



Hello, Officer Dave Runge here to bring you this weeks safety tips. This is the second article in a series that we are bringing you to hopefully make your experience in Fairmont as safe as possible. I have been a Police Officer in Fairmont since January 1997. I grew up in Mankato and received my law enforcement training at Minnesota State University, Mankato. This week I would like to talk to you about outdoor safety and National Night Out.

Just 10 short months ago an elderly lady was struck and killed by a vehicle on State Street by the VFW. Last week a nine-year-old was hit by a car while crossing Blue Earth Avenue. Neither one was in a crosswalk. In 2003, fifty-two pedestrians were killed in motor vehicle crashes. Sixty-one percent of them were simply going straight ahead in the roadway prior to the crash(e.g.- walking with traffic on the side of the road) . As expected, one out of three of the pedestrians killed were trying to cross a road where there were no crosswalk and no signal. Fortunately, All of these deaths are preventable.

Here are some important tips to help prevent you from being a statistic.

1. Always walk on the left side of the roadway(against oncoming traffic). Not only is this a good idea, it is state law.
2. Another law is that you must walk on a sidewalk when one is accessible and useable.

3. Always wear bright clothing or have some type of strobe light clearly visible. I work mainly during the night and it is remarkable how many people I see walking or jogging that are wearing dark clothing. At night they are almost impossible to see.
4. When crossing a street, do so at a crosswalk. Not only is jay-walking illegal, it is dangerous. A reminder to drivers; you must completely stop your vehicle and yield to a pedestrian in a crosswalk.
5. Walk or jog with a known companion and in a familiar area. Do not walk or jog in a heavily wooded, poorly lit or secluded area.
6. Do not walk or jog with headphones on. They make it more difficult to hear a vehicle approaching or someone sneaking up on you.
7. If a stray dog is encountered, do not turn and run away. This only triggers the chase instinct in them. Instead, stand still and be calm. Allow the dog to smell you and then tell it "no! Go home!". Then back away slowly until the dog is out of sight.
8. Carry a whistle or some Mace with when you walk or jog.

Mace and stun guns are legal to own and carry with you. They are both very effective at warding off an attacker if used correctly. Many companies offer small mace canisters that fit on a key ring or clip onto a shirt or pocket. State law says that a person may possess and use an authorized tear gas compound(Mace) or an electronic incapacitation device(stun gun) in the exercise of reasonable force in defense of the person or the person's property. No person under the age of 16 may possess or use a tear gas compound without written permission of a parent or guardian and no person under the age of 18 may possess or use a stun gun. Please note that no person shall knowingly use a tear gas compound or stun gun against a police officer who is in the performance of his duties. Both are also considered a weapon when used in the commission of a crime.

I checked with a few retailers in our area and found that Kmart was the only one that carried mace. None of them carried stun guns. Both can easily be found and purchased on the Internet just by searching "Mace" or "stun gun."

Here are just a few other safety tips to consider when out and about this year. Never hitchhike! It's not worth the risk. Be careful when using outside ATM's at night or in unfamiliar surroundings. Try not to overload yourself with packages or other items. Keep your hands as free as possible. If you have a cellular phone, carry it with you. Lastly, if you carry a purse, carry it close to your body, preferably in front. Carry no more money or credit cards than you absolutely need.

Please remember to call the Law Enforcement center at 238-4481 (or 911 in an emergency) if you see something illegal happening or someone acting suspicious. It may be your call that helps us solve a crime.

One last thing I would like to talk about is National Night Out(NNO). NNO is a unique crime/drug awareness event where you can help take back the streets from the criminals. Last year the NNO campaign involved citizens, law enforcement agencies, civic groups, businesses, neighborhood organizations and local officials from over 10,000 communities

from all 50 states, US territories, Canadian cities and military bases worldwide. In all, over 34 million people participated in NNO in 2004.

Once again the Fairmont Police Department will be hosting the event. This year it will be held on August 2nd so mark your calendars. The free meal and several interesting demonstrations are set for 5:30 PM at Gomsrud Park. Then at 8:00 PM the festivities will move to the Aquatic Park for some free water fun. Please join us and send a message to criminals letting them know that neighborhoods are organized and fighting back!