

## THE DENVER CENTER FOR CRIME VICTIMS

### HOLIDAY SAFETY TIPS

**The holiday season is an opportune time for crime!** Gifts are in full view under Christmas trees at home. Stores, malls and city streets are full of unsuspecting shoppers. People are rushing around, stressed out and careless, looking for last-minute gifts and trying to get everything done.

**Tips to keep you and your family safe from burglars, muggers, pickpockets and Internet scams:**

#### **When You Are Shopping...**

- **Shop during daylight when possible. Stay alert and be aware of what's going on around you.** Trust your instincts—if you feel uncomfortable, leave and go to a place that is safe.
- **Shop with at least one friend or family member.** Assist each other with carrying packages, making sure neither of you is over loaded. There is safety in numbers when waiting at bus stops or walking through parking lots and garages.
- **Keep people at home informed as to where you are and when you will be home.** Have someone meet you at the bus stop to accompany you home.
- **Park in a well-lighted space, and be sure to lock the car, close the windows, and hide shopping bags and gifts in the trunk.** Have keys in hand when you return to the car. Check the interior of the car before getting inside.
- **Avoid carrying large amounts of cash;** pay with a check or credit card whenever possible.
- **Carry only those credit cards you are going to use.** Keep the rest in a secure place at home and keep a list of all credit card numbers and contact numbers to call if they are stolen or lost.
- **When shopping with children, teach them how to go to a store clerk or security guard if you get separated.** Reinforce with your children not to go with or speak to strangers. Tell them not to be enticed by offers of gifts, holiday candy or helping to find a pet.
- **Discourage pickpockets, and purse and package snatchers.**
  - Don't overburden yourself with packages. Ask for assistance from a store clerk or security guard to help you to your car.
  - Be extra careful with purses and wallets. Decide what items you absolutely must carry with you; leave the rest at home. Use a fanny pack or small pouch that can be worn close to the body. If you must carry a purse, use one with a shoulder strap that you place over your head and across your body.

#### **When Shopping on the Internet...**

- Avoid websites you've never heard of before in favor of better known outlets.
- Complete the purchase only on secure websites, those with an "s" at the end of the "http" and a padlock to the right of the URL. If the website has a padlock, double-click on it to make sure it has a digital certificate. (Amazon.com says its connection is encrypted, in other words, safe.)
- Be stingy with your personal information. If a company sends you an email with a link to its website, do not click the link. Scam artists can make the link to get your personal info for bad purposes. Always type in the company's Web address on your own.
- Read the item's small print. Print out the product description and return policy (should have).
- Use your credit card, not debit card. Under terms of the Fair Credit Billing Act, you are not responsible for fraudulent purchases of more than \$50. (Credit card companies usually erase the first \$50.)
- Keep records of every purchase. Print out the confirmation.
- Do not send payment information via a separate email as it could be hacked into.

## **HOLIDAY SAFETY TIPS** (cont.)

### **If You Are Traveling...**

- Set an automatic timer for your lights.
- Ask your neighbor to watch your home, pick up newspapers, collect mail, and park in the driveway from time to time.
- Be sure to hide any gifts that may be left in the house while you're gone.

### **If You Are Out for the Evening...**

- Turn on lights and a radio or the TV so that it appears that someone is home.
- Lock all doors and windows while you're out, even if you'll be gone for just a few minutes.
- Do not place packages or gifts near windows or in other high-visibility sites.

### **If a Stranger Comes to the Door...**

- Stay alert to suspicious-looking couriers delivering packages to you or your neighbors.
- Many con artists take advantage of holiday generosity by going door-to-door. Use peephole and keep door closed. Ask for ID. Get specifics on the charity. Tell them you will check with the charity before making a contribution. Help a charitable organization you know instead.
- If you feel uncomfortable, just say "no thank you."
- Reinforce with children **never** to open the door to a stranger, even if they say they know their parents and they said it was okay.

### **If You Are at Home...**

- Turn on outside lights to deter burglars.
- **Report** any suspicious behavior to the police or local community watch groups.
- Make sure your homeowners (or renters) insurance is up-to-date and everything is inventoried properly.

**Let your houseguests know about your security precautions.** Make sure they follow them.

### **When You Are at Work...**

- Lock gifts you've bought on your lunch hour in a safe place. Remind coworkers to do the same.
- Be especially careful to keep your purse or wallet locked in a drawer or closet.
- Be alert for people taking advantage of the holiday mood, reduced work force, and people's inattention, to burglarize companies and their employees.
- Report to security unauthorized people in places they shouldn't be.

**The holidays are a good time to create or update your home inventory.** Take photos or make videos of items, and list descriptions and serial numbers. If your home is burglarized, having a detailed inventory can help identify stolen items and make insurance claims easier to fill out.

**Don't let holiday stress get the best of you.** Stay cautious and alert, but take time for yourself and with family, friends and neighbors.

**MAKE THE HOLIDAYS A SAFE AND HAPPY TIME FOR EVERYBODY—  
Except Criminals!**