



## Personal Safety During the Holidays

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**D**uring the holidays there are many distractions that can cause you to be unaware of your surroundings and the people around you. When you are distracted, you are an easy target. Criminals watch for these things. Be aware, be prepared, and stay informed! Protect yourself and be "Street Safe"!

As the holiday season approaches, we should all pause to think about personal safety. Unfortunately, the holiday time of year also has the highest crime rates, with theft at the top of the list.

Don't let CRIME spoil your holiday! Celebration can quickly turn to anguish because safety was neglected. "It *can* happen to you," so be careful, and consider the simple yet powerful strategies listed below. Being aware of these strategies can help make your world a safer place and your holidays the joyful times they should be.

### Holiday Safety Strategies

Remember "The Criminal Triangle": Desire, Opportunity, Victim. *Avoid providing opportunity!*

When out shopping, *be observant and aware* of your surroundings. Avoid parking in isolated areas. Walk in lighted areas and on established paths.

Send the right message. *Look and act as though you know where you are going.*

If someone makes you uncomfortable or the situation doesn't seem right, trust your instincts and *leave*.

Carry your purse close to your body and grip it tight. Do not hold your purse by the straps.

*Shop with family or friends* if possible. There is safety in numbers. Be alert in crowded places: jammed aisles, elevators, public transportation.

Plan ahead. Avoid exhaustion, and don't "shop 'til you drop." Take your purchases home and come back to finish your shopping another day.

Keep a close eye on your children while shopping. Teach your children to go to a store clerk or security guard if they ever get separated from you. Make sure your child knows where to meet you if you get separated.

Take your children home if they start to get tired. Cranky kids can be the distraction a criminal is looking for.

Carry the day's most expensive purchases closest to your body. Avoid leaving your purchases unattended or hidden in your car under a blanket. Criminals don't mind smashing your car window. Put your purchases in the trunk.

If you need to visit an ATM, do it during daylight hours and in populated locations.

Have your car or house key in hand before you reach the door. This reduces the time you are standing at the locked door searching for keys.

Keep car doors locked even when driving. Keep the windows rolled up far enough so that outsiders cannot reach in.

Shopping, getting presents, traveling, visiting family and friends . . . the holidays can increase your stress level. Plan ahead and make it a safe holiday season!



### Steps in a Criminal Act

**Surveillance**—Criminals will pick a target and observe and assess for weaknesses.

**Invitation**—The target is tested for accessibility and defense capabilities.

**Confrontation**—The targeted individual finds herself in a face-to-face situation with the criminal.

**Assault**—A crime takes place.