

through the heavy traffic, Sarah had a nagging thought that she'd forgotten to lock the door in her hurry to leave, but it disappeared in the excitement of seeing her parents.

When Sarah returned home a few hours later, she found chaos—weeping children, a police car, an anxious husband, concerned neighbors. The presents were gone. The cookies were scattered and broken all over the kitchen floor. Sarah was speechless. This was a nightmare.

And it would have continued except that Mrs. Scott next door noticed two men in coveralls putting packages in a van parked in Sarah's driveway. She thought for a minute, and then decided to call the police. Mrs. Scott was right on target. With her description of the van and its license plates, the police were able to arrest the burglars and recover most of Sarah's presents.

During the holidays, people are often like Sarah—busy, excited, and a little careless. Unfortunately it's a time when they should be extra careful, since it's a peak season for burglars, pick-pockets, purse snatchers, shoplifters, and con artists.

Here are some things you can do to help make the holidays a safe and happy time.

AT HOME

✓ Be extra cautious about locking doors and windows when you leave the house, even for a few minutes.

✓ Don't display gifts where they can be seen from a window or doorway. Store gifts before you go away on a holiday trip.

✓ If you go out in the evening, turn on lights and a radio or television so the house looks occupied.

✓ If you go away for a few days, get an automatic timer for your lights. Have a neighbor watch your house, shovel snow, pick up the mail and newspapers, and park his or her car in your driveway from time to time.

✓ Check to make sure items like televisions, VCRs, stereos, cameras, and microwave ovens are marked with a unique identification number to help police recover them if they do get stolen.

✓ Be wary of strangers coming to the door asking for charitable donations. They may be taking advantage of people's generosity during the holidays to start a charity that only benefits them. Ask for identification, how the funds are used, if contributions are tax deductible. If you aren't satisfied with the answers, don't give. Instead help charitable organizations you know.

✓ Beware of package deliveries where couriers have the "wrong" address. Write down tag numbers of suspicious delivery attempts.

✓ Teach your children not to play with tree lights or electric connections.

✓ Immediately after the holidays, mark new gifts with your license number or other I.D.

✓ Use only fire resistant ornaments on your tree and make sure lights are in good working order. Place the tree in wet sand to keep it green. Don't leave the lights on overnight or when you are out.

"Make sure your neighborhood is as safe as your home."

✓ Never burn gift wrappings in your fireplace.

✓ Test your smoke detectors.

✓ If you have house guests, let them know about your security precautions and make sure they follow them.

SHOPPING

✓ Even though you're rushed and thinking about a thousand things, stay alert to your surroundings and the people around you. If you see people loitering in parking garages, parking lots, and outside of stores, go the other way.

✓ Shop before dark if possible. Coordinate shopping trips with a friend if you plan to be out late. Never park in an unlit lot, no matter how convenient it is.

✓ Lock your car and close the windows, even if you're only gone a few minutes. Lock packages in the trunk.

✓ Park near street lights if possible and have your keys in hand when you return to the car. Check the interior of your car before getting inside.

✓ To discourage purse snatchers, don't overburden yourself with packages. Have your purchases delivered whenever practical.

✓ Avoid carrying large amounts of cash. Pay for purchases with a check or credit card when possible.

✓ Don't carry excess credit cards. Take only those cards for the stores where you intend to shop. Make sure you have recorded the numbers of all your credit cards and keep this information in a safe place at home.

✓ Be extra careful with purses and wallets. Carry a purse under your arm. Keep a wallet in an inside jacket pocket, not a back trouser pocket.

✓ Teach your children to go to a store clerk or security guard and ask for help if you become separated in a store or shopping mall. They should never go into a parking lot alone.

AT WORK

✓ Lock any gifts you've bought on your lunch hour away in a safe place. Remind co-workers to do the same.

✓ Be especially careful to keep your purse or wallet with you at all times or locked in a drawer or closet.

✓ Be alert for people who may try to take advantage of the holiday mood, reduced workforce, and people's inattention to burglarize companies and their employees. If you see unauthorized people in places they shouldn't be, call the security department immediately.

✓ Don't let a co-worker's holidays be ruined by crime. If someone you know has been a victim, offer to help with shopping and locating victim services. Just listening can be a big help.

✓ Give a ride home to a co-worker who drank too much at the company Christmas party.

"Coordinate shopping trips with a friend if you plan to be out late."

YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

✓ Help keep the holidays happy for everyone by being extra alert. If a neighbor's going away, offer to take in the mail and papers.

✓ Have a Neighborhood Watch party that includes everyone. Don't forget the elderly and other people who might be especially lonely during the holidays.

✓ Get teens in your neighborhood together to go caroling in a nursing home or help elderly residents with shopping and decorating their homes.

Provided By:

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Community Outreach Division
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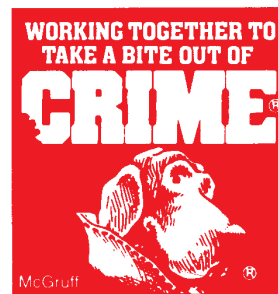
David Gee, Sheriff

HOW TO REPORT SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

1. Keep a list of emergency numbers handy.
2. Call law enforcement and tell them what happened, giving specific details as to, time and place, injuries, description of suspect/vehicle, license number, direction of escape, and any other details available.
3. Stay calm and remain on the phone until help arrives.

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| 1. Sheriff's Emergency | 911 |
| Ambulance - County Fire | |
| 2. Dispatch (Non-Emergency) | 247-8200 |
| 3. Sheriff Information | 247-8000 |
| 4. Community Outreach Division | 247-8115 |



A message from
The National Crime Prevention
Council in partnership with ADT.



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TIPS FOR A HAPPY AND SAFE HOLIDAY

"For once," Sarah thought, "I'm ready for the holidays!" A tree sparkled in the front window with its lights, decorations, and presents piled high. She checked her list—cookies baked, grocery shopping done, cleaning picked up, dinner in the freezer. All that was left was to pick up her parents at the airport. As she was driving

