

- If you're going out for the evening, turn on lights and a radio or television so the house looks and sounds occupied.
- If you go away for a few days, get an automatic timer for your lights, ask a neighbor or relative to watch your house, pick up newspapers and mail, and occasionally park their car in your driveway.
- Be aware that criminals sometimes pose as couriers delivering gifts.
- Teach your children not to open doors to strangers or give out information to unknown telephone callers.
- 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 when there's no charity involved. Ask for identification and find out how the funds will be used. If you aren't satisfied, don't give. Help a charitable organization you know and like instead.

We realize that this may seem like a lot of things to do, however, most of the items are common sense or things that we know we should do, but never take the time to follow.

Do your part to make the holidays a safe and happy time for everyone - except criminals.

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Holiday Safety Tips



Somerset County
Prosecutor's Office

HOLIDAY SAFETY TIPS

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Shopping during the holiday season can present unique dangers. Taking a few prevention measures can help keep your holiday season joyous.

The Holiday Season is a time when busy people can become careless and vulnerable to theft and other crimes. The following tips can help you be more careful, prepared and aware during the holiday season.

At the Mall, stores and shopping centers

- Shop during daylight hours whenever possible. If you must shop at night, go with a friend or family member. Try to shop when the mall is less crowded, ie. during the weekday. Avoid the weekend rush, when it's easy to lose children among crowds.
- If possible, leave small children at home with a trusted babysitter. If not, bring a babysitter, friend or older child to help watch your young children, especially when waiting in long lines.
- Teach your child what to do in the event you get separated. The best option is to instruct your child to look for a security guard or police officer, or go to a store clerk. Be sure that your child knows their first and last name and also their address and telephone number. If they have difficulty in remembering this, you should place a card with this information in their pocket which they can show to authorities as needed.
- Dress casually and comfortably. Avoid wearing expensive jewelry.
- Don't dangle your handbag from your shoulder. You are creating a perfect setup for a purse-snatcher. Keep your purse tucked tightly under your arm, or better yet, don't

even carry a purse. Wear a fanny pack facing the front. Besides allowing your hands to be free to hold onto or carry your child, you'll eliminate the possibility of leaving your purse behind or having it stolen.

- Always carry your New Jersey Drivers License or Identification Card along with necessary cash, checks, and/or a credit card you expect to use. Avoid carrying large amounts of cash. Don't "flash" large rolls of money in public. You never know who's watching!
- Even though you are rushed and thinking about a thousand things, stay alert to your surroundings.
- Shop in small doses. Make regular trips to the car. Avoid carrying too many packages that put you off balance and make you a target.
- Never leave valuable items inside your vehicle, visible through car windows. Store packages in the trunk of the car.
- Keep your car doors locked and windows closed at all times.

In the Parking Lot

- Park only in well-lit parking areas. Park as close to a mall or store entrance as possible. Don't settle for an isolated parking place just because you're in a hurry. Wait for a safe spot to become available.
- Once your car is parked, familiarize yourself with its location so you can find it without delay.
- When walking through parking lots, be sure that you are aware of your surroundings. Walk with authority. Don't look like a victim!
- In today's world it seems that everyone has a cell phone. It is a bad idea to talk to someone

while you are walking to your vehicle. It may make you feel safer but you are actually paying less attention to your surroundings if you are talking on the phone.

- Approach your vehicle with your car keys in hand, place your purchases in the trunk, survey the interior of your vehicle before entering and then lock your doors promptly once inside.
- Don't get into your car if you are being followed or are suspicious of anyone standing nearby. Return to an area with other people or return to the store and ask for assistance from security.
- Beware of strangers approaching you for any reason. At this time of year, "con-artists" may try various methods of distracting you with the intention of taking your money or belongings.
- Don't Play Hero - Comply with a thief's demands. Record an accurate description for law enforcement, ie., height, weight, eye color, hair color, scars, tattoos, clothing, license plate, make and color of vehicle.

At Home

- Don't put your gifts on display for the thieves. Be conscious of what can be seen through your windows from the street or from your front yard. Either keep your purchases stashed away until the last minute, or display them under your tree in a way that doesn't draw attention from passersby.
- Be extra cautious about locking doors and windows when you leave the house, even for a few minutes or when you are at home.