



## Thieves Love the Holiday Season

The holidays are rapidly approaching. This is an exciting and busy time filled with celebrating, visiting with family and friends, and exchanging gifts. Homes are brightly decorated and filled with new and expensive gifts. Malls and stores are teeming with shoppers carrying credit cards, debit cards, gift cards, checks, and extra cash for their holiday purchases. With all this hustle and bustle, shoppers sometimes can get stressed out and careless looking for last minute gifts while trying to get everything on their lists done on time.

This holiday season, don't let the spirit of giving lull you into giving **burglars, muggers, purse snatchers, and pickpockets** the opportunity to do their dirty work. The following are some safety tips that will help to prevent you from becoming a theft victim.



### If you are traveling...

- Put the lights in your home on automatic timers.
- Stop your mail and newspaper delivery.
- Ask a trusted neighbor, relative, or friend to watch your home for signs of a break in. Be sure to leave your contact information with them. Also, have them look for any mail or newspapers that were delivered in error.
- Be cautious of your purse and/or wallet in public areas--rest stops, airports, bus stations, rest rooms, dressing rooms, etc.
- **Never leave valuables in plain sight in your vehicle.**
- Don't keep your luggage in your vehicle while staying in a hotel or motel.
- Hiding your purse, wallet, or other valuables under the seat of your vehicle is not advisable, as this is one of the first places a thief looks.
- **BE ALERT TO YOUR SURROUNDINGS AT ALL TIMES!**



### If you are out for the evening....

- Turn on lights and a radio or television. This gives the impression that someone is at home.
- Remember to check to see if all entry points: doors-- garage, sliding or French, and windows are closed and locked. Do this even if you are only going to be gone “for just a few minutes”.
- Don’t display any gifts or valuables where they can be observed from the outside.

### If you are shopping...

- Try to park in a well lighted parking space.
- Pay with a credit card or check to avoid carrying large amounts of cash.
- Don’t overburden yourself with packages. Carry your purchases to your vehicle and lock them in the trunk. Try to move your vehicle to another parking space if you need to make additional purchases in the same shopping area.
- **Deter pickpockets** by carrying your wallet in your breast pocket. Avoid putting your wallet in your back pants pocket. Consider a money clip.
- **Deter purse snatchers** by carrying your purse close to your body, not dangling by the straps. Placing your purse across your chest has the potential to be hurtful to you if someone is determined to take it. Better yet, leave your purse at home and carry what is necessary in a “fanny pack” or in a breast pocket. NEVER leave your purse unattended.
- **Shopping with kids?** Teach them beforehand who to go to for help if they become lost. Persons behind a cash register or at the Customer Service/ Exchange Counter should be safe to approach. Teach your children NEVER to accept help from *a stranger who approaches them*. A possible exception may be a female with children. If your child is targeted for abduction, tell them to yell STRANGER, so that “good strangers” can be alerted and can provide help.
- Have your car keys in hand when walking to your vehicle. These can be used as a weapon, if necessary. Look under your vehicle as you approach it, if you are parked in an underground garage or parking deck. Check to see if there are emergency call boxes.
- If you are shopping alone, try to tag along with a group heading in the same direction, or ask for a security guard to escort you to your vehicle.
- Notify Mall Security, Store Security, or Law Enforcement regarding any criminal or suspicious activity that you observe.

## **A STRANGER AT YOUR DOOR**

It's not uncommon for people to try to take advantage of others' generosity during the holidays by going door-to-door for charitable donations. Unfortunately, sometimes the only person who benefits by your generosity is the thief who represents himself or herself as a volunteer who solicits funds for charities. If you wish to donate to a stranger, ask to see their identification and also ask how your donation will be used. If you aren't satisfied with their answers, don't contribute.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Don't open your door to strangers at any time. Many con artists capitalize on the spirit of the holidays as a means to get you to open both your door and your wallets to them. If you wish to donate to a charity, take the initiative and contact the charity of your choice.

## **TAKE A HOLIDAY INVENTORY**

The holidays are a good time to create or update your home inventory. Take photos and/or video of all valuables and list descriptions and SERIAL NUMBERS. If your home is burglarized, having a detailed inventory can help both insurance carriers and law enforcement. Common theft items include: Electronics—computers, office equipment, TV's, DVD's, VCR's, cameras, camcorders, and stereo equipment; power tools, sports equipment, jewelry, precious metals, lawn mowers, etc.

**HAVE A SAFE AND HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON!!!!**

