

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE _____

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SUFFOLK POLICE PROVIDE TIPS FOR HOLIDAY SHOPPING SAFETY

SUFFOLK, VA (December 3, 2021) – The busy holiday shopping season has officially begun, when busy people can become careless and vulnerable to theft and other holiday crime.

The Suffolk Police Department will once again participate in their “Holiday on the Beat”, an initiative that places Officers in Suffolk’s high volume shopping districts. These areas to *Love Local and Buy Local* 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.

The Suffolk Police Department is committed to keeping each and every citizen safe, and also 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. Talking or texting on your phone or digging in your purse for your keys while walking is a distraction and makes you an easy target.
- Use the buddy system and shop with a friend; there is safety in numbers.
- Be careful what you post online. Don’t alert others that you aren’t at home.
- 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.
- Keep a record of all of your credit card numbers in a safe place at home, and 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.
- If you must carry a purse, do not wrap the straps around your arms or shoulders, or carry a clutch purse tightly under your arm. Consider bringing a security travel pouch instead.
- 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. Consolidate where possible, or use store's package pick-up.
- Have your car keys ready in hand before leaving the store. Check the back seat and around the car before getting in. Get in your car, lock your doors, and leave. Don't start texting or talking on the phone.
- If you do return to your vehicle to unload purchases, place them in the trunk of the vehicle, not on the seat where they're visible and a target for thieves.
- Be just as vigilant about your surroundings during the daylight hours. A crime can occur at any time. 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, keep track of where you're parked (snap a photo of a marker/signage on your cell phone for reference), 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 Safety Tips Utilizing Popular Online Sites

- When shopping online, make sure you are dealing with a reputable online store. On checkout, before entering your payment information, make sure the page is encrypted and secure. Keep your antivirus, anti-phishing software up to date. Check the return policy before placing your order.
- Remember, if it sounds too good to be true, it usually is. Save all receipts. Print and save all confirmations from your online purchases. Start a file folder to keep all receipts together and to help you verify credit card or bank statements as they come in.
- A large number of citizens are utilizing online sites, such as Facebook Marketplace, Craigslist, and OfferUp to buy and sell things quickly and economically.
- Nationally, there has been an increase in robberies and assaults on citizens utilizing these sites to buy and sell items. Many times these robberies occur during the meetings of the buyers and the sellers of these items.
- The Suffolk Police Department has established two safe meeting zone locations, including Suffolk Police Headquarters, 111 Henley Place. The Suffolk Police Headquarters lobby is open 24-hours a day and is equipped with video surveillance cameras. The other safe meeting place location is at the Sector II Police Precinct, parking lot, 3903 Bridge Road in Northern Suffolk. The parking lot is well-lit and is also equipped with video surveillance cameras.

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 your blue recycle bin, or in a sealed, non-clear garbage bag.

Additional helpful safety information can be found on the website:
<http://www.suffolkva.us/403/Holiday-Safety>.

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