

## Response To "Safety Tips For Women" E-Mail

Submitted by ISCPP Member Susan Bartelstone, New York, USA

A popular Webmail I received several times is one titled "Safety Tips for Women." It claims to be written by a woman who discovered this vital information about women's safety and, of course, wanted to pass it along to all her female friends. And, of course, she urged them to pass it along to their friends and so on. This Webmail also contained some information I consider to be inaccurate and misleading. Below is my response to the Webmailer:

**THE WEBMAIL SAID:** "Tip from Tae Kwon Do: the elbow is the strongest point on your body. If you are close enough to use it, do!"

**Response:** First (and admittedly this is nit-picky), this could also be a tip from Kung Fu or Karate, okaaay. Just had to say that! Second, this is a pretty useless tip. Using elbows to fight with is fine, but how should you strike with them and what targets are the best? It's dangerous to start flailing appendages around without knowing these important things (or taking a course to practice them). Third, in my opinion, your legs (knees, feet) are far stronger than your elbows; but what body part you strike with, and where, is best determined by what vulnerable areas on your attacker's body are reachable.

**THE WEBMAIL SAID:** "I learned this from a tourist guide in New Orleans: If a robber asks for your wallet and/or purse, DO NOT HAND IT TO HIM. Toss it away from you...chances are that he is more

interested in your wallet and/or purse than you and he will go for the wallet/purse. RUN LIKE MAD IN THE OTHER DIRECTION!"

**Response:** I DON'T LIKE THIS ADVICE AT ALL!!! NEVER PLAY GAMES WITH A MUGGER. It could anger him and cause him to become violent unnecessarily. Just do what he says and give him your pocketbook or wallet calmly. That's your best chance of getting away safely. See my "Meeting Up with a Mugger" tipsheet on my website ([www.dearsafetysolutions.com/safetytips.html](http://www.dearsafetysolutions.com/safetytips.html)) for information on how to respond safely in a street robbery.

**THE WEBMAIL SAID:** "If you are ever thrown into the trunk of a car: Kick out the back tail lights and stick your arm out the hole and start waving like crazy. The driver won't see you but everybody else will. This has saved lives."

**Response:** This tactic is ok in a pinch but the design of many cars makes the taillight inaccessible from the trunk. Better to look for an inside trunk release or for something to use as a weapon to strike you. Consider putting a trunk release in your own car in the event of just such a situation. Since this is an extremely dangerous scenario, also consider putting up an all-out battle to prevent this from happening in the first place.

(Continued on page 4)



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"It's dangerous to start flailing appendages around without knowing these important things."

## Masked Hoodie A New Concern for Armed Robbery Prevention

Continued from Page 1

- Empower employees to ask customers to remove hoods of a hoodie especially if it obscures the customer's face.
- Empower employees to ask customers to remove hats and sunglasses inside the store or bank

especially if it obscures the customer's face.

These policies will help prevent armed robbery and will help police to find the suspect. ■



## Response To “Safety Tips For Women” E-Mail

*Continued from Page 3*

Susan Bartlestone, ICPS, teaches and writes on various crime prevention topics. She has taught personal safety courses to thousands of men and women.

She's been featured in a long and varied list of media (including "America's Most Wanted" and the "Today Show") and her articles have appeared in over two dozen publications.

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“There is no “ALWAYS” in a crime scenario and no blanket responses.”



**THE WEBMAIL SAID:** "Women have a tendency to get into their cars after shopping, eating, and working and just sit (doing their checkbook, or making a list, etc.). Don't do this! The predator will be watching you, and this is the perfect opportunity for him to get in on the passenger side, put a gun to your head, and tell you where to go. As soon as you get into your car, lock the doors and leave."

**Response:** Overly paranoid—though it's good advice to get into the habit of locking your car doors immediately after you get in. If you remain alert, you should be able to sit in your car awhile and kill time safely. Just be ready to take off at the first sign of trouble. How long you spend killing time, however, should depend on whether you're in an isolated parking lot (or a garage) or a crowded shopping mall. Don't linger in garages or isolated areas.

**THE WEBMAIL SAID:** "A few notes about getting into your car in a parking lot or garage:

A) "Be aware and look around you before you get in the car. Also casually check under the car, at the passenger side floor and in the back seat."

**Response:** Absolutely!

B) "If you are parked next to a big van, enter your car from the passenger door. Many serial killers attack their victims by pulling them into their vans while the women were attempting to get into their cars."

**Response:** Why not.

C) "Look at the car parked on the driver's side of your vehicle and the passenger side. If a male is sitting alone in the seat nearest your car, you may want to walk back into the mall, or work, and get a guard/policeman to walk you back out. IT IS ALWAYS BETTER TO BE SAFE THAN SORRY. Better paranoid than dead. "

**Response:** Of course, it's better to be safe than sorry and it's fine to be

reasonably paranoid...but this is being overly paranoid! A man simply sitting alone in a car isn't a suspicious act. Stay alert, let your instincts guide you and have a backup plan in place (like a handy canister of pepper spray) in case there IS trouble.

**THE WEBMAIL SAID:** "If the predator has a gun and you are not under his control, ALWAYS RUN! The predator will only hit you (a running target) 4 in 100 times; and even then, it most likely will not be a vital organ. RUN!"

**Response: THIS IS DANGEROUS ADVICE.** There's no "ALWAYS" in a crime scenario and no blanket responses. Be careful about running from a person with a gun. Law enforcement studies do indicate a large percentage of shots miss (even at close range), but much less so if the shooter is skilled...or if he runs after you—thereby closing the gap! A safer strategy would be to look for a barrier or some kind of cover (keep in mind that high-caliber bullets can penetrate a car or door) and bone up on how to negotiate in a crisis.

**Bottom line: only respond in the way you judge safest. Submitting to a criminal, with or without resistance, is a valid option if it will save your life.**

**THE WEBMAIL SAID:** "As women, we are always trying to be sympathetic ... STOP IT! It may get you raped, or killed."

**Response:** Overly paranoid. If you know how to take care of yourself (via a self defense or martial arts course) and use common sense, you can be sympathetic yet cautious at the same time. Get training and don't lose your humanity.

Always be cautious about what you read on the Internet. Try to corroborate its veracity first before acting on or passing along the information. A great website to check is [www.snopes.com](http://www.snopes.com). ■