

HOLIDAY SAFETY TIPS
FROM THE
LOWER MAKEFIELD TOWNSHIP
POLICE DEPARTMENT

Shopping during the holiday season can present a unique danger. Taking a few prevention measures can help keep your holiday season joyous. The holiday season is a time when busy people can become careless and vulnerable to theft and other holiday crime.

The following tips from the Lower Makefield Township Police Department Community Policing Unit can help you be more careful, prepared and aware during the holiday season.

Shop during daylight hours whenever possible. If you must shop at night, go with a friend or family member and park your vehicle in well lit areas or close to mall entrance ways.

Don't leave anything in plain view in the compartment of your vehicle, if your car has a trunk place any items purchased in there. Keep loose change, GPS units and other valuables out of sight.

Utilize your vehicle's alarm system and if you don't have one, purchase a "Club" at an auto parts store. This will prevent the theft of your vehicle.

Dress casually and comfortably.

Avoid wearing expensive jewelry or exposing it for others to see.

Do not carry a purse or wallet, if possible. For men carry your wallet in one of your front pockets.

Always carry your Pennsylvania Driver License or other Identification Card along with necessary cash, checks and/or a credit card you expect to use.

Even though you are rushed and thinking about a thousand things, stay alert to your surroundings.

Avoid carrying large amounts of cash.

Pay for purchases with a check, debit card or credit card when possible.

Keep cash in your front pocket.

Notify the credit card issuer immediately if your credit card is lost, stolen or misused.

Keep a record of all of your credit card numbers in a safe place at home.

Be extra careful if you do carry a wallet or purse. They are the prime targets of criminals in crowded shopping areas, transportation terminals, bus stops, on buses and other rapid transit.

Avoid overloading yourself with packages. It is important to have clear visibility and freedom of motion to avoid mishaps.

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.

Know the area you are going to be shopping in, have a cell phone with you in case of an emergency. Dial 9-1-1 in an emergency and describe the surroundings to the dispatcher in the event you are not familiar with the area; use landmarks, buildings, etc.

Above all else do not panic in an emergency; remain calm and play it smart.

Holiday Safety Tips For Children

Teach your children to stay with you at all times while shopping. They should always check first with you or the person in charge before they go anywhere. Always supervise your children in a public facility and accompany young children to the restroom.

Make a plan in case you become separated. Have older kids meet you in a pre-designated spot (e.g. the sales counter or mall information booth). Teach younger children to look for people who can help within the store or mall — a uniformed security officer, a salesperson with a nametag, a mother with children, etc. They should never leave the store/mall or go to the parking lot to look for you or your car.

Turn shopping trips into opportunities for your children to practice these "safe shopping" skills.

Leave clothing that displays your children's names at home, as it can prompt unwelcome attention from people who may be looking for an opportunity to start a conversation with your children.

Never leave children in toy stores or public facilities (e.g. video arcades, movie theaters, playgrounds) and expect store personnel to supervise your children.

Have older children take a friend, if you allow them to go shopping or to public functions without you. It's more fun and much safer. Older children should check in with you on a regular basis while they are out. Agree on a clear plan for picking them up including: where, what time, and what to do in case of a change in plans. Utilize a cell phone if your child is allowed to carry one.

Make other arrangements for child care, if you feel that you will be distracted during holiday shopping.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!