



Tips for Your New Home

Tip 1: Consider getting a PO Box.

Having a PO Box is a good safety measure for several reasons:

- If you are relocating temporarily or find that you need to relocate quickly, it minimizes the need for changing your address or having to go back to an unsafe situation to get your mail.
- It minimizes the risk of your abuser accessing your personal information.
- Having a PO Box can also be a safer option if you are still in an abusive relationship and want to begin receiving mail about available housing options, properties, etc.
- Apartment complex mailboxes are sometimes situated either outside of the entryway or on a walk way several feet from the entrance. This could potentially put you in a vulnerable situation if someone were to follow you home.

To inquire about obtaining a PO Box, contact your local US Post Office. You can locate a post office by going to www.usps.com.

If you decide to not get a PO Box, be sure your name is not on the mailbox so that no one can locate your apartment.

Tip 2: Inquire about front door security, and plan for your safety.

As you check out various apartment buildings and residences, consider the following safety elements:

- Does the building have a secured entryway? Check to see how all entrances and exits are secured.
- Does the building have a person at the front desk? If so, be sure to know if the front desk person is responsible for letting visitors in the building?
- If there is a person who manages the front desk, give him or her the name and picture of anyone who you do not want visiting you, as well as a copy of the protection order, if there is one in place.
- Have a back-up plan for what you will do if the unwanted visitor is able to enter the front door. You might want to consider asking the desk manager to call the police and notify you immediately if this happens.



- If the apartment does have an intercom system in which the resident buzzes the visitor in, take your time and make sure you identify each person calling you. Ask if they are alone or any other questions that will help you to feel safe about letting the visitor in to your building.
- If someone who you do not want in the building does get buzzed in by a desk person or another resident, keep a record of when it happens and report it to the building manager or landlord. In buildings without front desk security personnel, a general memo can be posted reminding tenants not to allow strangers into the building.
- Make sure that your name and apartment number does not appear on the intercom system or on the mailboxes.

Tip 3: Assess safety in stairwells and elevators.

- If your apartment building does not have an elevator, make sure that the stairwell is well lit. Be aware of any alcoves or blind spots.
- If the building has an elevator, ask the building manager if security cameras are installed and if the elevator has an emergency button. Consider getting instructions on how to contact someone if an emergency occurs in the elevator.

Tip 4: Assess parking safety.

- If you drive, be mindful of where you have to park in relationship to your front door. Always check out whether there is adequate lighting for street, garage or lot parking.
- If you have to park on the street, inquire about any parking permits you may need.
- Some garages and large parking lots have emergency call boxes and security cameras; make sure you are aware of where they are located. Inquire if those amenities are available.

Tip 5: Secure windows on the ground level.

- Check to see if the apartment windows on or near the ground level have security mechanisms built in such as iron bars or extra locking features on the inside windows.

Tip 6: Learn strategies for keeping yourself safe.

- You may want to consider taking a class to learn strategies for keeping yourself safe and responding to abuse, harassment and assault. Below is one program that provides self-defense training for survivors