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**CREATING YOUR  
OWN SAFETY IN  
HARRIS COUNTY**

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# CRIME IN HARRIS COUNTY

Violent crime in Harris County has been on an upward trend for several years and spiked nearly 50% in Houston as COVID-19 descended upon the 4<sup>th</sup> largest city in the country. The lion's share, 74.9%, of those arrested for felony offenses had previous convictions. Recidivism is the malignancy that feeds Harris County's rising crime rates.

There are about 20,000 gang members, in an estimated 300 gangs, in the greater Houston area, according to law enforcement.

Harris County is plainly in the midst of a safety crisis. According to the annual FBI Uniform Crime Report, rape cases in 2019 were cleared at a rate of *only* 11.5%. That means if you are raped in Harris County, there is about a **90%** chance your rapist walks away. The clearance rate for burglaries in 2019 was 2.29%. Rates that low violate your fundamental sense of security at home and work.

There are 166 budgeted, but vacant deputy positions in the Harris County Sheriff's Office. The officers we do have are overloaded, overwhelmed, undervalued and Harris county residents are underserved.

The goal of this brief Ebook is to share tips with Harris County residents to help them keep themselves, their families, their homes and their workplaces safe.

I know Harris County inside and out because I've proudly called it home my entire life. I was born at St. Joseph Hospital and was raised with 8 sisters and 1 brother. Harris County is where I worked my first paper route at 9 years old, where I started a business, where my bride and raised OUR children and where I've now served as a law enforcement officer for nearly **3 decades**.

I'm a Master Peace Officer and have worked in every division of the Constable's Office. I've got extensive experience coordinating law enforcement efforts with the FBI, HPD, HCSO and TXDOT.

It's my privilege to serve the citizens of Harris County. You are my family, my friends, my neighbors, my colleagues and my community. I know what you go through every day. I've seen every hidden corner of Harris County. From boardrooms to bus stops, we all have the same drive to keep our loved ones safe and I hope you'll find some helpful safety tips in the pages.

# PERSONAL SAFETY

According to the FBI's 2018 Crime Clock, a violent crime occurred every 26.2 seconds – and since Harris County is the third largest county in the United States, we've seen a significant number of those crimes on our news feeds.

If there's one thing I want to impart to every reader in this book, it's that in all of my years of protecting others, the truth is that there's no one better to protect yourself than YOU. You not only possess the instinct that signals to your subconscious that something is not right, but you can act quickly and decisively to dangerous situations they escalate.

Don't misunderstand, you can do everything you possibly can to protect yourself and still be victimized. We live in a beautiful, but unpredictable world. My hope is that I can help you and your family raise your situational awareness and defy the odds.

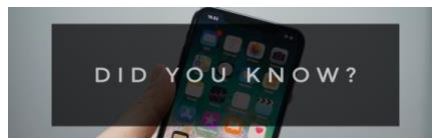
*The three most basic rules of personal safety are:*

- 1) **Stay alert.** Situational awareness is paramount to protecting your personal safety.
- 2) **Be confident in public.** or at least give the appearance of confidence that you know where you're going, you're calm and walk with purpose.
- 3) **Trust your instinct.** Take stock of how you feel in a situation. Sometimes our bodies know something isn't right before our brains do. It's called a "gut feeling" for a reason.

*Personal safety before you get into your vehicle*

- ⇒ It can get expensive, but it can save your life: make sure your vehicle's maintenance stays up to date. A flat or blown out tire can leave you stranded in an unfamiliar, unsafe place after dark. Many tire shops such as [Discount Tire](#) offer free tire air and tread checks, sometimes you don't even have to get out of your car!
- ⇒ Make sure your phone is fully charged before you leave home or work. Carry a [portable battery pack](#) with you at all times for backup in the event your vehicle battery dies.

- ⇒ Invest in an [inexpensive emergency kit](#) for your car that at least includes jumper cables, a first aid kit and a flashlight.
- ⇒ Park in a well-lit area, preferably under a light post so you can see your car and its surroundings from a distance.
- ⇒ Scan the parking lot before exiting a building or your car for suspicious activity.
- ⇒ Hold your key in your hand with thumb or index finger over the panic button on your key fob before you exit a building before you head to your car. Fumbling around in your purse or pockets raises your vulnerability.
- ⇒ Carry a small can of pepper spray.
- ⇒ If you have a physical car key, hold it so the key is sticking through your fingers to use as a weapon if you are attacked.
- ⇒ Look under, around and inside your car as you approach your vehicle.
- ⇒ If you are leaving the grocery store with a basket full of groceries and a young child or someone you need to give your attention to such as an elderly companion or person with reduced abilities, ask for assistance to your car. Store stockers, clerks and managers at nearly any store will almost always happily escort you to your car with your purchases.
- ⇒ Make sure your phone is easily accessible in case you need to call for help quickly.



If you have an iPhone (8 or later), press and hold the side button and one of the volume buttons until the Emergency SOS slider appears. Drag the slider to call emergency services. In a situation where you cannot drag the slider, if you continue to hold down the side button and volume button, a countdown begins and an alert sounds. If you hold down the buttons until the countdown ends, your iPhone automatically calls emergency services.

For an iPhone 7 or earlier: Rapidly press the side (or top) button five times. The Emergency SOS slider will appear. Drag the slider to call emergency services.

After the call ends, your iPhone sends your Emergency contacts a text message with your current location, unless you choose to cancel. If Location Services is off, it will temporarily turn on. If your location changes, your contacts will get an update, and you'll get a notification about 10 minutes later.

### *Personal safety once you are in your vehicle*

- ⇒ Lock your doors.
- ⇒ Do not become involved in a road rage incident. You never know what's going on in someone else's life, it's not worth a life-threatening confrontation. Take a deep breath and safely avoid angry drivers and don't make obscene gestures.
- ⇒ If you think someone is following you, pull into the right-hand lane and allow them to pass.
- ⇒ Do not go home if you think you are being followed. Pull up a map on your phone and start driving to the nearest police station, then call 911 to let them know you are being followed and where you are going.
- ⇒ Leave room between your car and the one in front of you at a stop light or stop sign so that you can drive around the car if necessary.
- ⇒ Continue to be aware of your surrounding when stopped at intersections.
- ⇒ When you arrive at your destination do not leave anything of value within plain sight.

### *Personal safety in a vehicle for hire (Uber, Lyft, etc.)*

- ⇒ Wait for your driver in a well-lit, safe place (preferably indoors) and have your cellphone in hand.
- ⇒ Before entering the vehicle, verify the car and driver by making sure the name and license plate matches the one given on the app and the driver bears a resemblance to their profile photo.
- ⇒ Before entering the vehicle, also make sure the driver verifies *your* name or ask, "What's my name." It's easy for criminals to pose as drivers after big events like concerts or games when there is a rush of people trying to go home.
- ⇒ Share your trip status or route with a friend or family member through the app. If you have an iPhone turn on location and share with a friend or family member.
- ⇒ Invest in on-the go safety technology. The [iWitness app](#) turns your phone into a personal security system with a security camera, alarm and emergency 911 calling just a tap or shake away.
- ⇒ Choose where to sit. It's a red flag if a driver tries to dictate where you sit. Unless there's a good reason, it is safer to sit in the backseat on the passenger side so that you can keep your eye on the driver and have access to two exits.