

Nevada Supreme Court

Personal Security

Handbook



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Background

In response to growing concerns regarding the safety and security of Nevada's courthouses, judges, and judicial employees, the Judicial Council approved the creation of a task force to assess security for courts in Nevada and to recommend minimum standards for security. The task force has made the creation of documents that can be used by all the courts in Nevada has become a priority, and thusly, the task force has created this handbook

Introduction

As members of the judicial family, we are all aware of the high profile cases of threats and violence against judges and court officials. While many of these incidents occur at the courthouse or workplace, it is important to remember that, according to the U.S. Marshals Service, most assaults on judges and court personnel occur away from work. That is why the Nevada Supreme Court has created this personal safety handbook, to help judges and other court employees and officials take sensible steps to ensure their safety and the safety of their families.

Tips for Individual, House, Home, and Family

Many of us already employ several of the safety measures listed below as common sense; however, all of our family members may not be cognizant of the need to be conscious of these important personal security practices. That is why it is our job to teach the members of our family, using age appropriate language and strategies, to be smart about personal safety.

At Home

- Restrict possession of house keys, and change or re-key the locks if keys are ever lost or stolen. Also, remember to change the locks when moving into a previously occupied home.
- Keep your doors and windows locked, including the garage, at night and even when you are home. Make sure the door from the garage into the house is equipped with a deadbolt.
- Destroy all envelopes, documents, and other materials that display personal information or information identifying your position when you dispose of them. A personal shredder is an excellent way to go about doing this.
- Get to know your neighbors.
- Arrange for an unlisted home telephone number so your address will not be as readily accessible.
- Check your phone number using google.com, and if your address (and a map) appear you can request that google.com remove it.

Be Suspicious

- Always be aware of your surroundings.

- Be alert to utility crews and workmen who request access to your property, always check their identities, and call their employer if any questions persist.
- Be alert to peddlers and strangers.
- Refuse any unordered packages and any un-requested deliveries.
- Write down a description and the license numbers of any suspicious vehicles, and note descriptions of the occupants.
- Treat with suspicion any inquiries about the whereabouts or activities of family members.
- Report suspicious activities to local law enforcement.

Telephone Security

- Post emergency numbers by the phone, i.e. local law enforcement, hospitals, doctors, and the fire department.
- Do not answer your home phone with your name or official title.
- Report all threatening phone calls to local law enforcement.
- Consider using an answering machine to screen your phone calls, and do not include your name or phone number in your answering machine message.
- Have Caller ID for incoming calls, and use Caller ID Blocking to prevent your phone number from being displayed on outgoing calls.
- Avoid ordering services or products by telephone or online. If you do so, inform the merchant that you do not want your name and information given or sold to others.
- Women who live alone need to take special precautions to avoid identifying that fact on their answering machine. Also, only have your first initial and last name listed in the phone book.

When Going Out

- Avoid high risk areas, and vary your movements and routine as to not be predictable.
- Try to be inconspicuous when using public facilities and transportation. Do not wear clothing that calls attention to your official position. Your mannerisms and conduct should not attract attention.
- Avoid public demonstrations; do not be curious.

Special Precautions for Children

- Make sure your child knows his or her full name, address, and phone number.
- Instruct children to keep windows and doors locked and to never admit strangers.
- Teach children how to contact law enforcement or a trusted, responsible adult during an emergency.
- If children must be left home, keep the house well lit and let trusted neighbors know. Make sure your children know to never let a caller or someone at the door know that they are home alone.
- Know where you children are at all times.
- Tell your children to never leave home without notifying a parent where they are going and who they will be with.

- Advise your children to only travel in pairs or groups.
- Tell your children to walk only on busy streets, avoid isolated areas, and never to walk next to the curb.
- Have your children only use play areas where recreational activities are supervised by responsible adults.
- Make sure your children know to refuse automobile rides from strangers, and to never accompany a stranger anywhere, even if the stranger claims mom or dad said it was okay.
- Advise your children to report anyone who attempts to molest or annoy them to a trusted adult.
- Monitor your children's online activity and make sure that children are taught to never post personal information like their address, telephone number, information on their parents' jobs, and the location of their school. Pay special attention to your children's use of "social networking" sites like www.myspace.com and www.friendster.com, and make sure your children know to talk with you immediately if they encounter anything online that makes them uncomfortable.

