of the mixture to get the city through this winter season, due to availability the city will not be able to use slag in the future.

There are alternatives. M1000 and M2000 are mixtures that are derived from corn that some cities are using to spread on streets. Some cities use liquid salt brine on all of their streets. Koch said these products have their disadvantages.

"The de-icing compounds are a little expensive. We also have very little room for liquid storage and we have only one liquid truck," Koch said.

The cost for the dry rock salt currently used on the roads is \$30 per ton. The liquid salt brine is 5 cents per gallon while the M1000 mixture is 95 cents per gallon. Magnesium chloride, another ice melting compound, is \$95 per ton.

"We are going to have to change the way we de-ice," Koch said, "First of all because we can not get slag anymore and second, we have to be aware of what is going down the storm sewer."

Most cities are moving away from using gravel. Sand is not abrasive enough. The Nebraska

Number Facts—Street Division

49—Approximate number of cul-de-sac areas to be plowed

25—Number of units of equipment the city owns that are used to move snow and ice

468—Tons of salt used on city streets in the 2000-2001 winter season

212—Tons of salt used on city streets in the 2004-2005 winter season

4.2—Average amount of snow in inches for December in Norfolk

14,650—Gallons of liquid brine used on city streets in 2004-2005

3,177—Cost in dollars per inch of snow to get it off of the streets of Norfolk last year

25—Percentage of mailboxes that were surveyed and found improperly installed and prone to snow damage

1—The number of feet that snow flies for every mile per hour the snow plow travels

1,000—Approximate number of cubic yards of material that can be stored in the city's dome on Omaha Avenue

24—Amount of hours after the street has been opened in which the snow must be removed from sidewalks

Department of Roads does give the City of Norfolk a certain amount of liquid salt in exchange for use of the city's washing bay. This is what is used on the viaduct on South 13th Street and also the bridges on Norfolk Avenue, Omaha Avenue, and Benjamin Avenue to prevent slippery conditions. Once applied the residuals keep ice off the road for up to seven days.

City of Norfolk police officers will call into dispatchers when the streets are getting icy. The dispatchers then call the street director. The de-icing agents are usually applied to streets before 5:00 am when the morning traffic starts.

And when the snow does start coming down, City of Norfolk residents need to remember that during a snow emergency parking is allowed only on the even sides of the street.

"We'll get to you as soon as we can," Koch said.