

Safe Holiday Tips

1. During this festive season of the year our thoughts turn to giving and receiving gifts, visiting friends, relatives, and delightful culinary experiences. However, there are others who think about unoccupied, appliance filled houses, distracted shoppers with extra cash in a purse or wallet, or they're planning their next "charity scam." Don't give a thief a chance this year. Please exercise extra caution during this special season. Trust your instincts; if something does not look or feel right, it probably isn't. Remember, being safe doesn't take a holiday.

WHILE SHOPPING:

Park in a highly visible well-lighted space.

Lock your vehicle both when driving and parked.

Have your car keys in your hand and be ready to open the car door immediately.

Place all shopping bags, packages and gifts out of sight.

Always know where you are parked, so you don't spend unnecessary time walking around the parking lot.

Look inside and under your car before entering.

Avoid carrying large amounts of cash – use a check or credit card.

Don't overburden yourself with packages. This will help deter pickpockets or purse snatchers.

Don't park next to a van or truck where people can hide.

OUT FOR THE EVENING:

Turn on lights, a television or radio so that it appears that someone is home.

Secure all doors and windows, even if you're only gone for a few minutes.

Holiday gifts should not be displayed where they can be seen from the outside.

HOLIDAY TRAVELING:

Ask a neighbor to watch your house.

Use automatic timers for your lights.

Stop your mail and newspaper deliveries.

Arrange to have snow shoveled (if necessary) while you're away.

Notify your local police department and leave a number where you can be reached in case of an emergency.

WHILE DRIVING:

Watch out at intersections and stop lights. They're favorite spots for troublemakers.

Keep car in gear; if you're threatened, blow the horn, then drive away. Leave enough space between you and the car in front of you to pull around if necessary.

Keep windows rolled up.

Keep doors locked at all times.

Keep valuables out of sight.

If followed – don't drive home. Go to a police station, fire house, gas station or public place.

If your car breaks down, stay with the car and accept NO rides. If someone stops to help, ask them to call the police. Use a cell phone if available. Keep vehicle well maintained and gassed up.

And remember -- gasoline and alcohol *don't mix*.

ATMs and ATM CARDS:

Stay alert.

Be aware of your surroundings when you use an ATM, especially at night. It's best to park in a well-lighted area and have someone accompany you.

Report suspicious people. If you notice anything unusual, cancel your transaction, pocket your card and leave immediately. Go to a safe place and call the police if you suspect dangerous or illegal activity.

Be prepared. To complete your transaction safely, fill out deposit forms and have your card ready before arriving at the ATM. When you've completed your transaction, pocket your card and cash immediately. Count the cash later.

When using a drive-up ATM, remember to always keep your doors locked, all other windows up and the car running.

Guard your ATM card as carefully as you do cash, checks and credit cards. Never give account numbers or card information over the phone.

Keep Your Personal Identification Number (PIN) secret. Don't write your PIN on your card or keep the number in your wallet. Memorize your number and do not tell anyone what it is – even family members or bank employees.

ACCIDENTAL POISONING:

Accidental poisoning often occurs when daily household routines become disrupted, as it usually is during the holidays. Take a few minutes to poison-proof your home for little visitors.

If a poisoning does occur, immediately call the Maryland Poison Center:

800.222.1222 in Maryland

800.735.2258 TTY for the hearing impaired

AT HOME:

Keep all doors and windows locked, even if you step out for a moment.

Mark all property with your driver's license number.

Videotape valuable as a record of ownership.

Inspect all holiday lights for frayed wiring before you hang them.

If you are using a ladder to hang holiday decorations, make sure it is properly secured.

Keep holiday decorations and plants away from young children and pets. Some are poisonous.

Place your holiday tree or wreath away from heating vents or fireplaces to reduce risk of fire.

Keep fresh cut holiday trees watered.

Use extreme caution when using lighted candles as part of your holiday decorations.

When partaking of holiday cheer, good judgment should always be exercised.

Beware of strangers coming to the door asking for charitable donations. Ask for identification, if donations are tax deductible, how will the funds be used. If you are not satisfied, don't give. Help a charitable group you know.

All our Holiday Best to you and yours!!