Special Precautions for Persons with Disabilities

- Know and avoid situations that could invite crime and/or assault, i.e. dark alleyways and unlit parking lots.
- Be aware of your surroundings in the office, on the street, and in other public places.
- Have a plan on what to do if you are confronted, and be realistic about your limitations.
- When waiting for public transportation, wait in a centralized location near other passengers.
- Always carry medical information about you that emergency responders will need to know.
- Always carry a cell phone capable of dialing 911.
- Never identify yourself as alone or disabled to anyone who calls.

Suspicious Packages or Mail

- Suspicious characteristics to look for include:
 - An unusual or unknown place of origin.
 - No return address.
 - Excessive postage.
 - Oily stains.
 - Wires or stings protruding from, or attached to, an item.
 - Incorrect spelling on label.
 - Odd looking or foreign-style handwriting or misspelled or incorrect addressing.
 - Different postmark and return address.
 - Strange odor, as many explosives smell like shoe polish or almonds.
 - Unusual package weight.
 - Uneven balance or odd shape.

- Springiness in the top, bottom, or sides.
- Actions to Take
 - Never cut tape, stings, or wrapping on a suspicious package. Never immerse a suspicious package or letter in water, as either of these actions could cause an explosive device to detonate.
 - Never touch or move a suspicious package or letter.
 - Report any suspicious packages or mail to local law enforcement immediately.

Domestic Employees

- Conduct a thorough review of references and background.
- Inform domestic employees about their security responsibilities.
- Instruct domestic employees about emergency communication methods.

Security Precautions When You Are Away

- Maintain a lived-in look at you home.
- Stop deliveries, or arrange for them to be made to a neighbor or other trusted individual.
- Do not leave notes on doors.
- Do not hide keys outside.
- Use a timer to turn on lights at varied times and for varied intervals. Consider putting radios, TVs, etc., on timers as well.
- Hide valuables.
- Notify local law enforcement of your absence.
- Arrange for your mail to be secured during you absence, and stop delivery of your newspapers.
- Arrange for your yard to be maintained, have the lawn mowed or snow shoveled, while you are away.
- Ensure arrangements are made to make all payments on the regular schedule, and to take care of other routine duties while you are away.

Residential Security

- Exterior grounds:
 - Do not put your name on the outside of your residence or mailbox.
 - Make sure your home is well lit and use security (motion sensing) lighting.
 - Control vegetation and landscaping to eliminate hiding places and prevent obstruction of lines of sight. Trim trees at least 6 feet from the ground.
- Entrances and exits should have:
 - Solid doors that are at least 1 ¾ inches thick, with deadbolt locks.
 - One way peepholes in doors.
 - Bars and locks on skylights, windows, and sliding glass doors.
 - Equip glass doors and ground floor windows with interior release mechanisms that are not reachable from the outside.
- Interior Features:

- An alarm system, with battery backup, serviced by a reputable company with round the clock monitoring and an intercom system. Make sure all out buildings are included when the security system is installed, and test the system on a monthly basis. Make sure signs or decals indicating the presence of an alarm system are prominently displayed.
- Fire extinguishers.
- Medical and first-aid equipment.
- Install smoke detectors, heat sensors, and carbon monoxide detectors; preferably the types that are hard wired with a battery backup.
- Have emergency escape plans in case of fire or other incident.
- Apartment and Condominium Security:
 - Avoid using the laundry facilities in your complex by yourself. Team up with another tenant.
 - Develop relationships with other tenants in your building. A well organized tenant association would be most helpful.
 - Do not buzz strangers into the building and do not allow strangers to enter the building when you are either entering or leaving.
 - Notify your building manager if you will be away for an extended period of time.

