

The Delaware State Police would like to remind everyone that the holiday season is a time when people can become vulnerable to theft and other holiday crimes. People are often in a rush buying gifts, decorating their homes, visiting friends or traveling. There is a big increase in the amount of people that are out and about shopping at the malls and grocery stores, packing the parking lots and waiting lines at the ATM. Provided are a few tips in hopes that everyone has a safe and happy holiday season.

How to Keep From Becoming a Holiday Crime Victim

The following tips can help you be more careful, prepared and aware during the holiday season.

- Try to shop during the day, but if you do shop at night, do not do it alone.
- Dress casually and comfortably.
- Avoid wearing expensive jewelry.
- Do not carry a purse or wallet, if possible. Consider bringing a security travel pouch instead.
- Always carry your driver's license or identification along with necessary cash, checks and/or a credit card you expect to use.
- Recognize when you are rushed, distracted and stressed out, and stay alert to what is going on around you.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash.
- Pay for purchases with a check or credit card when possible.
- Keep cash in your front pocket.
- If you discover that a credit card is missing, notify the credit card company as soon as possible. Don't assume that you misplaced it and will find it later.
- 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, 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 if you are approached.
- Beware of strangers approaching you for any reason. At this time of year, con-artists may try various methods of distracting you, including working in teams, with the intention of taking your money or belongings.

Parking Lot Safety Tips:

- Do not carry large amounts of cash; use checks, credit/debit cards to make purchases.
- Use automated teller machines in highly populated areas.
- Try not to use your phone or text when walking through a parking lot.
- Beware of strangers approaching you for any reason.
- Shop during daylight hours instead of at night.
- Carry your car key fob in hand to be used as a personal alarm.
- Do not leave purchased items visible in your vehicle.
- Do not wear expensive jewelry.

On-line Shopping Safety Tips:

- When in doubt, throw it out. Delete links in emails, tweets, posts, and online advertising.
- Think before you act. Be wary of offers of amazing deals that sound too good to be true or implore you to act immediately.
- Make sure the site is legitimate. A closed padlock on your web browser's address bar or a Uniform Resource Locator address that begins with `shttp` or `https`. This indicates that the purchase is encrypted or secured.
- Protect your personal information. Check the website's privacy policy and how your information will be stored and used.
- Keep a paper trail. Save records of your online transactions, check your credit card statements for any unauthorized charges and report discrepancy to your bank immediately.