



Constable Alan Rosen

Harris County Precinct One

The holidays are soon approaching and the hustle and bustle of the season will consume us. With that people become careless and vulnerable to theft and other holiday crimes. We can never be too careful, too prepared or too aware so here are a few tips to think about now as we prepare for the holiday season.

Driving and Parking Lot Safety

- Avoid driving alone or at night; if you must shop at night, park in a well-lighted area.
- Keep all car doors locked and windows closed while in or out of your car. Set your alarm or use an anti-theft device.
- Avoid parking next to vans, trucks with camper shells, or cars with tinted windows.
- Park as close as you can to your destination and remember where you parked.
- Never leave your car unoccupied with the motor running or with children inside.
- Reduce the temptation of thieves by securing valuables and packages in the trunk and out of sight.
- Locate your keys before walking to your car so you are not fumbling to find them in the parking lot.
- Keep a secure hold on your purse and packages.
- When approaching or leaving your vehicle, be aware of your surroundings and walk with confidence.
- Do not approach your car alone; if there are suspicious people in the area; ask for an escort from mall security if possible.

Automated Teller Machine (ATM)

Choose a location inside a police station, mall, or well-lighted location. Withdraw only the amount of cash you need.

- Protect your PIN by covering the keypad from those near you
- Do not throw your ATM receipt away at the ATM location.

Shopping

- Shop in daylight hours whenever possible. If you must shop at night, go with a friend or family member.
- Dress casually and comfortably and avoid wearing expensive jewelry.
- Do not carry a purse or wallet, if possible. They are the prime targets of criminals in a crowd.
- Always carry your Driver License or Identification Card; only carry the amount of cash you need and credit cards you plan on using.
- Stay alert to your surroundings.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash and keep cash in your front pocket.
- Pay for purchases with a check or credit card when possible so you are not showing others how much cash you may be carrying.
- Keep a record of all credit card numbers in a safe place at home and notify the your credit card issuer if your credit card is lost, stolen or misused immediately.
- Avoid overloading yourself with packages limiting your visibility and freedom of motion.
- Beware of strangers approaching you. Con-artists use various means of distraction with the intention of taking your money or belongings



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Shopping in Stores

- Do not buy more than you can carry. Plan ahead by taking a friend with you or ask a store employee to help you carry your packages to the car.
 - Save all receipts. Print and save all confirmations from your online purchases. Start a file folder to keep all receipts together and to help you verify credit card or bank statements as they come.
 - Consider alternate options to pay for your merchandise, such as onetime or multiuse disposable credit cards or money orders, at online stores and auction sites.
 - Wait until asked before taking out your credit card or checkbook. An enterprising thief would love to shoulder surf to get your account information.
 - Tell a security guard or store employee if you see an unattended bag or package. The same applies if you are using mass transit.
- #### Walking to and From Your Car
- Deter pickpockets. Carry your purse close to your body or your wallet inside a coat or front trouser pocket.
 - Have your keys in hand when approaching your vehicle. Check the back seat and around the car before getting in.
 - Do not leave packages visible in your car windows. Lock them in the trunk or, if possible, take them directly home.

Shopping with Small Children

- If you are shopping with children, make a plan in case you are separated from each other.
- Select a central meeting place.
- Teach them to know they can ask mall personnel or store security employees if they need help.

Shopping Online

- Before surfing the Internet, secure your personal computers by updating your security software. Everyone's computer should have anti-virus, anti-spyware, and anti-spam software, as well as a good firewall installed. Visit www.bytecrime.org for free software downloads.
- Keep your personal information private and your password secure. Do not respond to requests to "verify" your password or credit card information unless you initiated the contact. Legitimate businesses will not contact you in this manner.
- Beware of "bargains" from companies with whom you are unfamiliar—if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is!
- Use secure websites for purchases. Look for the icon of a locked padlock at the bottom of the screen or "https" in the URL address.
- Shop with companies you know and trust. Check for background information if you plan to buy from a new or unfamiliar company.