Identity Theft Protection

- Shred or destroy documents and paperwork with personal information before you discard the documents.
- Protect your social security number. Do not carry your social security card with you and do not have your social security number put on your checks or drivers license. Never give out your social security number unless absolutely necessary.
- Never provide personal information on the phone, via mail, or via the internet unless you are dealing with an entity you know and trust.
- Never click on links in unsolicited e-mails, or provide any personal or financial information unless you type in the web address. Make sure you use effective internet security measures that are up to date like anti-virus software, anti-spyware programs, and a personal firewall. Also, make frequent back-up copies of important data on a removable disk and store it in a safe place.
- Be particularly wary of “phishing” e-mails which may appear to come from your bank or another company with which you do business, and request you click on a link to “verify personal information.”
- Make sure passwords and pin numbers are not obvious or easily guessed.
- Do not leave mail in your mailbox overnight or on weekends.
- Put all outgoing mail in a secure U.S. Postal Service collection box.
- Keep all personal information and important documents in a secure location. Make sure you include information on all your accounts, including customer service numbers.
- Keep an eye out for signs your identity may have been stolen like bills that do not arrive, unexpected account statements or credit cards, denial of credit for no apparent reason, and calls or letters about purchases you did not make.

- Monitor your credit report for suspicious activity. To obtain a free copy of your report go to www.annualcreditreport.com or call 1-877-322-8228.
- Carefully review all financial and account statements for suspicious or unauthorized activity.
- For more information on what to do if your identity is stolen, log on to www.ftc.gov/idtheft.

Campaigning Precautions

- Arrange for security at parades, dinners, and events.
- Take someone along when going door to door.
- Do not use your home address on campaign materials.
- Avoid riding in parades if there are not adequate crowd control and security measures in place.
- Considering controlling admission to campaign events with invitations or limited ticket sales.
- Do not personally post or remove campaign signs, if you can avoid it. Always take someone with you when putting up, or taking down, signs.
- Limit the number and size of campaign signs or stickers at your residence and on your vehicle.

Media and Communication Security

- Try to limit the amount of personal information regarding you that is available, take advantage of “opt out” policies and take care not to post information online.
- Do not provide the media with information regarding family activities or with the names, ages, etc. of children unless necessary.
- Do not tell the media about security measures you or your court have in place, and do not tell the media about any security deficiencies you or your court may be experiencing.
- Limit the amount of personal information you provide in public settings.
- Avoid using your official title in public when possible.
- Always attempt to address people in a calm and respectful manner.
- Avoid overindulging in the consumption of adult recreational beverages (alcoholic beverages) in public settings as this may compromise your best judgment and increase your vulnerability.
- Report any threats made to you or your family, whether made by phone, mail, e-mail, verbal communication, through an informant, or by any other means, to law enforcement immediately.

Tips on Ground Transportation Security

Traveling by motor vehicle can be one of the situations that most exposes any person to danger, as illustrated by the fact that, according to the Nevada Department of Transportation, 31,522 people were injured and 381 people were killed in traffic accidents in Nevada in 2002. Judges and court employees, however, face additional danger in that traveling by motor vehicle can expose them to assault and other dangerous situations based upon their professional affiliation. Many of the following tips may seem

like common sense and a few may seem extreme, but it the goal of this handbook to equip judges, court employees, and their families with knowledge that is applicable in handling any situation, no matter how remote the possibility.

Identification

- Do not use personalized plates that identify you by name or official position.
- Do not have your name or title displayed at your office parking place.

Auto Maintenance

- Keep your vehicle in good repair, and have it regularly serviced.
- Keep the gas tank at least ½ full.
- Park in well-lit areas.
- Always lock your vehicle, even at home.
- Do not park on the street overnight, if possible.
- Never get out of the car without checking for suspicious persons, activities, or surroundings.
- Leave only the ignition key, or valet key, with parking attendants.
- Do not allow entry into the trunk unless you are there to watch.
- Never leave garage doors open or unlocked.
- Use a remote garage door opener, if available, and enter and exit your vehicle in a secure garage if possible.
- Carry a road side emergency kit in your vehicle.
- Have your key ready when getting ready to return to your vehicle.
- Consider installing a remote starter on your vehicle.

