

HOLIDAY SAFETY TIPS FROM THE DALLAS POLICE DEPARTMENT

During the holiday season, most people are thinking of last minute shopping and large meals. However, not everyone considers the holidays a time to celebrate, but rather an opportunity to commit a crime. Unfortunately, the holiday season provides a criminal with many opportunities to spoil holiday cheer. Busy parking lots and hurried shoppers are just two elements working for a potential thief. Also, we make his job easier by “advertising” our recent purchases. By knowing what makes you more likely to be a victim of a “holiday” crime, you can take steps to reduce your risk.

- If possible, do your holiday shopping during the day and avoid peak shopping periods.
- Carry a small purse and carry it under your blazer or jacket. This will make you a less attractive target to purse snatchers.
- If possible, don't take children with you during extended shopping periods. You are more vulnerable to a crime if most of your attention is on child care.
- Avoid doing all your shopping at once. The tendency would be to have a car full of gifts, which increases your chances of being targeted.
- Shop with a friend or relative. There is added security in numbers.
- As always, lock your car while shopping.
- Park your vehicle as close to the shopping center as possible and in a well-lighted location.
- Don't leave packages visible in your car. Place all valuables in the trunk of your vehicle. Don't give thieves a reason to break into your car.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash during the holiday season – use credit cards or personal checks.
- While shopping, keep credit cards, checks, cash and identification on your person rather than in a purse.
- Don't hesitate to ask mall security to escort you to your car when you exit the mall.
- When returning home, scan the parking lot before approaching your car. The element of surprise is a criminal's most important advantage
- Shop and go home. Don't make unnecessary stops with several items in your car.
- When taking packages from your car to your house, don't leave your vehicle unlocked with packages inside. Also, when you enter your house, don't leave the door open behind you when unloading packages.

Safety at Home

- Don't display gifts in your windows.
- Following the holidays, break down any large gift boxes (televisions, stereos, etc.) and put them in trash bags for discard. Don't provide thieves with information about new electronics in your home.

Away from Home for the Holidays? Exercise the same precautions during the holidays as during the rest of the year when leaving your house:

- Lock all doors and windows
- Leave lights and a radio on – preferably on a timer – to give your home a “lived in” look.
- If you leave for several days, stop mail and newspaper deliveries and have a trusted friend or neighbor watch your home.
- Notify the police sub-station in your area and request extra patrol.