



Home Alone!

During the summer months, many children stay home alone and care for themselves while parents work. It is estimated that more than five million children are home alone for some part of the day. Some children enjoy caring for themselves and happily accept the added responsibility. Others may be lonely, bored, or scared. For all of them, it is an excellent opportunity for parents to discuss safety and crime prevention.

When deciding whether or not to allow children to stay home alone, it is important that you make sure your child is mature enough to follow the rules and react properly in unexpected situations. Parents should focus on setting rules and limitations, increasing levels of responsibility, and communicating basic safety information to promote self-care skills. Follow these tips.

Children should:

- *Memorize their full name, address, and phone number.
- *Always check in with you or a trusted neighbor when leaving the house or arriving home.
- *Know how to properly use the 9-1-1 emergency system.
- *Never accept rides or gifts from people they don't know.
- *Keep the doors and windows locked when home alone.
- *Never open the door to a stranger or let a stranger into the home.
- *Never tell a caller or someone at the door they are home alone.
- *Always carry a house key.
- *Know how to get out of the house in case of fire.
- *Never go into a neighbor's house without your permission.
- *Keep a list of emergency contact numbers close to the phone.
- *Tell you if something happens that makes them feel scared or uncomfortable.

Parents should also set rules and guidelines for Internet usage, and make sure to carefully monitor what sites their child is visiting, and whom their child is talking to on the Internet.

Child predators no longer have to cruise parks and playgrounds; they can easily find their victims online.

