

General Safety Bulletin

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
POLICE AT HOUSTON



(713) 792-2890

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Holiday Safety Tips

It's the most wonderful time of the year, until your package is stolen from your car or doorstep. If you are purchasing gifts this holiday season, travelling, or making shopping trips, please consider the following tips that will help you avoid becoming a victim this holiday season. Please report any suspicious activity to UT Police at (713) 792-2890. Here are some easy personal security tips you can use to stay safe:

If You Are Traveling

- Get an automatic timer for your lights;
- Ask a neighbor to watch your home;
- Don't forget to have mail and newspaper delivery stopped. If it piles up, it's a sure sign you're gone.

If You Are Out for the Evening

- Turn on lights and a radio or TV so it looks like someone's home;
- Be extra cautious about locking doors and windows when you leave, even if it's just for a few minutes;
- Don't display gifts where they can be seen from outside.

If You Are Shopping

- Do not leave anything in your car when you are shopping. Car prowlers target parking lots on Black Friday and throughout the holiday season in anticipation of busy neighbors leaving packages in their cars while shopping;
- Stay alert and be aware of your surroundings;
- Park in a well-lit space, and be sure to lock the car, close the windows, and hide shopping bags and gifts in the trunk;
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash. Pay with a check or credit card whenever possible;
- Deter pickpockets and purse-snatchers. Don't overburden yourself with packages. Be extra careful with purses and wallets. Carry a purse close to your body, not dangling by the straps. Put a wallet in an inside coat or front pants pocket;
- Shopping with kids? Teach them to go to a store clerk or security guard if you get separated.

Prevent Package Theft

- If you are having your purchases shipped to your house, sign up for delivery alerts from the shipper. If you aren't home during delivery, message a neighbor to ask them to take the package back to their place until you get home;
- If possible, require a signature for all your deliveries. If there's no one home to sign for the package, it won't be left at your home;
- Be neighborly. If you see a package sitting on a neighbor's doorstep, reach out and ask if they would like you to hold it until they are home.

Protect Your Vehicle

- Always lock your vehicle and store all items out of sight. Breaking into an empty car isn't worth a thief's time. However, anything left in plain view—from your holiday gifts to spare change, sunglasses, cell phones, packages or briefcases—may tempt a thief;
- Help prevent your vehicle from being stolen by always locking your car and using anti-theft devices. Never leave your vehicle running while you run inside your home or a store—even if for only a minute or two.

Protect Your Home

- Criminals sometimes pose as couriers delivering gifts, so be cautious when accepting a package. It is not uncommon for people to try to take advantage of others' generosity during the holidays by going door-to-door for charitable donations when there's no charity involved. Ask for identification, and find out how the funds will be used. If you aren't satisfied, don't give;
- Don't stack empty boxes out for the trash that may advertise the new or expensive additions to your home;
- Keep your car and house doors locked at all times.

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