

Holiday Crime Prevention Tips

San Diego Police Department
Mid-City Division



This may be the season to be jolly, but is also the season to be wary of burglars, thieves, and other holiday Grinches.



Being a victim of a crime, can ruin the Christmas Spirit.



Unfortunately, some Grinches nefarious behavior view the holiday season differently. As time of great opportunity to burglarize your home and vehicle for cash, credit cards, and gifts.



The following presentation may minimize your potential of becoming a victim and help you to enjoy the holidays.



Please ensure your doors and windows are locked when you leave your residence, even just for a few minutes.



Don't openly display your lovely Christmas tree and gifts in the front window, which makes it very visible from the street. It may be too tempting for potential criminals to smash the window, grab wrapped packages, or plan a better break-in during less periods of observations.



*Don't advertise that you are not home. Cues like outdoor lights
Turned on for 24 hours a day, piled up newspapers, mail, or
junk mail should be avoided.*



*Utilize an inexpensive light timer when you are away
and ask a neighbor to pick up your newspapers and mail.*



*If you are out for the evening, turn on your lights, radio,
or television so the residence appears occupied.*



Do not put a hidden key near the front entrance, under rocks, flower pots, and door ledges. It is not as secured as leaving a spare key with a trusted neighbor.



Burglars prefer to enter through unlocked doors and Windows. Avoid running holiday lights extension cords through a window or garage door that may prevent it from being properly secured.



Burglars have used telephones and the internet in the past to obtain phone numbers. Avoid posting family names on mailboxes. Burglars may call and confirm if you are home or away.



*Beware of descriptive telephone answering machine messages like, "You've reached the Hoskins' we are away visiting family for a few days so, please leave a message."
It sounds like an invitation to burglarized your residence.*



When you do open up Christmas gifts, don't pile up the boxes from all the goodies, such as computer boxes, DVD players, I-Pads, or I-Phones. You are advertising what expensive gifts may be inside for them to steal. Breakdown or cut up the boxes.



We are all busy during the Holiday Season, shopping and running errands can make for a stressful time. Please be reminded, criminals are also out and about, looking for big scores and easy targets.



Don't get caught up, with the hustle and bustle of all the things you have to do for the holidays. Remain focused, always stay grounded, and be mindful of your surroundings.



If possible, shop before it gets dark. Plan to shop with friends and never park in an unlit or low illuminated area, regardless how convenient it may be.



While shopping, always lock packages and gifts in the trunk of your vehicles. Always keep your vehicle's doors and windows locked and closed. (SUV's are included)



When walking towards your vehicle, have your keys available in your hand before reaching your vehicle.



When you reach your vehicle, scan the interior of your vehicle to ensure no one is hiding inside and check to see if you have been followed.



Avoid carrying large amounts of cash. Pay for purchases with either a check, credit card, or debit card when possible.



Discourage purse snatchers, don't overburden yourself with packages and don't be checking your I-Phone while you are walking.



Be extra cautious with wallets and handbags. Attempt to keep wallets in an inside jacket pocket (not in a back trouser pocket) and attempt to keep your purse under your arm.



Beware of strangers approaching, con-artists will use various methods to distract you with the intention of taking your money and or belongings.



Internet shopping can be economical and convenient. However, to ensure your experience is a safe one, know who you are dealing with by confirming the online seller's physical address and phone numbers. When arranging a purchase, do not coordinate the link up in dark parking lots or on dark streets.



If you receive a pop-up message while you are browsing the internet requesting financial information. I encourage that you do not reply or click on the link in the message. Legitimate business do not ask for this information via email.



Know exactly what you are purchasing, words like refurbished, vintage, or close-out may provide clues that the item is in less-than-mint condition. As a rule, counterfeit prices are often too good to be true for a reason! Additionally, beware of shipping and handling cost, that adds to your total cost.



Keep in mind, if you pay by credit card or charge card, online transactions will be protected by the Fair Credit Billing Act. Under this law, you have the right to dispute charges under certain circumstances and temporarily withhold payments while the creditor is investigating the transaction.



Never disclose your PIN to anyone and never send out your PIN through the internet. This is also sound practices for passwords and never give them out.



Print and save all records of your online transactions. Avoid having parcels delivered, as thieves easily follow delivery trucks and mailmen/mailwomen as they deliver parcels to the front door. Parcels can be taken easily and swiftly. Instruct the receipt to be delivered and you can pick them up yourself. Additionally, you could have a trusted neighbor collect them when they are delivered.



Here are some good take-away life lessons:

- *Always park in well lit areas and close to the store.*
- *Don't talk on your cell phone when walking.*
- *Keep your full attention on your surroundings.*
- *Do not unlock your vehicle electronically until you are upon it.*
- *If you feel uneasy, asked for security escorts.*
- *Don't flash large amounts of cash.*
- *Have your vehicle keys in hand.*
- *Don't leave valuables in open view.*
- *Do your homework when donating to charity.*
- *Engrave your ID number on important gifts.*



Holiday Grinches can also be nefariously lazy, like taking packages from front porches and walkways. Often these thefts occur during daylight hours, when many of the residents are not home. Remember, any package that is left unattended make for an easy target of opportunity for the Holiday Grinch's.



Here are a few tips to remember that may lower your potential for being a victim of package theft.

- If your employer will allow it, have the packages delivered to your office or work location.*
- If you are not home, have the package delivered to a neighbors house who will be home or have them be on the look out for packages being delivered.*



- *Request that the shipper requires a signature or hold your package at their pickup facility.*
- *Have your package delivered at a large retailer store.*
- *Request the date and time of the shipper, so you will know when to be home.*
- *Sign up for delivery alerts.*
- *Be observant of possible vehicles casing the area.*



- *If you are traveling, have the post office hold your mail until you return.*
- *Always insure any package you send.*
- *Keep up with crime updates from your Community Relations Officer and please report any crime. Telling a neighbor and not reporting it to the police will not assist you in obtaining a crime report.*



The holiday season is a time to spend with family, friends, and love one's. It is a time of joyful celebrations and countless memories. Please remain safe and always thinking of others.

PLEASE DO NOT DRINK AND DRIVE!



On behalf of the Commanding Officer of Mid-City Division, Captain Thomas Underwood, Lieutenant Benjamin Kelso, Lieutenant Judson Campbell, and Lieutenant Romeo De Los Reyes and all the Officer's from the Mid-City Division; we want to wish each of you and your families, a safe and Merry Christmas Holiday Season.

Please continue to keep the men and women who wear the cloth of our nation and are serving in harms way, in your thoughts and prayers.

*Thank you and Semper Fi,
Officer Terry Hoskins
820's Community Relations Officer*

