



Thieves Love the Holiday Season

By Carolyn Nicolaysen
October 31, 2018

Thieves love the holiday season. They can do all their "shopping" in one place as we place gifts under the tree, leave them on counters to wrap and are overwhelmed and often ignore common sense safety practices. They love watching us run to our cars, place an armload of gifts in the trunk and then run back for more. With the rise in crime, lack of enough police, and our entitlement society - home thefts and thefts at malls are on the rise. Prepare now so you don't become a victim.

It may seem early to discuss Christmas shopping and decorating however, planning early will help you to review tips and share them with your family members thus protecting them. All family members should be taught, and tips should be reviewed several times.

1) Many of us will have company for the holidays. With more cars on the street this may require loved one to park down the block from your home. Remind guests to lock their cars, remove valuables, or place valuables in the trunk before arriving.

2) Be aware of your surroundings and stay alert for suspicious looking strangers in your neighborhoods. Do not hesitate to call the police immediately if you see something of concern. If you see someone at a neighbor's home and you know they are at work or picking up the kids from school write down a description of the person and vehicle and call the police immediately. We had a friend who was gone for 20 minutes to pick up the kids and when they came home their house had been robbed. We all have patterns to our behaviors and thieves know that.

3) Always lock your home's doors and windows, even if you are only planning on being gone for a few minutes.

4) Packages are often left by the front door at this time of the year. If the package has been mailed through the post office the carrier may also leave your mail at the door with the package. Think of the checks a thief could find in those letters from grandma or uncle Joe. If you are expecting a package, please watch for it, have your neighbors watch for it, or have it delivered to an address of a friend or neighbor who is home during the day. If you have many packages delivered ask the UPS, FEDEX, or other driver to drop it at the back door or behind a gate where it can't be seen.

5) Be sure not to obscure the view from your windows with yard decorations. Neighbors and you need a clear view of your property to avoid creating hiding spaces for a thief.

6) Begin before you leave home for a shopping trip by dressing down. If you want to be the last person to have your purse lifted or pocket picked, dress to look as though you are broke.

7) Be sure to activate your car alarm.

8) Teach children to go to a store clerk or security guard if you become separated. Place an identity

©Copyright 2018 Carolyn Nicolaysen, TotallyReady.com

All rights reserved. Duplication, redistribution or retransmission of this work is strictly prohibited without express written consent of the author.

Totally Ready

Prepped when it really counts ⚡

card in your child's pocket just in case. The card should include the names of the child and parents, address, telephone contact numbers, and the name of a relative.

9) When shopping, be aware of your packages and other belongings. Keep purses close to your body, cross body purses are perfect. Do not leave purses in shopping carts when in stores. Never leave your purse open as a thief can quickly grab your wallet and be gone. It only takes a second as you turn your back for someone to grab and dash. Keep your phone in your pocket so if someone does grab your purse or package you can call 911 immediately. Men, keep your wallet in a front pocket.

10) When dark, park your car in a well-lighted area, close windows, lock doors, and look around for suspicious persons before leaving your vehicle. Many retail outlets have security staff patrolling the parking lots. Be sure to let them and/or the police know when you observe any suspicious activity.

11) When shopping at night do not hesitate to ask for a security guard to escort you to your car. The time can get away from us and you may find yourself still shopping when most shoppers have returned home. A deserted parking lot can be a dangerous place.

12) Be aware of the people in your surrounding area. If you think you are being watched do not go to your car but return to a populated area and report the person to security.

13) If you decide to place your packages in your car at the mall, it is always best to place them in your trunk and then move your car to a new location in the parking lot before going back into the mall. Thieves pay close attention to shoppers and will break into the car to retrieve the packages.

14) Never talk on your cell phone or text when walking in a parking lot. Being distracted makes you an easy target. Look around and look everyone in the eye.

15) Check the back seat of the car and under the car before entering your car. As soon as you are in the car lock the doors.

16) Be careful not to flash cash. If you are shopping using cash, good for you, way to stick to a budget, but be aware. Do not place all your cash in your wallet where curious eyes can see your wad. Go to the restroom and move cash to replace what you have spent.

17) Credit cards offer convenience and security, however, keep track of all cards and keep receipts to compare to your monthly statement. Yes, there are unscrupulous clerks too. Wait until asked before taking out your credit card or checkbook. An enterprising thief would love to shoulder surf to get your account information.

18) Save all receipts. Print and save all confirmations from your online purchases. Start a file to keep receipts organized to help you verify credit card or bank statements as they come in. Notify the credit card company immediately if your credit card is lost, stolen, or misused.

19) Shop online only with companies you know and trust. Check a company's background if you are

©Copyright 2018 Carolyn Nicolaysen, TotallyReady.com

All rights reserved. Duplication, redistribution or retransmission of this work is strictly prohibited without express written consent of the author.

Totally Ready

Prepped when it really counts ⚡

not familiar with it. Remember, if it sounds too good to be true, it usually is.

20) If you plan to leave on vacation, contact your neighbors and ask them to remove any advertisements that may be placed on your driveway or front door and to keep an eye on your home. Stop your mail and newspaper. Remember the crowded street parking? Ask a neighbor to park a car in your driveway giving the impression you are home and have visitors.

21) Purchase several timers and begin using them now. The timers will set a pattern and if anyone is watching your home they will not be able to determine if you have left since the same lights go on and off every day whether you are there or not. Be sure the blinds are open enough for the light to be seen but not enough for the thief to see inside.

22) If you receive a telephone call or email from anyone stating they are from the bank, a company you ordered something from, the IRS, a hospital representative, or anyone asking for any personal information (social security number, account numbers, drivers license number, address, etc.), it may easily be a scam. Always ask for their name and telephone number and tell them you will call them back. If they hesitate at all phone your local police and report them. Even if they don't hesitate remain suspicious and do not return the call. I don't know of any company who will ask for this information over the phone. Never give personal information to anyone asking for it over the telephone or email.

23) Do not open the door to anyone you do not know. Be sure your children understand that they are never to open the door. If the person has on a brown uniform but there is no big brown delivery truck in the driveway you know they are up to no good. Call the police and report the incident. This is a good time of the year to keep your doors locked. Thieves will work in teams and while you are occupied at the front door they will slip in the back.

24) Use your home burglar alarm every time you leave your home and when you go to bed.

25) If you plan to travel for the holidays, don't discuss your plans with strangers. Why would you do that? Have you ever told a store cashier all the snacks you were buying were for your trip? Have you ever posted your plans on facebook or another social media site? Comments like, "can't wait for my mom's apple pie" or "Almost done with packing" Remember anything on the internet can be hacked and 80% of incarcerated thieves said they found leads on social media sites.

26) Christmas may have come and gone, but thieves have not. It is not time to let down your guard. When discarding boxes break them down so the original contents cannot be determined. You do not want to advertise the new TV or computer.

27) Continue with all the habits you have developed. Continue locking doors and windows and with tips 20-26.

Make this a safe holiday season by taking precautions now.

*Carolyn is asking for ideas for 2019. Please visit her [facebook page](#) and let her know how she can help you overcome your stumbling blocks to being **Totally Ready**.*

©Copyright 2018 Carolyn Nicolaysen, TotallyReady.com

All rights reserved. Duplication, redistribution or retransmission of this work is strictly prohibited without express written consent of the author.