On the Road

- Always travel with a cell phone, and make sure the battery is fully charged. Remember, all cell phones, even ones not on a calling plan, will call 911.
- Always plan your route and have appropriate maps and travel information available to you.
- If traveling long distances across Nevada ensure that trusted individuals know your travel plans, including departure and arrival times.
- Before leaving buildings to get into your vehicle, check the surrounding area to determine if anything of a suspicious nature exists. Display the same wariness before exiting your vehicle.
- Before entering vehicles, check for suspicious objects on the seats and floor, and pay special attention to the back seat.
- Guard against the establishment of routines by varying times, routes, and modes of travel.
- Avoid isolated roads and dark alleys if possible.
- Know the locations of “safe havens” along routes of travel.
- Ride with seatbelts fastened and doors locked.
- Do not allow your vehicle to be boxed in; maintain a minimum 8-foot interval between you and the vehicle in front of you. Try and avoid the use of interior lanes.

- If you are involved in an accident, call law enforcement, but do not identify yourself as a judge or court official, and wait for law enforcement to arrive.
- When traveling on a deserted road, do not pull over for another vehicle or to render assistance, use a cell phone to notify law enforcement.

If You Are Being Followed

- Circle the block for confirmation of surveillance.
- Do not stop or take other action that could lead to confrontation.
- Do not go home if you think you are being followed.
- Get a description of the vehicle and its occupants. Get the license plate number if possible.
- Go to the nearest “safe haven” and report the incident to local law enforcement.

Recognizing the Signals of an Attack

- Cyclist falling in front of your vehicle.
- Flagman or workman stopping your vehicle.
- Unusual or suspicious police checkpoint.
- Disabled vehicle/accident victims on the road.
- Unusual detours.
- An accident in which your car is struck.
- Car or pedestrian traffic that boxes you in.
- Sudden activity or gunfire.

How to Escape an Attack

- Without subjecting yourself to additional danger, try and draw attention to the situation by sounding your horn.
- Put another vehicle between you and your pursuer.
- Execute an immediate turn and escape, if jumping the curb is necessary use a 30 to 45 degree angle, at no faster than 35 mph.
- Ram blocking vehicle if necessary.
- When at a traffic signal, leave room between you and the car in front of you so you can escape if need be. Also, be aware of pedestrians on street corners and near the intersection.

Buses, Trains, and Taxis

- Vary mode of commercial transportation.
- Select busy stops.
- Do not use the same taxi company every time.
- Do not let anyone direct you to a specific cab.
- Ensure the face of the driver matches the picture on the license.
- Travel with a companion when possible.
- Specify the route you want the taxi to take, if possible.
- Carry exact change in your hand when boarding a bus, or paying for a taxi cab ride.

- Sit in the front of buses, near the driver, or in the middle of cars, away from the doors.
- When arriving by taxi, request that the driver wait until you are inside your destination.

Tips for Safety When Traveling by Air

Air travel poses unique security risks and problems. The following are simple precautions you can take.

Making Travel Arrangements

- Do not use your title on tickets, travel documents, or hotel reservations.
- Remember, window seats and seats in the rear of the plane provide greater protection for an assailant.
- Sitting in an emergency exit row may provide an opportunity to escape.

Precautions at the Airport

- Look for nervous passengers who maintain eye contact with others from a distance. Note behavior that is out of the ordinary.
- Avoid secluded areas that can provide concealment for attackers.
- Do not use your official title on luggage tags.
- Be aware of unattended luggage, and always maintain control of your luggage at all times.
- Report any suspicious activity or situations to airport police.
- Refer to www.tsa.gov for more information on airport and air travel security.

