

Holiday Crime Prevention

This holiday season don't let the spirit of giving lull you into giving burglars, robbers, and thieves a better chance to do their dirty work. Crooks love the holidays as much as everyone else, especially because it's an opportune time for crime.

Here are some tips from the Denton Police Department on how to celebrate safely this holiday season:

If You Are At Home:

- Keep doors and windows locked.
- Consider how much of your residence you are exposing to people passing by on the street when you have your curtains open (displaying seasonal ornaments, etc.).

If You Are Out for the Evening

- Turn on lights and a radio or TV so it looks like someone's home.
- Be extra cautious about locking doors and windows when you leave, even if it's just for a few minutes.
- Use your home alarm system. Make sure a monitored service has up to date contact phone numbers.
- Don't display gifts where they can be seen from outside.

If You Are Traveling

- Get an automatic timer for your lights.
- Ask a neighbor to watch your home, and park in the driveway from time to time.
- Don't forget to have mail and newspaper delivery stopped. If it piles up, it's a sure sign you're gone. This can be done easily online or by a phone call.

If You Are Shopping

- Stay alert and be aware of what's going on around you.
- Park in a well-lighted space, and be sure to close the windows and lock the car.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash; pay with a check or credit card whenever possible. (Note: Remember to get your credit card(s) back from the salesclerks at the end of your transaction).
- Deter purse-snatchers. Don't overburden yourself with packages. Be extra careful with purses and wallets. Carry a purse close to your body, not dangling by the straps. **Do not leave your purse unattended in a shopping cart** (even while you turn your back to look at an item on a shelf, etc.).
- Shopping with kids? Teach them to go to a store clerk or security guard if you get separated.

Protect Your Vehicle

- **LOCK – TAKE – HIDE**
 - **LOCK** your vehicle.
 - **TAKE** your belongings out of the vehicle. Do not leave anything in plain view (ex. Purses, wallets, GPS systems, sunglasses, CD's, holiday gifts, spare change, etc.)
 - **HIDE** your belongings inside your vehicle (in the trunk, console, glove box, etc.)

- Help prevent your vehicle from being stolen by always locking your car and using anti-theft devices. And **never leave your vehicle running** while you run inside your home or a store – even if for only a minute or two.

If a Stranger Comes to the Door

Criminals sometimes pose as couriers delivering gifts, and it's not uncommon for people to try to take advantage of others' generosity during the holidays by going door-to-door for charitable donations when there is no charity involved. Ask for identification, and find out how the funds will be used. If you aren't satisfied, don't give. Help a charitable organization you know and like instead.

Solicitors should be permitted by the City of Denton prior to going door to door. If you have any suspicions, please contact the Denton Police Department at 940-349-8181.

Solicitors may only conduct residential solicitation during the following times:

9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (Monday – Saturday)

Solicitation may not occur at any time on Sundays, New Year's Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day or Christmas Day.

After the Holiday Season / After the Gifts Are Opened

Burglars know that many households have new, and oftentimes expensive, items in their homes following the December holidays – especially items such as new computers and peripherals, stereo components, televisions, cameras and other electronic equipment. In too many cases, residents make it easy for burglars to figure out which homes to target by putting boxes that identify their new gifts in plain view with their other garbage.

Avoid becoming an easy target for post-holiday burglars by not leaving boxes for new electronics and other items in the alley or other garbage pick-up locations for several days at a time. Instead, break down any boxes you are throwing out, put them in garbage bags and place them inside a trash/recycle can.

Think about keeping broken-down boxes inside – in a garage, for example – until the evening before your regular garbage pick-up. Some burglars actually look inside garbage cans for evidence of holiday gifts.

And, of course, if you see someone suspicious, call the Denton Police Department's non-emergency number, (940) 349-8181. If you see a burglary in progress, call 911.

Take a Holiday Inventory

The holidays are a good time to update – or create – your home inventory. Take photos or make videos of items, and list descriptions and serial numbers (or owner applied numbers). If your home is burglarized, having a detailed inventory can help identify stolen items and make insurance claims easier to file.

Make sure things like TVs, VCRs, stereo equipment, cameras, camcorders, sports equipment, jewelry, silver, computers, home office equipment, and power tools are on the list. Remember to check it twice!

Be sure to keep this list in safe location that can be readily accessed in the event you need to report any of these items lost/stolen to the police department.