

## HOLIDAY CRIME PREVENTION

During the holidays, the potential for thefts and robberies increase. More people are out and about, and they are carrying more gifts and money than during other times of the year.

While there's no need to be afraid, you should keep in mind the following holiday safety reminders:

- Carry your valuables wisely.
- Do not keep cash in your wallet. Instead, keep it in an inside pocket and only carry the credit cards you'll need.
- Do not leave valuables in your vehicle.
- If you must leave packages in your car, put them in the trunk.
- Keep receipts with you.
- Carry a cell phone with you. If someone makes you suspicious or uncomfortable, notify security or call the police.
- Whenever possible, park and walk in well-lit areas.
- Be aware of your surroundings, especially the people around you.
- Carry your purse close to you, with the opening or flap towards your body.
- Never leave a purse unattended in a shopping cart.
- Do not keep a wallet, credit cards or cash in a backpack.
- If you are in a crowd, consider carrying the backpack in front of you.

- Pickpockets can quickly and easily remove items from a backpack without being noticed by the owner.
- Protect your credit card numbers and other personal information.
- Carefully dispose of receipts that have a credit card number on them.
- Never provide credit card information in response to unsolicited calls or email.
- Don't announce your new high-dollar purchases after the holidays. Break down the boxes of TVs, stereos, computers, etc. and turn them inside out before putting them in the trash.
- If you are traveling for the holidays, make your home look "lived in".
- Have a friend or neighbor collect your mail and newspapers or have your service suspended while you are away.
- Use timers to turn lights off and on.

### At Home

- Be extra cautious about locking doors and windows at all times.
- Don't display gifts and other valuables where they can be seen from a window or doorway.
- If you go out in the evening, turn on lights and a radio or television so the house looks occupied.
- If you go on vacation, get an automatic timer for your lights.
- Ask a neighbor or trusted friend to watch your house, pick up the mail

and newspapers and park their car in your driveway from time to time.

- Beware of package deliveries where couriers have the "wrong" address.
- Write down tag numbers of suspicious delivery attempts.
- After Christmas, don't advertise your new electronics and/or other new valuables that you have just received by putting the boxes out on the curb for the garbage collectors.
- Break the boxes down and fold them so the words are on the inside.

### Shopping

- Stay alert to your surroundings and the people around you. If you see people "hanging around" parking garages, parking lots, or the outside of stores, avoid the area. Notify the police or security department.
- Shop before dark if possible.
- Coordinate shopping trips with a friend if you plan to be out late.
- Never park your car in an unlit area, no matter how convenient it is.
- Lock your car doors and windows even if you are only gone for a few minutes.
- Keep packages and other valuables out of public view, preferably locked in the trunk.
- Park near street lights if possible and

have your keys in hand when you return to your car.

- Always check the interior of your car before you unlock the door to get in.
- To discourage purse snatchers, don't overburden yourself with packages.
- Have your purchases delivered whenever practical.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash.
- Pay for purchases with a check or credit card whenever possible.
- Be extra careful with purses and wallets.
- Carry a purse under your arm with the strap across your body.
- Keep a wallet in an inside jacket pocket, not a back trouser pocket.
- Teach your children to go to a store clerk or security guard and ask for help if they should become separated in a store or shopping mall.
- They should never go into a parking lot alone.

### General Tips

- If you find yourself in pedestrian mode, walk on the sidewalk, stay in the street lights and stay close to the curb. If you must walk next to parked cars, try to stay in the middle of the sidewalk.
- Creeps like to hide in side streets, alley

ways, and parked cars, snatching victims into the darkness.

- We want to make it a little bit more difficult for them by creating distance and staying visible to the public.
- Attacks in parking lots often happen next to or in the vehicle, you are more at risk when next to your vehicle than when walking to it.
- The more visible you are, the most likely people will witness the crime, which is an outstanding deterrent to an attack.
- Have your keys, subway pass, key card, or whatever you may need, while in transit, ready to go.
- Color code your keys for ease and swiftness of use.
- Have all your shopping items ready to stow away quickly.

### When Driving

- Recognize that the holidays can cause stress – keep emotions under control while driving.
- Give other drivers plenty of space and always leave yourself a route to avoid an accident.
- If you attend parties where alcohol is served, remember to use a designated driver.
- Prepare for winter driving conditions and equip your vehicle with cold weather emergency supplies.
- Minimize distractions such as talking

on a cell phone.

- Take frequent breaks to avoid fatigue, especially when driving long distances. If you get tired, stop and rest until you're able to drive with full attention.
- Buckle up! That means passengers and kids, too!!
- Be patient!
- Give yourself extra time for travel, especially in snow or rain.
- Even in dry conditions, traffic during the holidays is heavier than normal, and it will take longer than you expect to get around.