

Tips to make holiday shopping a safe activity

With Black Friday just days away and the holiday season here, the Washoe County Sheriff's Office offers 12 Tips of Holiday Safety to help people stay focused on personal safety.

Be careful not to get so caught up in the shopping frenzy that you lose awareness of your surroundings. If you see suspicious activity in your neighborhood or while out shopping, report it to law enforcement or store security.

In the spirit of Black Friday week, here are an additional 12 tips focused on holiday shopping:

- Avoid shopping alone; there is added safety when shopping with a companion.
- Always lock vehicles and keep valuables out of sight, preferably in the trunk or locked compartment.
- Before sunrise and after sunset, park and walk in well-lighted areas.
- Stay alert to your surroundings. Take time to look around for possible suspicious persons, vehicles, and/or situations.
- When in crowded places, be alert for potential thieves. Don't overload yourself with packages.
- Maintain visibility and mobility to avoid potential threats.
- Be wary of unsolicited phone calls. The holiday season is notorious for con-artists who use this "season of giving" to take advantage of your kindness.
- When possible, avoid carrying large amounts of cash and valuables, and avoid wearing expensive jewelry.
- When using the new "chip" credit cards, make sure they have not been left in the card reader before leaving the checkout counter.

- Keep close track of all personal belongings and never leave them unattended.
- Keep a record of all your credit card numbers in a secure place at home.
- When shopping with children, keep a close eye on them at all times. Consider coaching them to go to a store clerk or security guard if they become separated and be sure they know their first and last name so they can advise someone who they are. Give children a contact phone number that they can carry on their person in case they do become lost.