

Shop Safely Online

As more of us use the Internet to do our shopping, it's important to take precautions. Here are some basics to consider:

1. Protect your personal information. It's valuable.
2. Know who you're dealing with.
3. Use anti-virus and anti-spyware software, as well as a firewall, and update them all regularly.
4. Make sure your operating system and Web browser are set up properly and update them regularly.
5. Protect your passwords.
6. Back up important files.
7. Learn who to contact if something goes wrong online.

Learn More

Some additional resources you might consider before making purchases online:

- » www.safeshopping.org
- » onguardonline.gov
- » www.aarp.org/money/wise_consumer/smartshopping

Get More Safety Tips

For tips on other ways to stay safe from crime in your daily life, see the other brochures in this series, available from our Website at www.mpdc.dc.gov/safety. Or visit your local police district. To find the one nearest you, visit www.mpdc.dc.gov/districts.

Get Involved!

No one individual or agency working alone can prevent crime. It takes police and citizens working in partnership. The District of Columbia's community policing strategy provides many ways for police and communities to work together to prevent crime and build safer neighborhoods. These include regular Police Service Area meetings in your community, citizen patrols and more. To learn more about community policing activities in your neighborhood, call your local police district:

1st District	Main:.....(202) 698-0555.....	TTY: 727-8506
	Substation:.....(202) 698-0068.....	TTY: 543-2352
2nd District	Main:.....(202) 715-7300.....	TTY: 364-3961
3rd District	Main:.....(202) 673-6815.....	TTY: 518-0008
4th District	Main:.....(202) 715-7400.....	TTY: 722-1791
	Substation:.....(202) 576-8222.....	TTY: 576-9640
5th District	Main:.....(202) 698-0150.....	TTY: 727-5437
6th District	Main:.....(202) 698-0880.....	TTY: 398-5397
	Substation:.....(202) 698-2088.....	TTY: 281-3945
7th District	Main:.....(202) 698-1500.....	TTY: 889-3574

Know Something About a Crime? Don't Keep It a Secret

If you have important information to share with the police, the Anonymous Crime Tip Line and Text Tip Line enables you to give MPD vital information anonymously. Just dial (202) 727-9099 or text to 50411 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Your name will not be used, only the information you provide. Your information could lead to a cash reward. For more details, see www.mpdc.dc.gov/tipline.



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Metropolitan Police Department
300 Indiana Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001

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FOR YOUR SAFETY



Holiday Safety

Tips for protecting yourself while shopping and preparing for the holiday season



Don't give more than you mean to during the holidays.

This holiday season, don't let the spirit of giving lull you into giving burglars, muggers, and pickpockets 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.

Homes jam-packed with glittering gifts. Stores, malls, and downtown streets teeming with unsuspecting shoppers. Parked vehicles with holiday purchases and other "goodies" — cell phones, briefcases, purses — left in plain view. People rushing around, stressed out and careless, looking for last-minute gifts, trying to get everything done. It's enough to make a crook giddy with holiday joy.

Here are some tips on how to enjoy this holiday season safely while reducing your chances of being victimized.

When You Are Traveling

- » Get an automatic timer for your lights.
- » Ask a neighbor to watch your home, shovel snow, 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.

When 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.
- » Don't display gifts where they can be seen from outside.

When You Are Shopping

- » Stay alert and be aware of what's going on around you.
- » Park in a well-lit space, and be sure to lock the car, close the windows, and hide shopping bags and gifts in the trunk.
- » Avoid carrying large amounts of cash; pay with a check or credit card whenever possible.
- » Deter pickpockets and 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. Put a wallet in an inside coat or front pants pocket.
- » Shopping with kids? Teach them to go to a store clerk or security guard if you get separated.

Protect Your Vehicle

Loading up on all those gifts is a sign of progress in the holiday shopping. But if those packages are left out in the open after they're in the car, your car has become a likely target for thieves. Remember the old cliché "Out of sight, out of mind?" The same idea applies to items in your car.

Always lock your vehicle and store all items out of sight. Breaking into an empty car isn't worth a thief's time. However, anything left in plain view — from your holiday gifts to spare change, sunglasses, CDs, cell phones or briefcases — may tempt a thief.

Help prevent your vehicle from being stolen by always locking your car and using anti-theft devices. And although it's cold, 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's 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. Or think about reaching out in the spirit of the season and helping someone who's less fortunate or lonely.

Do your part to make the holidays a safe and happy time for everybody—except con artists and other criminals.

After You've Opened the Gifts

Burglars know that many households have new, and often-times expensive, items in their homes following the December holidays — especially items such as new computers, 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 can. (In many cases, especially with computer equipment, you might consider keeping the boxes for safe storage, shipping or moving in the future.) 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 casing your alley, call the Metropolitan Police Department's non-emergency number, 3-1-1. If you see a burglary in progress, call 9-1-1.

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. If your home is burglarized, having a detailed inventory can help identify stolen items and make insurance claims easier to file.

Make sure items such as 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!

Celebrate Responsibly

The holiday season is a time of celebration and revelry. Drinking and driving is a danger to everyone on the road. Anyone with a blood-alcohol content of .08 or higher is in violation of DC law and may go to jail. Remember that the risk isn't worth it — if you choose to drink alcohol at a party, don't drive. Take a cab, use public transportation or a designated driver, or call SoberRide® (800-200-TAXI), a free cab service in DC and the surrounding area active from the middle of December through January 1. Have fun, but remember to celebrate responsibly.