



HOLIDAY SAFETY TIPS

The holiday season is quickly approaching and in our haste to find the right present or perfectly decorate the house, we have a tendency to forget about our personal safety and thus become a victim.

Criminals enjoy the holiday season as much as you do. There are many more victims to choose from and too many of us are carrying more money or credit cards than what is really necessary.

PERSONAL SAFETY TIPS WHEN OUT SHOPPING

Follow these simple precautions to protect yourself and decrease your chances of being assaulted or robbed during the shopping season:

- **THE** most important rule to remember is your own safety comes first. Everything you own at the moment that you are approached by a robber is replaceable, whether the item is money, your car, jewelry, clothes, etc. Many victims, especially senior women will resist giving up their purses, and unfortunately, in some cases, their attacker drags them or a physical struggle ensues and the woman ends up on the ground sustaining injuries that could have easily been avoided.
- **ALWAYS** be aware of your surroundings and never let your guard down. If you walk with your head down or you are carrying too many packages, you are an easy target. Make eye contact, say hello to strangers, walk with a purpose or walk with someone else and you greatly reduce your chances of being a robber's next victim.
- **TRUST** your instincts. Victims are followed home from the bank, the grocery store, the shopping mall, etc. If you feel you are being followed while driving home, go to a public place instead of leading the robber to your front door. If you are walking go to the nearest public place and ask for help. Many victims will tell investigating officers that they saw the suspect walking in the alley or driving behind them, but still did their normal routine. If you see someone loitering in or near an alley, drive around the block or park your car at the front of the house.
- **WHEN** parking in your garage that abuts an alley, you should always back into your garage rather than pull straight into the garage. By backing into the garage, you have a clearer view of who may be coming into the garage, plus this allows you to drive out of harms way. Notify someone in your house ahead of time that you are about to drive into the garage. He or she can then meet you outside or turn on additional lights.
- **LIMIT** your losses. Don't carry excessive amounts of cash or credit cards. Keep cash and keys on your person, not in a wallet or purse. Carry a "dummy" purse or

wallet with a small amount of money. Don't carry social security cards, health insurance cards, driver's licenses, keys or irreplaceable pictures in your wallet or purse. When these items are stolen they can be used to commit other crimes such as a burglary because your address is now known or your keys were taken and identity theft because your social security card was stolen.

- **MAINTAIN** your personal space. If someone moves inside your comfort zone, quickly get away from that person. Many robberies happen in bus shelters or on gas station parking lots, where a stranger approaches you for directions, the time, etc.
- **CARRY** a charged cell phone at all times, scream fire rather than help if needed, keep your keys in your hand always ready to enter your car or house and consider carrying pepper spray as a way to defend yourself if ever attacked.

BURGLARY PREVENTION TIPS

Burglars know that during the holidays, people are away from their homes for long periods of time. During the holiday season many residents display their nicely decorated tree in the front window. The tree in the window, however, prevents the curtains or shades from being closed, thus allowing any would be burglar to see inside the house. Be extra cautious about home security during the holidays and lessen your chances of having a burglar spoil your holiday.

- Keep doors and windows closed and locked at all times. Invest in steel entry doors or solid wood doors.
- Entry doors should always be secured with a dead bolt lock, and the bolt should be at least three inches long.
- Insert a pin or screw above all first floor window sashes to prevent windows from being forced open. Basement windows can be glass blocked, painted shut or nailed shut.
- Your house should always look occupied. Burglars rarely will enter a house if they think someone is at home. Put lights on timers, leave a radio or television on, keep a car in the driveway, pick up the mail and newspaper and maintain the outside of the house. You are advertising that no one is home if the lawn is covered with leaves or the sidewalk hasn't been shoveled.
- Turn on your porch lights. Invest in either a dusk to dawn outdoor light or a motion activated light.
- Keep large televisions and computers away from open windows. Participate in operation Identification by engraving your electronic equipment with your driver's license number.

OTHER HOLIDAY TIPS

- After the holidays are over, it is a good time to start or update an inventory of your property. Purchase an address book that has alphabet tabs and record all of

your computer and electronic equipment's model numbers, serial numbers and brand names.

- Completely destroy the boxes of your new items. Burglars will drive thru alleys looking for the house that recently features a new television, computer system, etc.
- During the holidays we are more likely to give money to charitable organizations. If someone comes to your door soliciting for money, ask for identification and ask how the money is used. Contact the police if you are concerned about the person(s) going door to door in your neighborhood.
- Real Christmas trees can be a fire hazard. Make sure trees are watered daily. An unlit tree in an open window is another indication you are not home.
- Start the new year off right with establishing a block watch or rejuvenating an existing block watch in your neighborhood.

For additional crime prevention information or block watch information, please contact Officer Shellee Lubus at 935-7278 and have a safe and enjoyable holiday season.