

Holiday Season Crime Prevention Tips

During the holiday season, crime rates tend to have a slight up-swing. This is due, in part, to shoppers carrying more cash and credit cards with them while shopping - shopping later than usual and the relaxed, easy-going attitude that comes with this time of year. We call it good cheer. Criminals call it complacency. By remaining aware of holiday season risks you can better protect yourself. The Crime Prevention Unit of the Asheville Police Department provides these tips to assist you in having a safe and enjoyable holiday season.

Out and About

- Shop during daylight hours when possible & shop with a friend – safety in numbers!
- Be aware of your surroundings. Pay attention to who is around you, what they are; doing and what activities are going on. Be aware of someone watching you, or following you – you should notice who is around you!
- Don't overload your arms with packages and bags while shopping. Clear visibility and freedom of movement are important self protection habits;
- Pick your parking spot wisely. Look for a well lit area. If you own a small car, try not to park next to a large vehicle, which can block your vision, or other citizen's view of you while you are entering or exiting your vehicle;
- Do not leave your vehicle unattended while the engine is running, even if you are only going to be away from it for mere seconds;
- Have your keys out and ready when approaching your vehicle;
- Be aware of how you carry your purse or wallet. Would it be easy for someone to take it? Remove any unnecessary items and leave them at home;
- Try to carry only the amount of cash you will need to make your purchases and limit the number of credit cards to only the ones necessary for your current shopping trip or for that day;
- Keep a list of all credit cards, along with contact phone numbers for each card and keep it in a safe place. This will help in the event they are lost or stolen;
- Discuss various situations with your children. What will they do if you are separated? What will they do if approached by a stranger? What will you do?
- Practice an exercise used often by police and military called Crisis Rehearsal. Consider what you would do in various stressful situations. Go through the plan in your mind. If you practice this and then are faced with an unusual situation, you will be able to think more clearly and react more calmly because you have already rehearsed it.

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The Holiday Parties

- Control your alcohol intake;
- If you do drink, remain with your friends;
- Consider how much and what kind of jewelry you are wearing;
- An alone, inebriated person, flaunting expensive jewelry is the recipe for a robbery.

In Your Home

- Install secondary locks on your windows and doors - pins, deadbolts, stick in the slider etc.;
- Light the exterior of your home around doors, windows and driveway;
- Trim hedges, bushes and trees around doors and windows. Be able to approach your door from the outside and be certain there is not an intruder waiting for you;
- Place gifts where they cannot be seen from outside your home;
- Avoid opening the door to strangers.

In your Car

- Don't drive without first locking your doors and closing your windows;
- When walking out to your car, try not to do it alone. Go with a friend, or when there is another group walking out as well;
- Walk to your car with a purpose;
- Do not exit your car if you see a suspicious situation. If you are in doubt, or are approached, drive away;
- If you are being followed, go to a populated public place and call the police;
- Do not let anyone approach you on foot, while in the drive through ATM machine;
- Avoid shortcuts that take you through unfamiliar or unsafe areas;
- When stopped in traffic, leave enough room between your car and the one in front of you, in the event you need to pull away quickly.

Much of the above information is geared toward being aware of where you are, who is around and what is in the environment. If you can control the environment you enter into and pay attention to the things going on around you, you can greatly reduce the possibility that you will become the victim of robbery. The bad guys won't have a chance to make you a victim. A Safe Holiday starts with a Crime Prevention Plan!