

Complacency Can Get You Killed



Just as an unlocked footlocker is an invitation to thievery, being complacent in your daily life can result in you becoming a victim of crime.

A few years ago, a murder occurred in our little town. It happened in a private residence as the result of an argument, and the killer got away. It was 24 hours before he was found in a nearby vacant lot where he had committed suicide, probably within minutes after committing his heinous crime.

But, in those 24 hours following the shooting, our little town went into panic mode over the fact that a killer was on the loose. Doors were getting locked that probably hadn't been locked in the past 10 years. Keys were taken out of some cars for the first time ever, and I'm sure that the local gun shop had a high-revenue day. Everywhere you went, you heard, "This is unbelievable! It just can't be happening in our little town!"

Well, of course it can. Crime happens everywhere—in seedy neighborhoods and even in upscale zip codes. Everywhere. In some places it occurs less frequently, however, and that can cause some people to become complacent.

We even see complacency among police officers. The cops who are working armed-robbery details, narcotics raids and felony apprehensions stay pretty well-tuned-up and alert. But, the officer who is assigned to daytime traffic patrol may be a whole other story.

He or she doesn't see the fights and the shootouts on such a regular basis and may tend to not spend too much time thinking about it. They may be the type who leaves their ballistic vest at home because it is just too hot today. Complacency.

And we certainly see complacency among armed citizens. These are the folks who have a defensive handgun, but only carry when they think they might need it. Or they leave it in their car to keep it handy—which assumes they will be anywhere near their car when the balloon goes up, or that they will have time to get to the gun.

Then there are the armed citizens who don't seek out professional training because they got it in military service, however long ago that might have been. They think they can rely on a few days of training, from some 20 to 30 years ago, knowing full well that shooting skills are quickly diminishing skills. Complacency.

Back in the early part of the summer, we had a film crew out here to shoot a TV show. Since they weren't from around here, I gave them a little talk about rattlesnakes and how to avoid them. The first few days, I could tell that they were being careful, but by the end of the week, they were stomping around without a care in the world. They hadn't seen a snake, so they forgot about it.

But then I, too, live in a small town that has little violence. So, what do I do about it? My solution is found in being a full-time defensive writer and teacher. As I remind you of these things, I consciously remind myself of the need to be vigilant, to train and to practice.

It is that reminder we need. Folks living in or near high-crime areas get that reminder every time they hear the sirens, watch the local news or see the results as they drive down their streets. Nothing reminds you to drive carefully like driving past the scene of a major accident. And, nothing reminds you to stay defensively alert like driving by the scene of a violent crime.

Those of us who live in more peaceful climes can avoid complacency by daily giving some thought to our personal-defense plan. We need to deliberately set aside that time each day. It is even better if we have regular discussions with other family members or friends.

Some female friends of mine have a local chapter of The Well Armed Woman that meets once a month. Since ammunition has been so hard to get of late, they have turned those monthly meetings from range sessions into a lecture series. In a much more relaxed atmosphere than is found at the shooting range, they can sit around and discuss tactics, ask questions and share ideas. I would suggest local discussion groups with qualified guest speakers for anyone who is serious about their own safety.

The simple fact is no one can afford to be complacent, because anyone and everyone can be the victim of violent crime. Living in a small town will not stop it. Living in an upscale neighborhood won't stop it. Having the most professional police department in the whole country won't stop it, either.

We can't eliminate violent crime, but we can prepare to deal with it. That's why we get good training and practice what we've been taught. It is why we research and purchase quality equipment and then take the time to really learn how to use it. It's why we spend time developing a defense plan and continually modify and improve it. It is why we get serious about our own safety and avoid complacency.