



## **NEWS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** \_\_\_\_\_

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### **SUFFOLK POLICE PROVIDE TIPS FOR HOLIDAY SHOPPING SAFETY**

SUFFOLK, VA (December 1, 2016) The holiday shopping season is in full swing, when busy people can become careless and vulnerable to theft and other holiday crime.

Since Thanksgiving, the Suffolk Police Department has been participating in the "Holiday on the Beat", an initiative that places Officers in Suffolk's high volume shopping districts. Areas include Harbour View, Bridge Road shopping corridor, Bennett's Crossing, Plaza West, Godwin Boulevard shopping corridor, North Main Street shopping corridor, and the Downtown Business District. They've taken this initiative a step further this year and have also been providing helpful safety brochures to citizens and businesses they encounter along the way.

The Suffolk Police Department is committed to keeping each and every citizen safe, and would like to offer these crime prevention tips to help you be more careful, prepared and aware during the holiday season.

### Holiday crime prevention tips while shopping

- Stay alert to your surroundings and the people around you.
- Shop with a friend; there is safety in numbers.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash.
- Pay for purchases with a check, credit or debit card.
- If possible, carry only your driver's license, personal checks, or necessary credit or debit cards.
- If you must carry a purse, do not wrap the straps around your arms or shoulders. Carry a clutch purse tightly under your arm or wear a fanny pack.
- Do not carry a wallet in a back pocket. It should be placed in a front pocket of your pants for safety.
- Be alert that crooks look for the "high dollar" shopping bags with your purchases. When possible, slip bags/purchases in a plain, nondescript bag.
- Watch purchases while eating in mall food courts; bags can easily be switched or taken.
- Educate your children about what to do if they are lost as well as "Stranger Danger".
- Don't overburden yourself with too many packages. Use store's package pick-up.
- Have your car keys ready in hand before leaving the store.
- If you do return to your vehicle to unload purchases, place them in the trunk of the vehicle, not visible on a back seat.
- Try not to shop until the store closes. Remember, fewer people are present at this time

### Holiday crime prevention tips for parking lots

- Shop early and leave early to avoid evening darkness.
- Park in a high visibility area and check for lighting in case you leave during hours of darkness.

- If at all possible, try not to park next to a vehicle with dark, tinted windows.
- Prior to arriving at the shopping center, lock all your valuables in the trunk of your vehicle.
- Leave the store with others, not alone.
- Ask security to escort you to your vehicle if you feel uncomfortable.
- Walk briskly, confidently, and directly through the parking lot. Be cautious of people handing out fliers or asking questions in the parking area.
- Watch for people who may be following you. This can occur inside as well as outside. If you suspect someone following you, report it to security immediately.

#### Holiday crime prevention tips at home

- Keep the outside of your home well-lit with doors locked and window curtains closed.
- Don't display gifts beneath the Christmas tree which can be seen from windows or doors.
- After the holidays, don't advertise gifts received by the boxes left for the garbage collection. Destroy boxes and place in a sealed, non-clear garbage bag.

Brochures and other helpful safety information can be found on their website at [www.suffolkva.us/spd/holidaycrimesafety](http://www.suffolkva.us/spd/holidaycrimesafety).

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