

# Holiday Tips

Being the victim of a crime can be especially disturbing when it happens during the holiday season. We've compiled a list of helpful tips that can help you **stay safe this holiday season**.

## Online Shopping

- **Know your merchant.** Be familiar with the company you're dealing with. The Federal Trade Commission has a website ([www.consumer.gov](http://www.consumer.gov)) that provides buyer's guides, tips and links to helpful resources.
- **Protect your personal information.** Know what information the seller is collecting, how it will be used and if it will be shared with other merchants. Check the site's privacy policy and look for seals from privacy enforcement organizations like BBBonLine and TRUSTe. Be cautious if a site asks for personal information not generally needed to make a purchase in a retail store, such as your social security number.
- **Use a credit card.** Under federal law, your liability for an unauthorized charge is \$50. To ensure that your credit card information is being transmitted securely, look for an unbroken key or padlock icon or for a policy that indicates use of strong security technology. **DO NOT SHARE** your password with others!
- **Keep good records.** Make sure to print or save any records related to online transactions.

## Retail Shopping

- **Cash:** take only the amount you will spend when shopping. Avoid flashing cash in public. Never leave your purse or wallet unattended.
- **Credit cards:** take only the cards you will use while shopping. Report lost cards immediately. Check your statements for accuracy.
- **Park:** in well-lit areas. Keep your doors locked and always put items in the trunk **before** arriving at your next destination.

## Home Security

- **Close the blinds or curtains at night or while you're away.** Presents that can be seen through windows are tempting to thieves
- **Keep your doors and windows locked**
- **Keep outdoor lights on from dusk 'til dawn**
- **Make arrangements for neighbors to pick up deliveries if you aren't home**
- **Garage locks are usually the weakest locks you have.** Avoid hiding presents in the garage. A second-story closet or attic offers safer storage. Consider upgrading your garage lock to an automatic keypad lock.
- **Break up boxes, especially for purchases like TVs.** Bundle inside out and only put out to your collection point on the pick-up day. Don't advertise what you have.
- A **holiday light display** (inside or outside) shows ownership and increases the overall lighting in the area.

## Deliveries

- **Schedule deliveries for times when you are at home.**
- **Make arrangements to have your parcels delivered to a neighbor** if you are unable to be at home.
- **If you live in a multi-unit building:**

- Bring packages left outside for your neighbors into a secured area
- Leave a note on the door giving permission for the package to be delivered to a trusted neighbor if you are gone for a delivery.

### Transporting gifts in your car

- **Think of everything in your car in terms of cash value.** If you would not leave the equivalent in cash out, do not leave it out in the form you bought it.
- **Never leave gifts unattended or in the back seat of your car.** This invites opportunity for a thief to break into your vehicle.
- **Always lock your car.**
- **Lock all purchases in the trunk.**
- **Pick up major items at the end of your shopping trip if possible.**
- **Remove all purchases from your car when you return home.**

### Holiday scams

- **Know your charities and retailers.**
- **Fake charities:** If you're asked for a donation, verify the legitimacy of the charity before giving.
- **Gift cards:** Only purchase gift cards from trusted retail outlets. Make sure gift cards have not been tampered with before purchasing.
- **Scam emails and online shopping:** Shop only at trusted retail sites. Do not respond to unsolicited emails or click on their links.

### Be a Good Neighbor

- **Keep a watchful eye on your block.** Call 911 if you see or hear suspicious activity.
- **Leave lights on outside,** so you and your neighbors have better visibility.
- **Join or create a block club.** Contact your Crime Prevention Specialist for more information.

### Walking after Dark

With the long hours of darkness, pay special attention when you are outside.

- **Walk with confidence.** Keep your head up and watch your surroundings.
- **Do not be distracted by cell phones, music players, or other technology.**
  - Activate or purchase an app to find your phone if it is lost or stolen
- **Walk in well-lit areas.** Avoid alleys or poorly lit areas.
- **Try to walk with another person.**
- **Have your keys ready and in your hand**
- **Carry as little cash or valuables as possible.** If you carry a purse, place extra cash or valuables in a pocket.

**Please enjoy a safe and happy holiday season!**