Holiday Crime Prevention Tips

presented by:

SHELBY COUNTY SHERIFF’S OFFICE
'Tis the season to be jolly, but it is also the season to be wary of burglars, thieves, pickpockets, and other holiday grinches.
Nothing can ruin the Christmas spirit faster than becoming the victim of a crime.
Unfortunately burglars view the holiday season a little differently...for them, it is a time of opportunity to burglarize your home for cash, credit cards, and gifts.
The following are a few strategies that will help you enjoy the holidays without incident.
Be extra cautious about locking doors and windows when you leave your house or apartment, even for a few minutes.
Don’t openly display your Christmas tree and gifts in the front window so it’s easily visible from the street. It’s too tempting for a potential criminal to smash the window and grab the wrapped packages. Or plan a later break-in based on their earlier observation.
Don’t advertise ... Burglars look for occupancy cues like outdoor lights burning 24 hours a day, piled up newspapers, mail, or advertising flyers hanging on the door knob.
Protecting Your Home

Use an inexpensive light timer when you are away and ask a neighbor to pick up your newspapers and mail.
If you go out for the evening, turn on lights and a radio or television so the house or apartment appears to be occupied.
Burglars know to look for the hidden door key near the front entrance. *Don’t* hide spare keys under rocks, in flowerpots, or above door ledges. *Instead give the spare key to a trusted neighbor.*
Burglars prefer to enter through unlocked doors or windows. A holiday problem can occur when exterior Christmas light extension cords are run inside through a window and prevent it from being secured.
Don’t post your family name on your mailbox or on your house. A burglar can call directory assistance to get your telephone number and call your home while in front of your house to confirm that you are away.
Don’t leave descriptive telephone answering machine messages like, “You’ve reached the Wilson’s...we’re away skiing for the Christmas holidays...please leave a message.” Bad guys love to hear that they have plenty of time to break in and completely ransack your home.
After Christmas day, don’t pile up empty gift boxes from your new computer, DVD player, or stereo receiver on the street for the garbage man. Burglars appreciate knowing that you have expensive gifts inside for them to steal. Break the boxes down or cut them up to conceal the items better.
Christmas is a time of year during which many of us will be busy shopping and running errands in order to be ready for the Holiday Celebration. We must not forget that criminals will also be out and about looking for easy targets to make a big score.
Even though you are rushed and thinking about a thousand things, stay alert to your surroundings.
Shop *before* dark if possible. Coordinate shopping trips with a friend. *Never* park in an unlit lot or area, no matter how convenient it is.
Remove *all* valuables from vehicle. Keep your vehicle's doors *locked* and windows *closed*. This is especially relevant for SUVs.
Have your keys readily available in your hand before you go to your car.
When you return to your vehicle, scan the interior of your car to be sure no one is hiding inside. Check to see if you are being followed.
Avoid carrying large amounts of cash. Pay for purchases with a check, credit card, or debit card when possible.
To discourage purse-snatchers, don't overburden yourself with packages. Have your purchases delivered whenever practical.
Shopping Prevention Tips

Be extra careful with purses and wallets. Carry a purse *under* your arm. Keep a wallet in an inside jacket pocket, **not** a back trouser pocket.
Beware of strangers approaching you for any reason. At this time of year, "con-artists" may try various methods of distracting you with the intention of taking your money or belongings.
And Remember...

NEVER DRINK AND DRIVE
Happy Holidays from your friends at Shelby County Sheriff’s Office!!!