



NOVEMBER 2009

Holiday Tips for Shoppers

The holiday shopping season is here again. This list of safety tips is as important as your gift list. Check this list twice before you head for the stores this year!

- Be alert and aware. Be attentive to your surroundings at all times.
- Do not carry more cash or valuables than is necessary. Be discreet so that you do not attract attention.
- Take extra precautions with your wallet or purse. Carry your purse with the opening flap next to your body and with the strap hung over your shoulder.
- Allow for darkness. It gets dark early this time of year, so be sure to factor this into shopping plans.
- Instruct children on holiday safety measures. Know where your children are at all times. Before going shopping, decide where to meet if you and your children should get separated.
- Always lock your car doors and remember where you park.
- Be sure to put valuables out of sight (i.e. packages, purses, mobile phones, CDs, etc.). Place them in the trunk or take them with you.
- Never hide spare keys in or on your car. These hiding places are easily discovered. If you need spare keys, keep them in your wallet or purse.
- Be alert to suspicious persons or circumstances. Avoid parking where you see someone sitting in their vehicle for no apparent reason.
- Trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable or unsafe in a situation, report it to security immediately.
- When walking in any parking lot, grocery store, airport, shopping center, etc., walk confidently with your head up, make eye contact, and have your keys ready.
- Report all suspicious activity to 9-1-1
- And remember, parking lots will be more crowded and checkout lanes will be busier, so be patient and have a safe shopping experience.

Please check out our Crime Prevention Video on Holiday Safety at

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZogujAKwYIE>

How to Safeguard Your Home While on Vacation

Source: Florida Attorney General's Office

- Strive to make your home look as lived-in as possible while you're away.
- Don't broadcast your plans but do let your neighbors and local law enforcement know.
- Give a spare key to your neighbors and give them an emergency telephone number to reach you.

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- Arrange to have your mail and newspapers either stopped or picked up daily.
- Have someone mow your yard or rake the leaves so your house looks lived-in.
- Use automatic timers to turn on a radio and lights at different intervals to hide the fact you aren't home.
- Turn down the ringer on the telephone. An unanswered telephone is a dead give-away.
- Be sure you don't announce your absence on your answering machine message.
- Leave your blinds like you normally would if you were home. Only close them all the way if that is what you would normally do.
- Be sure to close and lock the garage as well as any storage sheds, gates, etc.
- Engrave all your valuables with your driver's license number. If possible videotape the contents of your home. Be sure to keep the video and the list of valuables in a safety deposit box.
- Ask your neighbor to occasionally park in your driveway. If you are leaving a vehicle parked outside, have the neighbor move it periodically so it looks as though you are home.
- Be sure someone knows your itinerary and your estimated time of arrival and return.
- If you get lost while traveling, ask directions of local law enforcement, not complete strangers.
- Be sure your vehicle is in good working condition and that you have taken enough money. Do not carry large amounts of cash, use credit cards and travelers' checks.
- Announcing your travel plans on social networks informs all of your contacts that you are away. It is recommended that you post travel pictures and information when you return.

St. Lucie County residents can contact the St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office Patrol Operations Division at 462-3281 or the Crime Prevention Unit at 871-5303 to request a close patrol of their home or business while away.

NEED MORE INFORMATION? CONTACT THE CRIME PREVENTION UNIT AT (772) 871-5303.