

Tips for a safe holiday season

To the community,

The holiday season is always a special time of year. It is also a time when thieves and con artists prey on innocent victims caught up in the hustle and bustle of the season. We can never be too careful, too prepared or too aware. So keep these tips in mind for a safe and happy holiday season.

Around the house:

- * Be extra cautious about locking doors and windows when you leave the house, even for a few minutes or just going down the block.
- * We all want our homes to reflect the joy of the season, but avoid displaying gifts where they can be seen from a window or doorway.
- * Inside and outside decorations should not impede a clear vision of your property.
- * Set your indoor and outdoor lights on an automatic timer.
- * Leave a radio or television on so the house looks and sounds occupied.
- * When leaving town, have a trusted friend or neighbor take care of your home by picking up the newspaper and mail.
- * If you're planning an extended absence and want extra patrol/vacation check contact the Sheriff's Office STAR program (530) 621.7545.

Shopping:

- * If you can shop with someone else and stay alert to your

surroundings.

- * Carry your purses closed and snugly against your body; carry wallets in front pants pocket or coat pocket.

- * Avoid carrying large amounts of cash.

- * Take your time when making purchase. Be sure to collect your license, credit cards or check book and your receipt.

- * If you must use an ATM, choose one in a safe well-lighted area.

- * Take care in protecting your PIN, by shielding the ATM keypad.

Home shopping and package delivery:

- * Request a signature confirmation of delivery. By doing this, the deliverer will have to wait until you're available or deliver the package to a neighbor.

- * If you have an understanding boss, have your packages delivered to you at work.

- * Track packages online to see exactly when they're sent to your house for delivery. If you're out of town at the time, phone a neighbor to pick up the package for you.

- * Leave special instructions for where to deliver the packages. A good place is on the side or back of the house, so that the package is out of site from the road

Vehicle safety:

- * Keep all car doors locked and windows closed while in or out of your car. Set your alarm or use an anti-theft device.

- * Park as close to your destination as possible and take notice to where you have parked.

* Do not leave packages or valuables on the seat of your car. This creates a temptation for thieves. If you must leave items in your vehicle place them in the trunk or cover them.

* Look inside your car and around it as you approach. Do not approach your car alone if there are suspicious people in the area.

* Park in well lighted areas.

Operation identification:

* The idea behind Operation Identification is to deter property related crime and to assist the El Dorado County Sheriff's Office in identifying stolen property and returning it to its lawful owners

* Mark gifts with your California driver's ;icense number. Do not use your Social Security number.

* On items that cannot be engraved, photograph them.

Although this is a large list, most of the tips are relatively easy to apply and by doing so you could reduce the chances of being a victim. If you find yourself a victim of a criminal act, report it immediately to your local law enforcement agency. The El Dorado Sheriff's Office wishes you a safe and joyful holiday season.

Lt. Bryan Golmitz, El Dorado County Sheriff's Office