

## Public Safety Bulletin #7

### *Holiday Safety*

#### *Criminal activity peaks around the holiday season.*

*Criminals use this time to prey on unsuspecting and distracted shoppers, travelers and home owners. Typical crimes around the holidays include shoplifting, pick-pocketing, identity theft (primarily on-line credit card fraud), vehicle break-in/thefts, purse snatching and home burglary. There is no total way of preventing crime, but here are some proven tips that we have shared with our readers over the years.*

#### *Home*

- Take special notice of who is in the neighborhood. If you see suspicious activity, write down a description and call police.
- Criminals may pose as delivery personnel. Check credentials and call the delivery company to verify.
- Be aware of charity fraud. Some criminals try to collect for charities that don't exist. Give to charities you know and trust.
- Don't store or display gifts where they can be seen from outside your home.
- Don't leave boxes from electronics and other expensive gifts where they can be seen. Break down boxes and put them in trash bags when you throw them away.
- Keep your house looking "lived in." Whether you're away for an afternoon of shopping or for a week at grandmother's house, make it look as though someone is home.

#### *Shopping*

- Minimize after-dark shopping.
- Wait for a close space.
- Put valuable items, including portable navigation systems and other electronics in your trunk BEFORE you park your car; never leave anything inside the interior portion of your vehicle including gym bags, backpacks, etc.
- Secure your vehicle once you park it; many vehicles are actually unlocked during the holidays, which creates a huge opportunity for a criminal to strike.
- When you're shopping, walk confidently and park in well-lighted areas close to stores.
- Teach your children to stay with you at all times; never allow them to wander.
- Carry a minimal wallet (license, one credit card, cash-never place your social security card in your wallet). Keep your wallet in your front pocket.
- Avoid large amounts of cash.
- Grip bags close to your body.
- Be aware of your surroundings; don't be distracted with shopping bags and other items.
- Wear comfortable, non-designer clothing and keep the jewelry that can easily be taken.
- Never leave your shopping bags unattended.
- Ask for an escort if your vehicle is parked in a dark or remote area.
- Before you enter your vehicle look inside, upon entry IMMEDIATELY lock the doors.
- Know the location of the mall security and report any person or activity that is suspicious.
- Don't give money to pan handlers; this can be a ruse to get you distracted and open your wallet or purse for another criminal to grab it.
- All crimes and suspicious activity should be reported to the police, neighbors, and fellow business owners.

*Call police by dialing 911.*