



## SIMI VALLEY POLICE DEPARTMENT



# ***Citizen Alert Release***

### **Safety When Shopping**

Shopping during the holiday season can present unique dangers. Taking a few prevention measures can keep your holiday season joyous.

The holiday season is a time when busy people can become careless and vulnerable to theft and other holiday crime. The following tips from the Simi Valley Police Department Crime Prevention Unit can help you be more careful, prepared and aware during the holiday season.

- Dress casually and comfortably and avoid wearing expensive jewelry.
- Be extra careful if you carry a purse or wallet. They are the prime targets of criminals in crowded shopping areas, bus stops and other public transportation modes.
- Never put the straps of purses around your neck to protect it from theft. The sudden impact on your neck from a potential purse-snatcher could cause serious injury.
- Fanny packs, carried on your front waist, are a great place for carrying valuables while shopping. They are closer to your body, they are difficult to remove and they leave your hands free to shop.
- Carry only enough money to purchase what you need. Try carrying your money in several different locations on your person. When you make purchases and get back only small amounts of change, it appears that you have spent all of your money.
- Carry only the credit cards you will need that day. Photocopy your credit cards front and back, and keep them in a safe place at home. Pay for your purchases with a check or credit card whenever possible. Notify the credit card issuer immediately if your credit card is lost, stolen or misused.
- Shop during daylight hours whenever possible. If you must shop at night, go with a friend or family member and park in a well-lighted area close to the entrance. Remember there is safety in numbers.
- When leaving your vehicle, make sure your windows are rolled up and your doors are locked. Do not leave valuables in the vehicle.
- Be leery of people who seem to be loitering in or around a parking lot or business, they could be looking for a victim. If you are not comfortable with the situation, park elsewhere.
- When walking to and from the parking lot into stores, be aware of your surroundings and what is going on around you. Make it a point to make eye contact with people you see. Criminals are

less likely to victimize someone who is confident and observant. They don't want to be remembered.

- Avoid overloading yourself with packages. It is important to have clear visibility and freedom of motion to avoid mishaps. Place packages in your trunk out of sight of persons passing by your vehicle. If you must return to the store after placing packages inside your vehicle, move your car to another location. Loading packages into your vehicle and returning to the store without moving it, makes your car a possible target to any observant thief.
- If shopping carts are available, use them. They cannot only be used as a barrier between you and the aggressor, but will allow you to keep your hands free.
- When leaving the store to go back to your vehicle, if you notice suspicious activity or a suspicious person around the area of your vehicle, go back inside and notify security or call 911. Security can escort you to your vehicle.

By using the safety tips provided, you can lessen your chances of becoming a crime victim. Stay safe and have a good holiday season.

For further information on this or other crime prevention topics, contact Jean-Marie Maroshek of the Simi Valley Police Department Crime Prevention Unit at 583-6276.