

HOLIDAY SAFETY TIPS



- When parking: roll-up the windows; lock the vehicle; take your keys with you. Don't leave garage door openers or house keys in your car.
- Don't leave children or pets unattended in a car.
- If you must keep anything in your car that identifies where you live, such as insurance cards or registration, make sure to lock the glove box or compartment where you store them, *in addition to locking your car doors*. Thieves want to get in and get out quickly, so using secure compartments in the car for personal items *might* harden the target.
- If shopping after daylight hours, park and walk in lighted areas. Shop with a friend if possible, and not alone. REMEMBER where you park!
- WOMEN: If someone grabs you, scream "FIRE" – this will get people's attention and assistance more easily than "HELP".
- Don't look vulnerable or distracted: Don't leave the store "loaded up" with packages; don't fumble for your keys while walking; don't talk on the phone or text while moving through a parking lot or in and out of stores; remove earphones. Keep purses, handbags, backpacks close to your body. Be purposeful in your actions.
- It is recommended that electronics purchases (or jewelry and other expensive items) be made last, if you are out shopping at multiple stores, so you do not have to store them in the car during other stops.
- If you must leave valuable items in your car, place items out of sight *before reaching your destination or move them inconspicuously*.

- Load your trunk when you **leave** a location — never open a trunk, fill it full of valuables, close it, and then just walk away to do more shopping or other errands.
 - This includes packages, backpacks, gym bags, GPS units, MP3 players, CDs.
 - An opportunistic thief is on the lookout for "trunk-packing", and can break into your car the minute you're out of sight.
 - Also, someone may be watching when you put items under/behind seat and try to cover them up.
- Thieves check glove compartments, behind seats, and under seats. It only takes a few seconds to check all the "usual" hiding places in the car where people leave things.
 - NEVER think "I'll just be a minute" and leave a car unlocked, or worse, leave the engine running. It takes just a few seconds to break into or steal a car.

While out and about, present an alert appearance.

Be aware of your surroundings; scan the area from time to time. Avoid concentrating so hard on shopping that you fail to keep track of your surroundings, others near you, or your personal property.

- Wear conservative, comfortable clothing.
- Grip items firmly and avoid leaving them unattended.
- Carry minimal cash and valuables, wear minimal jewelry.

Shop with friends or relatives if possible; there IS safety in numbers. As you shop, be alert in crowded places. Among pickpockets' favorites are revolving doors, jammed aisles, elevators, and public transportation stops and vehicles, especially at rush hour. Carry the day's most expensive purchases closest to your body, and don't carry so much you lose the ability to react quickly.

If possible, leave your children with a baby-sitter while you are shopping. For holiday shopping, consider making arrangements with family or friends/neighbors, and take turns baby-sitting. If you take your children with you, **keep a close eye on them while shopping.**

Using debit or credit cards is much safer than carrying a lot of cash. If the vendors you will visit don't take cards, consider obtaining traveler's checks which, unlike cash, can be replaced if lost or stolen. Visit ATM's only at well-lighted and populated locations; visit during daylight hours if possible.

Using the drive-up is usually safer than walking up or into a facility. Remember to scan around you as you make your withdrawal. Many ATMs now have "fisheye" mirrors mounted above the keyboard to enable you to view the entire surrounding area while conducting business; try to patronize ATMs so-equipped, and use the mirror!

If anyone is loitering, or you don't like their looks, go to another ATM. Stand so that those behind you cannot see your PIN as you enter it; your PIN should NEVER be written down on or carried with your ATM card.

Be observant. Avoid dark areas, short-cuts, cul-de-sacs, and suspicious persons. Stay near light and people.

Be prepared to flee potential problems. If apprehensive about any location for any reason, leave. Consider carrying a whistle. Weapons are not recommended, and may be unlawful.

At Home: "Harden the Target" and Don't Be A Victim of *Crimes of Opportunity*

- The holidays mean people are busy! Don't get careless. Garage doors should be kept closed, unless you working in it, or outside in the driveway or yard near the garage (within eyesight). Thieves drive through neighborhoods **LOOKING** for open garage doors.
- Do not display gifts under a tree in a front window for passing traffic to see, especially when you are not home.
- Cars, even those parked at your home, should remain locked when not in use.
- Backdoors, side doors, sliding glass doors, any access to your home or property should be locked when not in use.

- Keep your home lit when not occupied.
- Have a trusted neighbor or friend take in your mail and paper when you are away.
- There is POWER IN NUMBERS – Neighborhood Watch programs that alert their members about crimes of opportunity quickly become “unattractive” targets.
- In neighborhoods where residents talk to the police, keep their cars locked and garage doors down, where business owners know each others’ comings and goings, where citizens aren’t afraid to call the police when something is suspicious...these are the neighborhoods that stand a better chance of NOT having 10-20-30 cars broken into in one evening, as an example.
- Remember – no one needs to know what you have! Get valuables out of the car and out of plain sight.
- Remind your children NOT to share personal information on the internet (“I just got a new...”) and NOT in their text messages or on their social networking sites (“I think dad is buying mom a diamond ring for Christmas”). NEVER share personal information, such as a home address, on unrestricted/nonsecure websites or pages.
- And remember, banks DO NOT ask for account verification via the internet. Those can be phishing messages. Do not open them and do not respond.
- WHEN RECEIVING electronics or other valuable items (flat screen TV’s; cell phones; computers; electronic games), make sure you break down the boxes and put them in a dark refuse bag before placing outside for trash pick up. DON’T ADVERTISE your possessions.
- ETCH your Driver’s License number on all electronic devices. Record you serial numbers and place this list with your insurance documents. A floor safe or larger (heavy) fire proof safe, or safety deposit box is recommended. *Small* fire boxes or safes can be easily carried from your home.

JSO Community Affairs Division

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