



## Topsfield Police Department: Citizens Information Alert/ Holiday Safety Tips

The rush and good will that surround the holidays can increase the opportunities for criminal activity. The Topsfield Police Department suggests these simple tips to assist you in having a safe and happy holiday season.

### When Shopping:

- Be ALERT and AWARE of your surroundings. Pay attention to who is around you & what activities are happening. Don't leave the safety of a building or your vehicle until you have ensured all is secure & safe. Trust your instincts; if you feel uncomfortable with a place or person(s), get away.
- Park in a well-lit area.
- Remember to lock your vehicle!! Keep vehicle doors & windows locked while you are in it & especially when you are not! Use anti-theft steering wheel clubs or locks as well. A thief is looking for easy targets & anything you can do to deter them from choosing your car, the better.
- Minimize the number of valuables left in your vehicle and keep valuables, electronics (including cell phones and DVDs), gifts and other "theft attractors" out of sight.
- Protect your purse or wallet and clean out any unnecessary items before leaving home. Don't carry large amounts of cash or extra credit cards. Carry only those cards that you will need to use that day. Keep a master list of all cards so if your wallet is stolen, they can be reported promptly to the appropriate banking facility.
- Never leave your purse, wallet or cell phone unattended in a public place.
- Don't overburden yourself with packages while shopping.
- Shop with a buddy – there is safety in numbers.
- Role-play with children about what should happen in the event you are separated.
- Have your keys out and ready when you return to your vehicle.
- Do not leave your car unattended with the motor running or with the keys in the ignition – even for the very short time needed to do a quick errand or pay for fuel.
- Only make online purchases from trusted, secure websites. Look for "https" in the web address to verify security.

### At Home:

- Make sure all doors & windows have secondary locks (window pins, deadbolts, dowels, etc.) and use them!

- Ensure that dark areas and entrances have outdoor lights that are turned on after dark or that are activated by sensors.
- Place gifts where they can't be seen from the outside.
- Avoid opening the door to strangers. Legitimate delivery people will be able to show identification.
- Investigate charities before donating by calling the Secretary of the Commonwealth's office at (617) 727-7030 or 1-800-392-6090 or the charity's main office.
- Be sure to mail cards with money, checks or gift certificates from the Post Office.
- If traveling, use timers for lights and radios while you're away. Ask a trusted friend, neighbor to watch your home. Place your home on the Topsfield Police House Check list so the Police can check your home as well. Remember to make arrangements for mail and newspapers.

#### When Driving:

- Recognize that the holidays can cause stress – keep emotions under control while driving. Give other drivers plenty of space and always leave yourself a route to avoid an accident.
- If you attend parties where alcohol is served, remember to use a designated driver.
- Prepare for winter driving conditions and equip your vehicle with cold weather emergency supplies.
- Minimize distractions such as talking on a cell phone.
- Take frequent breaks to avoid fatigue, especially when driving long distances. If you get tired, stop and rest until you're able to drive with full attention.
- Buckle up! That means passengers and kids, too!!
- Be patient! Give yourself extra time for travel, especially in snow or rain. Even in dry conditions, traffic during the holidays is heavier than normal, and it will take longer than you expect to get around.

#### After the holidays:

- Pay close attention to bills and report any unauthorized charges.
- Photograph and record the serial numbers of new items and add them to your inventory.