



# Arizona Crime Prevention Association

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## Holiday Safety

*Article submitted by Angela Freeman and Chi Guillermo, Glendale Police Department*

**T**his holiday season, protect yourself, your family and your property against criminals wishing to do you harm. Criminals have a desire to commit crimes against those who are not aware of what is going on around them. The holidays are an opportune time for a criminal to commit these offenses. Know your surroundings and don't become a target. It is up to YOU to make sure that a criminal does not have the opportunity to take advantage of you and your family.

### While Shopping

- Stay alert to your surroundings and the people around you.
- Shop with a friend; there is safety in numbers.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash.
- Pay for purchases with a check, credit card or debit card.
- If possible, carry only your driver's license, personal checks or necessary credit or debit cards.
- If you must carry a purse, do not wrap the straps around your arms or shoulders. You could risk injury from a would-be purse snatcher. Carry a clutch purse tightly under your arm or wear a fanny pack.
- Do not carry your wallet in a back pocket. It should be placed in a front pocket for safety.
- Be alert. Criminals look for the "high dollar store" shopping bags that contain your

purchases. When possible, slip bags/purchases into a plain, non-descript bag.

- Watch purchases while eating in the food court. Bags, as well as purses, can easily be switched or taken.
- Educate your children about what to do if they are lost, as well as what to do if a stranger should try and take them.
- Don't overburden yourself with too many packages. This jeopardizes your safety while walking to your vehicle. Either make multiple trips to your vehicle or have your packages sent to package pick-up where you may retrieve them in a well-lit and heavily populated area.
- Have your car keys ready in hand before leaving the store. They also make a great weapon should you need to defend yourself.
- If you do return to your vehicle to unload packages and continue shopping, place your purchases in the trunk. Be observant of anyone watching and, if possible, move the vehicle to another parking space to deter a burglary of your vehicle.
- Try not to shop until the store closes. Fewer people are present at this time.

### In Parking Lots

- Shop early and leave early to avoid evening darkness.
- Park in a highly visible area and check for lighting in case you leave after it gets dark.
- Do not park next to a vehicle with dark tinted windows. Waiting assailants can be obscured from view upon your return.

- Before shopping, lock all valuables in the trunk PRIOR to parking in the parking lot.
- Leave the store with a group of people, not alone.
- Ask the security officer to escort you to your vehicle if you are uncomfortable.
- Walk briskly, confidently and directly through the parking lot. Be cautious of people handing out fliers or asking questions in the parking area.
- Watch for people who may be following you. This can occur inside, as well as outside the store. If you suspect that you are being followed, report it immediately to store or mall security.

### **At Home**

- Keep the outside of your home well-lit, doors locked and window curtains or blinds closed.
- Don't display gifts beneath the Christmas tree that can be seen from windows or doors.
- After the holidays, don't advertise gifts received by putting the boxes in the recycle bin. Destroy boxes and place in a sealed, non-clear bag.

### **If You Are Traveling**

- Get an automatic timer for your lights.
- Ask a neighbor to watch your home, collect mail and newspapers, park in the driveway, etc.
- Have mail and newspaper delivery stopped. If it piles up, it is a sure sign you are gone. Because emergencies occur, this is not always possible. Rely on friends and neighbors to help.

### **Take Inventory**

Make good use of your holiday time. Take inventory of your property. This is especially good for insurance purposes in case of burglary or fire.

Make a video or take photos of your items and make a written list of the items. This list should include items like TVs, DVD/BlueRay players, VCRs, stereo equipment, computers, cameras, camcorders,

jewelry, silver, power tools, home office equipment and sports equipment.

Make sure to mark these items with your Arizona driver's license or identification number. Engraving tools are usually available at either your local police station or library.

Keep a copy of the video or photos and your inventory list in a fireproof safe or safety deposit box. This will make an insurance claim much easier to file should anything happen.

*Editor's Note: There are many free home inventory software programs out there. The one I currently use is found at <http://whatyouown.org/index.html>. Besides descriptive information about the item, you can also enter price paid, where purchased and upload photos and any other documents that go with the item, like a scan of the purchase receipt or the user manual.*

*Should you need to print for insurance purposes, it can be done easily; you can even create custom printable reports.*