

# Precautions can help make travel alone safer

By Kim Kemske  
Special Writer

Going home for the holidays? If you're a woman traveling alone, there are a few things you should think about before you pack your bags. Whether you're driving, flying or taking a bus, here are a few suggestions on what you can do to increase your personal safety:

■ If you plan to drive: When possible, avoid traveling alone. Find out if a friend or relative is planning to travel in the same direction.

■ Be sure to keep your car in good repair and keep enough gas in your tank to take you to your destination, or at least the next service station.

■ Always keep your car doors locked and your windows up, at least most of the way. Check the

## HILLS POLICE

back seat of your car every time you get in.

■ Remain alert and aware of your surroundings, particularly in underground parking structures and dark or secluded areas.

■ Park in well-lighted areas and, when possible, have someone escort you to your car after dark.

■ Keep your eyes open when stopped at a light, parking lot, driveway or pay phone. If you see or hear something that makes you feel uneasy, be ready to move on.

■ If you're involved in a minor car accident and are alone, or in a secluded area, keep your car doors locked and tell the other driver, through your car window, that you

will meet him/her at the local police department where you can both file a police report.

■ If your car breaks down, activate your emergency flasher lights, raise your hood, tie a white flag on the antenna or door, and remain inside the car with doors locked until the police arrive.

■ If someone in an unmarked vehicle motions you to pull over, keep driving unless there are lights, sirens or other indicators that it is a police vehicle. If pulled over by someone in an unmarked vehicle, you have the right to ask for identification.

■ Don't get out of your car to help a stranded motorist. Signal that you will get help and then go to a telephone to call the police.

■ If you believe you are being followed, go to a well-lighted busi-

ness or a police station and sound your horn, flash your lights, draw attention to yourself. Report the incident to police, providing the license plate number and description of the car and the person.

■ Carry a whistle or sound alarm to blow in case you are attacked or harassed. The Police Department does not recommend the use of mace or chemical sprays for self protection. The risk is that any such weapon could be used against you by an attacker.

When riding:

■ Stay awake and alert while riding. Keep your purse closed and on your lap. On a bus, try to sit near the front and ask the driver if you're unsure of where you're going.

■ If taking a cab or bus, ask the

driver to wait until you're safely inside the building.

■ Dress for freedom of movement. No long, confining skirts, tight jeans, platform shoes, long scarves, necklaces or capes.

■ If you stay in a hotel or motel, ask to be shown to your room and have a precautionary inspection conducted of the room prior to entering.

■ If it is necessary for you to park in a remote or hazardous area, ask a hotel employee to escort you to your car when you leave the building.

■ Always identify callers through a peephole before opening your door. Ask service people for identification before allowing entry to your home. If in doubt, don't let anyone in. Never let callers, on the phone or at your door, know

when you're home alone.

■ Plan to bring along a portable auxiliary locking device. Security door bars are available that will fit under the knob of any door and extend to the floor. The best ones are collapsible and are fitted at both ends with non-skid rubber grips. If you don't have a chance to purchase or borrow this type of device, use a chair in front of the door.

■ Always report suspicious activities, people or vehicles to the police as quickly as possible. If it looks suspicious to you, it is probably worth checking. Trust your intuition and act on it.

Awareness and precaution are your best defense against crime. For your own sake, know what steps to take to avoid becoming a victim.

## Share

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One day, 2½ years ago, Charlotte Tessler was on her way to have lunch with longtime friend Zuroff, who was at home recovering from surgery. The phone rang — it was Tessler's doctor, who told her that her mammogram "didn't look good."

Tessler was diagnosed with breast cancer and had surgery five days later.

"I had been supporting her all those years, who knew she would be supporting me?" Tessler said of her friendship with Zuroff. "It's ironic."

### Money issue

Some of the women said that although cancer is prevalent, not enough is being done to find a cure. Dianne Joseph, a Hills resident who had a partial mastectomy six months ago, said she thinks more money is being pushed toward AIDS research than cancer, especially breast cancer.

Many of the women also expressed concern about the legacy left to their daughters. Zuroff said women are concerned about heredity and about daughters of breast or ovarian cancer patients being more likely to develop cancer themselves.

Tessler's sister went into a Pennsylvania hospital Tuesday for a lumpectomy.

"The good news is that she knows where I am," Tessler said. "The bad news is that she knows what she has to go through."

But cancer survivors, like Zuroff, can surprise themselves.

"I never knew I would have the courage and the determination to do all that I had to do," Zuroff said. "I discovered that in the midst of serious illness, it was crucial that I cling to some semblance of normalcy."

But even clinging to normalcy can be difficult for cancer survivors, especially when the fear of recurrence can be so overwhelming.

Marcia Amhowitz, a Hills resident, was diagnosed with breast cancer 10 years ago. In August, she was told that the cancer had recurred.

But she told the women that the cancer is not going to get the best of her.

"I decided 10 years ago it wasn't going to put me down," Amhowitz said. "Whatever time I have, it's going to be quality time. It isn't going to put me down."

She was hailed with a round of applause.

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