Tips on Security in the Workplace

The Nevada Supreme Court recognizes the variety of workplaces and court facilities that exist within our state, so some of the following tips may or may not be applicable to your specific work situation. However, the basic idea remains the same; use your common sense, best judgment, and whatever security features are in place at your facility in order to help ensure your personal safety and the safety of those you work with.

Security at Building Entrances

- Use only authorized entrances and exits.
- Do not use fire exits or freight exits except in emergencies. Using these exits in non-emergency situations may allow intruders to enter the building.
- When using parking facilities, report any suspicious activity like persons trying to gain entry into parked vehicles, persons carrying suspicious packages, persons loitering in parking facilities, and persons attempting to gain unauthorized access to parking facilities to law enforcement and security personnel immediately.
- If your facility utilizes employee identification badges make sure to always display your badge when entering the facility, never allow anyone else to use your employee badge, and never use your badge to provide entry to visitors.
- Make sure to report any broken windows, open emergency exits, and any other suspicious conditions to law enforcement and security personnel immediately.

- Do not attempt to bring any prohibited items or weapons into court facilities.

Security Inside Buildings

- Make sure all doors leading to public areas have secure locking mechanisms.
- Use an organized key control system to track possession of keys. A key inventory should be conducted semi-annually, and if any keys are missing, locks should be replaced.
- Have facilities cleaned during the day, if possible, so as to not allow cleaning personnel to have access to security alarms or other security features.
- Make sure a file of emergency contacts for employees and coworkers is maintained at your facility.
- If your facility is equipped with alarms, make sure you know the location of alarms and how to use them.
- Do not allow visitors access to secure areas without first having them check in or comply with facility security procedures.
- Report any unauthorized persons in your work area immediately, and try to provide a description of the person as well as the last location in which you saw them.
- Be curious, ask strangers in your work space for identification and ask why they are there.
- Do not admit unexpected visitors, included repair and delivery people, without checking with you supervisor or security personnel first.
- Keep security doors locked at all times.
- Make sure to keep sensitive files, valuable items, and valuable personal property under lock and key at all times.
- Do not leave personal property in locations where it can be stolen or tampered with.
- If working outside of normal business hours; keep all doors locked, never “advertise” that you may be working alone, and be wary of persons concealing themselves in your facility.
- Be alert for strange objects and packages in and around your facility. Report any such packages or objects to law enforcement and security personnel immediately.

Bomb Threats and Personal Threats

- If you receive a bomb threat by telephone immediately call law enforcement and security personnel, and put into action any policies your facility may have regarding such an incident.
- If you receive a threat, make sure to record the following information: telephone number that the threat was received on, time of the threat, and the words of the caller.
- It may seem strange, but sometimes persons making bomb threats may answer questions that can provide valuable information to those handling and investigation the threat. If you receive a threat you should ask the following questions:
 - When will the bomb explode?

- Where is the bomb?
- What does the bomb look like?
- What kind of bomb is it?
- What is your name?
- What is your address?
- What is your telephone number?
- Where are you calling from?
- Why did you plant the bomb?
- Make special note of the caller's voice (calm, excited, disguised, accent, etc.), the caller's sex, the caller's age (as indicated by voice), if the caller's voice was familiar, and any background noise during the call.
- If you receive a personal threat via the telephone, follow the same basic procedures as outline above for a bomb threat, but make sure to ask what the caller wants and make note of any related threats and inform law enforcement of any reason you suspect the threat was made.
- Follow the same guidelines outlined in the earlier section regarding "Suspicious Packages or Mail" when you are at your court facility.

Evacuation of the Workplace

- Make sure you are familiar with any evacuation procedures your facility has in place, and make sure any people who work under you are familiar with the procedures as well.
- Make sure you know the location of emergency exits and make sure you know the best evacuation route from you work area.
- Make sure you know where the fire alarm boxes in your facility are and make sure you know how to activate them.
- Make sure you know who your "floor warden" is, if your facility has "floor wardens", always follow the instructions of your "floor warden" during an emergency, and make sure you know the emergency contact procedures.

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