

Holiday Safety Tips

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The holidays are a time for joy and giving, but unfortunately can create ideal circumstances for criminals. Shoppers rushing around stressing to find the perfect gifts, purchased left in vehicles, and people traveling or away from home for holiday events can fill criminals with holiday joy as well. In addition, holiday parties tend to lead to an increase of drinking and driving.

To help ensure that everyone has a safe and happy holiday season the Punta Gorda Police Department will be providing increased holiday patrols throughout the month of December. This will include increased police presence downtown and in our commercial shopping districts, as well as dedicated DUI patrols. Here are some of the things you can do to keep safe and avoid becoming a victim this holiday season:



When You Are Shopping:

- Stay alert and be aware of your surroundings;
- Park in well-lit areas making sure that gifts and valuables are out of sight and your vehicle doors are locked;
- If shopping with children make sure they have been taught to seek out a store clerk, security guard, or

police officer should they become separated from you;

- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash when shopping. Pay with credit cards or checks when possible.

When You Are Away From Home:

- Get an automatic timer for your lights;
- Have mail and newspaper delivery stopped while you will be away;
- Ask a neighbor to keep an eye out for unexpected packages, flyers, etc. Having items sitting outside your home for an extended period of time is a sure indicator to criminals that your home is vacant;
- Be very careful about what you post on social media and who can see it. Criminals have become very savvy using social media. Posting information or photos about your travel plans can inform criminals that your home is unoccupied.

When You Are Out for the Evening:

- Make sure that doors and windows are closed and locked;
- Leave lights and a TV turned on so it appears that someone is still home;
- Keep gifts and valuables where they cannot be seen through windows or make sure that window coverings are closed;
- If you may be drinking alcohol while you are out designate a sober driver, plan on calling a taxi, or utilize a ride share service. Never drive when you are intoxicated, even buzzed driving is drunk driving.



Other Safety Tips:

- The holidays are the ideal time for package thefts. Have packages delivered where someone will be able to receive them such as your workplace or a neighbor or family member's house. You can also ask the post office to hold your packages until you are able to pick them up yourself;
- After the gifts have been open avoid advertising the valuables inside your home by putting out packages for televisions, computers, or other expensive items. Instead break down boxes and packaging and put them in garbage bags or cans;
- Criminals often prey on people's generosity during the holiday season by soliciting for "charitable donations" either door-to-door, by phone, or online. Only do your holiday giving directly to legitimate charitable organizations that you know and trust.

We hope that everyone has a happy, healthy, and safe holiday season!