

A Safer Naperville

July --- Personal Safety

Summer is finally here and there are so many special events in Naperville. The Naperville Police Department encourages all our residents to get out and take advantage of as many of the events as possible, but we also want to remind everyone to be safe while doing so.

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

Situational Awareness is, in the simplest of terms, being aware of your surroundings. It may sound easy, but with the speed at which our lives move these days and the number of distractions we encounter on a regular basis, it's far more difficult than one might realize.

Here are a few tips to help you hone this personal safety skillset:

Identify Your Surrounding: The first step in achieving Situational Awareness is to become aware of what is around you. Identify the type of environment you are in, large crowd compared to a secluded area. Observe other people and their actions.

Trust Your Feelings: Listen to your gut. When you have a feeling that something is wrong, trust it. It is better to be wrong and safe than ignore the feeling and expose you or your family to danger. If you think a crime is about to be committed, call 9-1-1.

Avoid Complacency: Actively keep yourself in the right mindset. Never assume that because you've done something safely before that nothing will happen this time. Continue to challenge yourself and those around you to be prepared for contingencies. Do a mental check every now and then.

Have a Plan: Talking with your family about what to do in different situations will prepare them for when it happens. Knowing what to do beforehand will allow you to stay calm and better handle the situation. Create preparedness and response plans with your family to address likely risks.

By practicing situational awareness, you can avoid being in dangerous situations and even identify criminal behavior. The more aware we are of what's going on around us, the less opportunity there will be for accidents, crimes or other unfortunate circumstances.

TIPS FOR PARENTS AT CROWDED PLACES

A parent's biggest fear is losing a little one, and keeping track of them while at a crowded venue such as Ribfest or Last Fling is no small task. Before you head out on your next family outing, set up family guidelines and what-if plans. The amount of freedom you give your children will be influenced by their age and maturity.

Here are a few tips for keeping your family together in a crowd.

Dress in bright colors: Neon green, bright orange or safety yellow are colors that get noticed. Adding other identifiable accessories such as a fun watch, reflective strips or bright hair accessories will help you and/or law enforcement to quickly scan a crowd for your child.

Take a family picture: Before heading out for the day take a family photo. In a panic, some people cannot remember correctly what everyone is wearing that day. A photo of what your family members are wearing that day can be shared with law enforcement, security and/or event staff to aid in locating your child.

Child identification: Having your child wear a lanyard, under their shirt, with important information like their name, your name and immediate contact information. Or put this information on a piece of paper and put in into their pocket for them to retrieve if they become separated from you. You can even get temporary tattoos on which you can write their name and your cell phone.

Coach kids on an action plan if they get separated: Ask your children, *“What will you do if you become separated from me?”* Teach your kids to stay where they are and yell out their parent’s name. Ask them, *“Who is the safe adult to ask for help?”* In the ideal world, this would be a police officer, firefighter, security guard or event employee. In a panic, however, have them look for another mom with children. Have you ever meet a mom who wouldn’t help a child?

Check the map first: Start the day off by locating the park’s information centers in advance so you can point them out to your children or get to them quickly in case of an emergency. Also, look for the first-aid and baby-care centers.

Have a meeting location and time: Besides the challenge of keeping an eye the little ones, pre-teens and teens are another challenge. Have the older children check in with you throughout the day at prearranged meeting locations and times.

Remember it only takes a moment for a child to become separated from you. If your child does become lost, do a quick sensory search. Call out their name. This will alert others around you to the situation. If you don’t find them notify an employee/event staff/law enforcement.

College Safety

As many new college freshmen are getting ready for “move-in” day on college campuses across the nation, the Naperville Police Department wants to be sure that parents are sending off their young adults safely. The Department is offering a presentation on July 25th at 7 p.m. entitled, “Safety for the College Bound Student,” and encourages all college freshmen and their parents to attend.

The presentation has two distinct focuses. The first part of the program will educate students and parents about drugs, alcohol, and the law. The second portion of the presentation will concentrate on personal safety. The Naperville Police Department wants students to start their college careers armed with the necessary knowledge and skills to keep themselves and their property safe.

No registration is required for this class, which will be held at the Naperville Police Department, 1350 Aurora Ave., Naperville. For more information contact Crime Prevention Specialist Mary Browning at 630-420-6731.