

**Seattle Police Email Community Newsletter**  
**November 21, 2011**



Dear Community Friends:

**Safety And Prevention During The Holiday Season**

Many of us will take time off and celebrate the holidays. We may buy presents for family and friends. We may leave town. Given this background, there are some things you should consider. The following recommendations can reduce your risk of being a crime victim during the holiday season.

**Out Shopping**

- Before you leave home decide what you actually need to take with you rather than automatically taking your entire handbag or wallet out of habit. For example, if you are going to the grocery store for a few items, you can carry cash, a single check, or credit/debit card, I.D. and keys in a pocket.
- Wear clothing and shoes that are comfortable, low profile and appropriate for the weather. This may not be the most fashionable choice, but it is the safest.
- Always plan your route and stay alert to your surroundings. Avoid shortcuts. Walk confidently. Scan your surroundings and make eye contact with people.
  - Always maintain positive control over your items. Don't tempt a thief by leaving your purse, wallet or packages unattended. It only takes a second to grab them. Never leave your purse unattended, even if it is in a shopping cart.
  - If you carry a purse, don't dangle it from your arm. Carry it very close to you, preferable with the strap over your shoulder and the purse to the front of your body. Even better would be to carry the purse over your shoulder *across* your body and under your coat.
  - Take a friend along when doing holiday shopping. Using the buddy system reduces your chances of being a victim of robbery.
- When paying by cash, only take out the amount needed and keep the remainder out of view. It's always a good idea to carry minimal amounts of cash, regardless of the time of year.
- Don't tempt a thief by leaving your purse, wallet or packages unattended. It only takes a second to grab them.
- Beware of strangers who bump, shove or get too close. Pickpockets may use these diversions to lift your wallet.
- Be cautious of those you don't know who offer to carry bags and packages for you. Depending on where you shop, store personnel or mall security may offer assistance in carrying packages to your car or escorting you to your vehicle.
- Before returning to your car, make sure you're not over-burdened with packages. Have your car keys in hand to avoid "searching" for them when you reach your car.
- If you must leave valuables in your car (say you're out shopping and still have some stops to make), make sure that nothing of value is within plain view. Place items in your car trunk out of sight. Do this when you get to your car, rather than waiting until you park at your next stop.



**When Using an Automated Teller Machine**

- Only take out the amount you need, rather than the maximum you can get.
- Don't walk away from the cash machine counting your money. That's an invitation to someone who may not have the best of intentions in mind. Secure your money and your bank/credit card back in your wallet or pocket before leaving the ATM.
- Beware of strangers hanging around the ATM. Wait until they leave, or consider using an alternate cash machine. Report suspicious people to bank personnel, mall security and/or police.
- Using the ATM inside a major grocery store might be a better alternative to using one on the street, especially during hours of darkness.
- Always keep your PIN number separate from your bank and/or credit card.





### **Prevention Tips At Home**

- Don't openly display wrapped or received gifts so they are easily visible from the street. You increase the possibility that a burglar will be tempted to gain entry and steal the gifts.
- When disposing of the packaging in which gifts and other purchases come, realize that when you place these out for recycling or trash collection, those boxes sitting out on the curb on collection day give a passer-by a pretty good indication of what's in your home. Recycle the packaging, yes - but break the boxes down first, turn them inside out so the exterior writing does not show, and don't put them on the curb until collection day.
- Burglars often enter through unlocked doors or windows. When exterior Christmas light extension cords are run inside through a window, this prevents the window from being secured, and this unsecured window is visibly noticeable. Consider installing an inexpensive exterior outlet for your holiday lights so you don't provide an opened and unlocked entry to your home.
- If you have ordered items and are going to have them delivered, consider having them delivered to your place of business rather than your home, or to a neighbor who has agreed to accept packages for you. Unattended packages left on your porch become enticing targets for thieves.
- If you are going to be away, let your trusted neighbors know that you plan to be out town so that they can watch your home for you. If they see suspicious activity while you are gone, they will know to call 911 for you.

### **A Word On Charities**

- Be cautious of those going door-to-door collecting for charities. Ask to see an ID that identifies them with that charity. Never give cash. Please report suspicious people. If your instincts tell you, "Something is not right," act on that. Call 911 to report the incident.



We wish you a happy and joyous Holiday Season. Peace, prosperity and good health to you and yours this Season and in the coming New Year.

Until next time, Take Care and Stay Safe!

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