

HAVE A SAFE HOLIDAY, AND A CRIME-FREE NEW YEAR!

SEASONS GREETINGS,

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HOME SAFETY TIPS

- ★ Be extra cautious about **locking doors and windows** when you leave the house, even if you will only be gone for a few minutes.
- ★ If you're out for the evening: Turn on lights and a radio or TV so it looks like someone's home.
- ★ Don't display gifts in view of your windows or doors.
- ★ When going on trips or just out for the evening, use **automatic timers** to turn indoor lights on and off to make it appear you are home.
- ★ Consider **informing your neighbors if you will be away** from your house for an extended period of time; ask them to watch your house and to park in your driveway occasionally.
- ★ Don't forget to have mail and newspapers stopped – or have a trusted neighbor collect them.
- ★ Immediately after Christmas, **mark all new gifts** with your California Driver's license or I.D. number.
- ★ If you have **house guests**, familiarize them with your security precautions and make sure they follow them.
- ★ Be sure any holiday decorations are **child-proofed** (secure trees, double check the safety of electrical decorations).
- ★ **Don't advertise what you got for Christmas by putting the boxes out on trash day.** Break the boxes down and put them in dark trash bags or take them to the dump yourself.



SHOPPING SAFETY TIPS

- ✳ **ALWAYS BE AWARE OF WHO IS AROUND YOU. KEEP YOUR EYES PEELED!**
- ✳ **DO NOT LEAVE ANYTHING VISIBLE IN YOUR CAR.** Be sure to lock the car, close the windows, and hide shopping bags and gifts in the trunk.
- ✳ Shop early in the day to avoid excessive crowds. If you must shop in the evenings, shop with a friend.
- ✳ **Keep your money safe.**
 - Carry your purse in front of you, next to your body, with the purse flap against you.
 - Carry your wallet in your front pocket.
 - Carry only the charge cards you will need.
 - Do not carry large sums of cash.
- ✳ When charging an item, ensure you **get your credit card back.**
- ✳ Don't overload yourself with packages and **don't allow your attention to be distracted** from your purse or packages.
- ✳ **Park in well-lit areas**, as close as possible to store entrances.
- ✳ **Be particularly aware of persons in the parking lot**, especially anyone near your car.
- ✳ Try not to park next to large vehicles (such as vans, trucks and SUVs) where people could surprise you.
- ✳ Shopping with kids? **Teach your children** to go to a store clerk and ask for help if you become separated in a store or shopping mall.
- ✳ Don't hesitate to **notify store security** if you see suspicious activity.
- ✳ If you have to wait for a ride, wait in a busy, well-lit place.
- ✳ **If you are a victim of a crime, report it to the police immediately.**



REMEMBER THIS:
UNLIKE US, CRIMINALS DON'T TAKE A BREAK OVER THE HOLIDAYS.
IN FACT, *THIS IS THEIR BUSY SEASON!*
BE ALERT AND REPORT SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOR.

If you're going to shop, shop smart!

Avoid Online Scams When You're Shopping for the Holidays

Every year we see staggering new statistics about how many people are buying gifts online instead of braving traffic, long lines, and parking nightmares at brick-and-mortar stores. During the holidays, many online retailers will also offer breaks on shipping costs—so the advantages of less physical hassle, no sales tax, and potentially free or cheap shipping make online shopping pretty appealing. However, the risks involved in online shopping are persistent as ever. Here are a few key ways you can protect yourself.

1. Use a virtual account number - This is a service that most credit cards now offer. Here's how it works: Log onto your credit card account and with one click you can generate a random credit card number that makes it virtually impossible for anyone to steal your account number while shopping online. When your virtual number is generated, simply enter it into the merchant's form and complete your purchase without revealing your actual card number. This virtual credit card number is only valid for a short period of time—long enough for the retailer to process your transaction, which will be charged to your real credit card account. But if a retailer stores that number and a hacker later breaks into their system, the number will be useless. Please note: Virtual account numbers cannot be used for purchases that require you to show your credit card at time of pick-up (e.g., movie tickets, etc.), because the account numbers will not match.

2. Make sure you're shopping on a secure site - Look an address bar that turns green, the closed-padlock icon and/or a URL that starts with <https://>. That means your transaction is encrypted. (Encryption is a security measure that scrambles data as it traverses the Internet.)

3. Don't trust emails from "retailers" claiming you need to verify your credit card information - This is almost certainly a scam. Every year millions of emails go out from hackers pretending to be eBay or PayPal customer service and asking consumers to provide information that the actual service already possesses. If you're worried that a retailer really has failed to process your order, go to the site and look up your account or contact their customer service center—don't click on a link in email that could redirect to a dummy site.

4. Look for signs that the business is legitimate - Buy from reputable stores and sellers. Here are some ways to check: Find out what other shoppers say. Sites like Epinions.com or BizRate have customer evaluations which can help you determine a company's legitimacy.

A Police Officer's Christmas Poem



'Twas the week before Christmas,
And all through the house,
Not a creature was stirring
Not even a mouse.

Under the tree
Lay the gifts piled high,
Temptation enough
To catch any thief's eye.

The windows and doors
Locked tight as a drum,
However the burglar
He was not so dumb.

Down at the door
With hardly a rattle,
The spring latch was slipped
With no sound to tattle.

Into the house
And away with the loot,
As fast as greased lightning
The burglar did scoot.

Finding it easy
And wanting some more,
He grabbed up his tools
And hurried next door.

Slipping and prying
He found in dismay,
A large, shiny deadbolt
Was barring his way!

Away to the window
He went on the sly,
Tore open the screen
And gave it a pry.

He pried and he pulled
'Til his knuckles were skinned,
But no progress was made
'Cause the windows were pinned.

In the window he noticed
A sign stating clear,
"NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH
Has already been here."

All the shaking and knocking
The sleepers did waken,
Still safe in their home
By precautions they'd taken.

They ran to the phone
The police they did hearken,
Telling them where
The culprit was parkin'.

Delayed and dejected
By pickings so lean,
The crook was just leaving
When the cops made the scene.

As they carted him off
The crowd heard him say,
"By good locks I've been foiled,
Now they'll lock me away."



*This holiday season, make sure you
are the second neighbor - with your
house locked up!*