IF A STRANGER COMES TO THE DOOR, BEWARE

Criminals sometimes pose as couriers delivering gifts. And it's not uncommon for people to try to take advantage of others' generosity during the holidays by going door-to-door for charitable donations when there's no charity involved. Ask for identification, and find out how the funds will be used. If you aren't satisfied, don't give. Help a charitable organization you know and like instead.

Last but not least, don't let holiday stress get the best of your holiday spirit. Make time to get together with family, friends, and neighbors. And think about reaching out in the spirit of the season and helping someone who's less fortunate or lonely.

Do your part to make the holidays a safe and happy time for everybody—except criminals.

TAKE A HOLIDAY INVENTORY

The holidays are a good time to update — or create — your home inventory. Take photos or make videos of items, and list descriptions and serial numbers. If your home is burglarized, having a detailed inventory can help identify stolen items and make insurance claims easier to file. Make sure things like TVs, VCRs, stereo equipment, cameras, camcorders, sports equipment, jewelry, silver, computers, home office equipment, and power tools are on the list. Remember to check it twice!

TAKE A BITE OUT OF CRIME

Crime Prevention Tips from
National Crime Prevention Council
1000 Connecticut Ave., NW, 13th Fl.
Washington, D.C. 20036
and
MARYLAND COMMUNITY CRIME PREVENTION INSTITUTE
Police Training Commission
6852 4th Street
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ADT Security Systems

HOLIDAY SAFETY

TIPS FOR SAFE AND HAPPY HOLIDAYS

This holiday season, don't let the spirit of giving lull you into giving burglars, muggers, and pickpockets a better chance to do their dirty work. Crooks love the holidays as much as everyone else, but chiefly because it's an opportune time for crime.

Homes jam-packed with glittering gifts. Stores, malls and downtown streets teeming with unsuspecting shoppers. People rushing around, stressed out and careless, looking for last-minute gifts, trying to get everything done. It's enough to make a crook giddy with holiday joy.

Here are some tips on how to celebrate safely this holiday season:

If you're traveling

- Get an automatic timer for your lights.
- Ask a neighbor to watch your home, shovel snow, and park in the driveway from time to time.
- Don't forget to have mail and newspaper delivery stopped. If it piles up, it's a sure sign you're gone.

If you're out for the evening

- Turn on lights and a radio or TV so it looks like someone's home.
- Be extra cautious about locking doors and windows when you leave, even if it's just for a few minutes.

- Don't display gifts where they can be seen from outside.

If you're shopping

- Stay alert and be aware of what's going on around you.
- Park in a well-lighted space, and be sure to lock the car, close the windows, and hide shopping bags and gifts in the trunk.

- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash; pay with a check or credit card whenever possible.
- Deter pickpockets and purse-snatchers. Dont overburden yourself with packages. Be extra careful with purses and wallets. Carry a purse close to your body, not dangling by the straps. Put a wallet in an inside coat or front pants pocket.
- Shopping with kids? Teach them to go to a store clerk or security guard if you get separated.