



Holiday Shopping & Safety Tips

***NICHOLAS C. DERZIS,
CHIEF OF POLICE***

www.hooverpd.com

Reprinted from *The Law Enforcement Officer's Complete Crime Prevention Manual*,

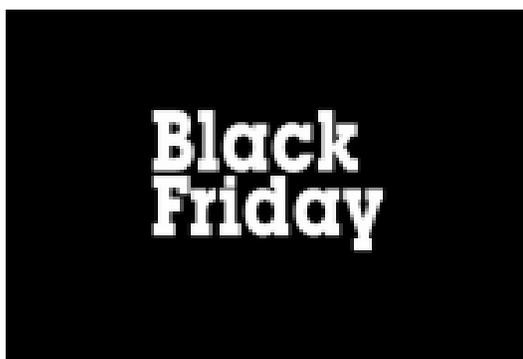
with the permission of Mr. Daniel P. Keller, Executive Director of the

American Crime Prevention Institute

Black Friday Theft Prevention

Black Friday is the day following Thanksgiving Day in the United States, traditionally the beginning of the Christmas shopping season. On this day, most major retailers open extremely early and offer promotional sales. It is an intense time of bargain Christmas shopping for many people. It has been described as the busiest shopping day of the year.

Black Friday obviously becomes an opportune time for thieves and robbers. They know shoppers may possess significant funds in their possession and are often pre-occupied in their thoughts. They often shop from store to store, leaving their accumulated purchases in their vehicles. They also may have numerous packages in their possession.



Crime Prevention Tips While Shopping

- Stay alert to your surroundings and the people around you.
- Shop with a friend; there is safety in numbers.
- Don't buy more than you can safely carry. Plan ahead by taking a friend or ask a store employee to help you carry your purchases to your vehicle.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash.
- Pay for purchases with check, credit or debit card.
- If you carry a purse, do not wrap the straps around your arms or shoulders. Carry it by clutching the purse tightly under your arm or wear a fanny pack.
- Do not carry a wallet in a back pocket. It should be in the front pocket of your pants.
- Thieves or robbers often look for "high value" shopping bags with your purchases. When possible, slip bags/purchases in a plain nondescript bag.
- Watch purchases when eating at mall food courts; bags can be easily switched or taken.
- Have your car keys in hand before leaving a store.
- If you do return to your vehicle to unload packages, place them in the trunk.

Crime Prevention Tips in Parking Lots

- If possible, avoid shopping during hours of evening or early morning darkness.
- Park in a high visibility area with good lighting and ample pedestrian traffic.
- Avoid parking next to vehicles with dark tinted windows.
- Prior to arriving at a shopping center or mall, lock all valuables in the trunk of your vehicle.
- Try to walk with others, not alone – there is usually safety in numbers.
- Walk briskly, confidently and directly through the parking lot. Be cautious of people handing out fliers or asking questions in the parking area.
- Watch for people who may be following you. If you sense someone is following you or you feel uncomfortable, return immediately to the store.
- You may want to consider having a chemical agent or loud audible alarm in your possession.
- Don't allow yourself to become distracted by a cell phone call while walking to and from your vehicle.

Tips for a Happy and Safe Holiday

During the year-end holidays, people are often busy, excited and sometimes a little bit careless. The following holiday crime prevention tips can be shared with members of the community as a community relations or community policing effort. They can be included in a flyer, brochure, Internet web page, etc.

At Home

- Be extra cautious about locking doors and windows when you leave your house or apartment, even for a few minutes.
- Don't display holiday gifts where they can be seen from a window or doorway. Store gifts before you go away on a holiday trip.
- If you go out for the evening, turn on lights and a radio or television so the house or apartment appears to be occupied.
- If you take a holiday trip away from your home, have some interior lights activated by an automatic timer. Have a neighbor or family member watch your house, shovel new snow, pick up the mail and newspaper and park his or her motor vehicle in your driveway from time to time.
- Participate in Operation Identification and mark your valuables with a unique identification number.
- Be wary of strangers soliciting for charitable donations. They may attempt to take advantage of people's generosity during the holidays. Ask for identification, how donated funds are used, if contributions are tax deductible, etc. If you aren't satisfied with the answers, don't give.
- Immediately after the holidays, mark new gifts with an identification number and record new serial numbers.
- Test your smoke detectors.
- Use only fire resistant ornaments on a holiday tree and make sure electric lights are in good working order. Don't leave the lights on overnight or when you are away from home.
- If you have house guests, advise them of your security precautions and make sure they follow them.
- Avoid leaving boxes from purchases (especially TV's, VCR's, computer, etc.) out on the curb for trash pickup.



