



Holiday Safety Tips

*“It's the most wonderful time of the year
With the kids jingle belling
And everyone telling you be of good cheer,
It's the most wonderful time of the year...”*

While you're enjoying the holidays, thieves are enjoying watching you, your car and your home. Below are a few Holiday Safety Tips to keep you, your family, your vehicle and your home protected.

Online Shopping Tips: *(tips recommended by the Federal Trade Commission)*

- Conduct research: When using a new website for purchases, read reviews and see if other consumers have had a positive or negative experience with the site.
- When in doubt, throw it out: Links in emails, posts and texts are often the ways cybercriminals try to steal your information or infect your devices.
- Personal information is like money: value it and protect it: When making a purchase online, be alert to the kinds of information being collected to complete the transaction. Make sure you think it is necessary for the vendor to request that information. Remember, you only need to fill out required fields at checkout.
- Use safe payment methods: Credit cards are generally the safest option because they allow buyers to seek a credit from the issuer if the product isn't delivered or isn't what was ordered.
- Don't be disappointed: Read return and other policies so you know what to expect if the purchase doesn't go as planned.
- Protect your \$\$: When shopping, check to be sure the site is security enabled. Look for web addresses with <https://> indicating extra measures to help secure your information.

Shopping Online and on the Go:

- Now you see me, now you don't: Some stores and other locations look for devices with Wi-Fi or Bluetooth turned on to track your movements while you are within range. Disable Wi-Fi and Bluetooth when not in use.
- Get savvy about Wi-Fi hotspots: Limit the type of business you conduct over open public Wi-Fi connections, including logging on to key accounts, such as email and banking. Adjust the security settings on your device to limit who can access your phone.

Basic Safety and Security Tips:

- Keep a clean machine: All web-connected devices – including PCs, smartphones and tablets – can be protected from malware and infections by running only the most current versions of software and apps.

- Get two steps ahead: Turn on two-step authentication – also known as two-step verification or multi-factor authentication – on accounts where available. It adds a layer of protection beyond logon and password.
- Make better passwords: If your passwords are weak, improve them by adding capital letters, numbers and symbols and using different passwords for every account.

Visit stopthinkconnect.org for more tips about how to stay safe online.

Basic Safety Tips for Shopping at the Malls or Stores:

- Park in well-lit areas and look for lot markers: Snap a quick photo of your parking location so you are not a target while looking for your car in the dark.
- Always, always, always lock your car and never leave expensive items in plain view. Place all purchases in the trunk of your vehicle.
- If you are carrying a purse, keep it in front of you and cover the clasp or zipper opening with your forearm. Do not carry bags without zippers or clasps.
- Never leave your purse unattended.
- Men should carry their wallets in an interior jacket pocket instead of rear pants pocket.
- If shopping with children, keep them close to you. Before you leave the house, prepare them to stay close and instruct them to seek a security guard or store clerk if they get lost. Practice an 'I'm lost' scenario with them.

Protecting Your Home:

No one knows your neighborhood better than you and your neighbors. Maintain an open dialogue with your neighbors. The observation skills of you and your neighbors may deter a theft to a vehicle or burglary to a home in your area.

- Always be sure to lock the doors and windows of your home, garage and shed before you leave to go shopping.
- Illuminate the exterior of your home to deter potential offenders.
- Leave an interior light on.
- Request a House Watch if you are heading out of town for the holidays. To request a House Watch, call our 911 Communications Center at 847-549-5200.

