

Holiday Shopping Safety Tips

Using debit or credit cards is much safer than carrying a lot of cash.

If the stores that you will visit don't take credit cards, consider obtaining traveler's checks, which, unlike cash, can be replaced if lost or stolen.

Carry purses with straps close to you body and away from aisles especially when walking in the parking lot.

If someone grabs your purse, let it go. Your safety is more important than your property. Carry minimal cash and valuables, preferably in your front pockets, and wear minimal jewelry.

When parking

Roll up the windows, lock the vehicle, take the keys, and conceal valuables, preferably in the trunk. During hours of darkness, park and walk in lighted areas when possible.

When returning to your vehicle

Carry your keys in your hand and be ready to unlock the door and enter as quickly as possible. Wait to use your remote control to unlock the doors until you are close enough to look around and only press the unlock button once so only the driver's door is unlocked. As you approach your vehicle, scan the area, glance underneath the vehicle and take a quick look inside before entering.

Return to your vehicle periodically to check on it

Reduce the amount you are carrying and must keep track of. Store packages in the trunk or, if your vehicle doesn't have one, out of plain view (on the floorboard, under a blanket or clothes, etc).

Move your car to another parking space after putting packages away.

When possible, have purchases delivered instead of taking them with you; many businesses offer free delivery during the holiday shopping season.

Stay alert while loading items into or out of the vehicle or arranging packages.

If someone approaches, and you feel threatened, get in and lock up until they leave the area; if they loiter, drive away.

Most malls and some stores have uniformed security officers both inside and outside for your safety.

They work with the local police all year long to keep the malls safe. Ask for an escort to your car if you feel nervous. Return to the mall or store for assistance if you spot suspicious activity near your vehicle.

While out and about, present an alert appearance.

Be aware of your surroundings; scan the area from time to time. Avoid concentrating so hard on shopping that you fail to keep track of your surroundings, others near you, or your personal property. Wear conservative, comfortable clothing. Grip carried items firmly and avoid leaving them unattended.

Shop with friends or relatives if possible; there IS safety in numbers.

As you shop, be alert in crowded places. Among pickpockets' favorites are revolving doors, jammed aisles, elevators, and public transportation stops and vehicles, especially at rush hour. Carry your most expensive purchases closest to your body, and don't carry so much you lose the ability to react quickly

Keep a close eye on your children while shopping.

Teach your children to go to a store clerk or security officer if they ever get separated from you in a store or mall and be sure they know their first and last name so they can tell someone who they are. It's best to keep children under four (4) in a stroller. Children in shopping carts should be properly belted and seated in the child carrier area at all times. Never let your child stand in or push a shopping cart. If possible, leave your children with a baby-sitter while you are shopping. For holiday shopping, consider making arrangements with family or friends/neighbors, and take turns baby-sitting.

Visit ATM's only at well-lighted and populated locations—during daylight hours if possible.

If anyone is loitering, or onlookers make you uncomfortable, go to another ATM. **Stand so that those behind you cannot see your PIN as you enter it. Your PIN should NEVER be written down on or carried with your ATM card. If the ATM appears to be tampered with, do not use it and report it to management.**

If you have access to a cell phone, carry it with you. Remember that 9-1-1 works on a cell phone, even those that are not activated. Be prepared to give your location and stay on the line.

When shopping on-line

Use only reputable companies and websites that have proper security features. Look at the address in the browser window. Secure sites have an address that begins with HTTPS:// (The “S” stands for “secure”). Be wary of pop-up ads that lead you to another website or ask for personal information or credit card or bank account numbers.

Promptly report suspicious persons, vehicles, and crimes to local law enforcement agency and mall security.

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