Shopping

- Shop before dark if possible. Possibly coordinate shopping trips with a friend. Never park in an unlit lot or area, no matter how convenient it is.
- Lock your packages and gifts in your vehicle's trunk. Keep your vehicle's doors locked and

windows closed.

- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash. Pay for purchases with a check, credit card, or debit card when possible.
- To discourage purse-snatchers, don't overburden yourself with packages. Have your purchases delivered whenever practical.
- Be extra careful with purses and wallets. Carry a purse under your arm. Keep a wallet in an inside jacket pocket, not a back trouser pocket.
- Teach children to go to a store clerk or security guard and ask for help if you become separated. They should never go into a parking lot alone.

Holiday Party Safety

- Have non-alcoholic beverages available for party guests.
- Serve something to eat before serving alcoholic beverages. High protein foods stay in the stomach longer and slow absorption of alcohol into the system.
- Have alternative transportation for intoxicated persons. Don't let guests drink and drive.

Pickpockets

Pickpockets like to take advantage of crowds in stores, on the street and on public transportation. Many work in teams with one distracting the victim while the other does the actual pickpocketing. Beware of anyone who jostles you. It may be accidental but, then again, it may not. For women who carry a purse, one that has a flap which folds over the opening and fastens at the bottom is preferable to one that can be opened simply by turning a clasp at the top. Men who carry wallets or a money clip should keep them in inner or side pockets rather than rear trouser pockets.

Safe Shopping Crime Prevention Tips

Criminals look for the easiest opportunity when deciding to commit a crime. Shoppers, particularly women, can be vulnerable to such crimes as theft, robbery, and assault. The following crime prevention tips or recommendations are designed to make shopping as safe of an experience as possible.

- **Be alert and aware of your surroundings at all times.** Knowing what is around you can help you avoid being surprised. It also allows you time to react if something does appear suspicious.
- **Display confidence.** Criminals choose the victim who looks like the easiest target. That choice is partially based on their perception about your abilities to react to an attack. If you walk with purpose, scan the area around you, and make casual eye contact with others, you are displaying confidence.
- **Trust your instincts.** Your body will tell you when someone or something is suspicious. If you have an intuitive feeling something is wrong, do not second-guess yourself. React immediately and take action to reduce your risk.
- **Carry only what you need.** Extra cash, credit cards, checks, jewelry and other items should be left at home. If it is necessary to carry a purse, keep it in front and close to your body. Men should keep wallets out of back pockets where they are easily stolen. Carry wallets in front coat pockets or use a money clip as an alternative.
- **Don't be overburdened with packages.** Carrying several shopping bags makes you look vulnerable. Request a store to hold your merchandise until you are finished with your shopping. If the store does not offer that service, place your purchases in the trunk of your car before you buy additional items.
- **Shop with others.** The chance of being victimized drops dramatically when you are with a companion. If there are three or more people together, the chance of being targeted for crime is 90% less than when alone.
- **Ask for an escort.** Many retailers have security personnel. Ask for an escort to your vehicle if you are uneasy about venturing into the parking lot alone.
- **Be prepared.** Have your keys in hand when walking to your vehicle. The keys can be used as a defensive weapon and you will not waste time trying to find them when standing outside your vehicle. Carry a whistle or personal alarm. These devices will alert those around you something is wrong.
- **Plan ahead.** Choose areas to park where lighting is good and activity is high. Valuables in your vehicle should be kept out of view. Be sure to lock the car at all times. Most auto burglaries occur on cars that are left unlocked.

